

Though Mercier acknowledged that there are often long lines in Canada for necessary procedures, he said that this wait must be balanced by consideration of the way in which the Canadian system not only deliberately seeks to include those who would not have access in the U.S., but also tries to limit the costs incurred. This issue, he said, ultimately touches deep levels of the psyche and one's implicit ranking of common good vs. self-interest. One downside of the extensive government involvement in healthcare which Mercier noted has been the distancing of institutions from their basis in local communities. Furthermore, in the current spate of amalgamation, the government has found it difficult to deal with the differences inherent in hospitals representing a variety of religious traditions, let alone see how such differences are valuable.

In a vibrant discussion period, Richard McCormick noted that healthcare problems are erroneously equated with hospital problems. Others contrasted the still increasing U.S. rate of over 14% of GDP being spent on healthcare with the stabilized and slightly declining Canadian rate of 9.7%. When pressed by David Kelly, Mercier said that he would not favor an increase in the percent of GDP spent; instead, he said the hard choices of resource allocation must not be avoided. Others echoed this by speaking of a theology of limits. A distinction which emerged is that in the U.S. the key voice is had by the "consumer" whereas in Canada that voice belongs to the "citizen." The latter is more conducive to a quest for the common good and universal access.

Both the interest and the sense of urgency expressed by participants in this well-attended session clearly indicate the need for further efforts on the part of the Society to bring the tradition of Catholic social thought into discussions regarding healthcare and to secure a voice for both Canadian and U.S. participants.

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CHRISTOLOGY

Topic: Christological Claims, the Historical Jesus, and the Word of God

Convener: Michael O'Keeffe, Saint Xavier University, Chicago

Presenter: Tatha Wiley, St. John's University, Collegeville

Although at first glance this year's session on the historical Jesus seems a radical departure from the postmodernism of last year, on further reflection this was not the case. What Tatha Wiley actually delivered was an exploration of what Christology becomes once the insights of postmodernism, particularly its sensitivity to ideology and its advocacy for a hermeneutics of suspicion, are given a determinative role. Thus Wiley's presentation began with an examination of how bias and ideology turned the social critique of Jesus and his concern for

oppressed and marginalized peoples into a program that eventually upheld the established order and the plethora of unjust relationships it affirmed.

For Wiley, the central culprits in the development of ideology were a distorted Christology and a distorted soteriology. A distorted Christology developed when Patristic theologians became too concerned with the ontological status of Jesus to be attentive to Jesus' social and cultural critique. Consequently, the "Word" that Jesus revealed was his divine status vis-à-vis the Father and the Spirit, not a new way of being in community. Hence Christology became right thinking about the ontological status of the Son, irrespective of the social conditions under which the Son labored.

A distorted Christology was then furthered by a distorted soteriology, which misplaced Jesus' focus on social sin with a focus on personal sin. Structural evil was then downplayed; replaced by an emphasis on the need to remain obedient to divine law and to be cleansed from the effects of original sin. Under this trajectory, the Reign of God that Jesus proclaimed, which had centered on God's deliverance of oppressed and marginalized peoples in a community of equals, became an eternal reality, achieved through baptism and communion with the Church. Hence soteriology was privatized and spiritualized. The Church became the sole instrument of salvation in a sea of contrary forces, which had to be undermined if the salvation of persons would be achieved. In the process, Jesus' criticism of the "Domination System" of his time was displaced and replaced by the Christian conflict with Judaism and other non-Christian religions, eventually leading to the flourishing of anti-Semitism and the development of Christian triumphalism. In addition, the social structures that Jesus denounced as sinful, particularly patriarchy, but also the separation of peoples into categories such as Jew and Gentile, slave and free, were now embraced by the Church as necessary in lieu of the Fall. In the end, the followers of Jesus "misused" the symbol of Christ to support persons and institutions that separated peoples into unequal categories. These distinctions were then enshrined in an anthropological model that accepted gender, racial, and cultural differences as both natural and hierarchically structured.

To break this ideological distortion, Wiley applauds recent research on the historical Jesus. For her, this body of research rightly places emphasis on Jesus' social analysis and Jesus' efforts to fashion the Reign of God as an earthly locus of inclusivity, equality, and justice. Drawing principally on the writings of Walter Wink, E. P. Sanders, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Rosemary Radford Ruether, Wiley indicates that a modern Christology must counteract the central distortions of the past, which she defines as anti-Semitism, Christian triumphalism, cultural and racial intolerance, and gender dualism. Although prepared to address all four areas, Wiley only developed the first. She demonstrated that contemporary Pauline theology essentially affirms the insights of historical-Jesus research about the original focus of Jesus' critique. In effect, Paul, like Jesus, was concerned about relationships among persons, not between religions, and sought to fashion an inclusive community, where Jew and Gentile were both

welcome. To read Paul's theology as a "replacement theology" misrepresents Paul and Jesus' concerns about a social kingdom.

Wiley concluded her presentation by examining how, once ideology has been recognized and challenged, a "renewed Christology" becomes possible, this time open to the implications of the historical Jesus and focused on those concerns. Although truncated, she managed to outline four central conditions necessary for a contemporary Christology. These included openness to historical Jesus research, sensitivity to and acceptance of religious pluralism, the integrity of non-Western cultures, and the refusal to condone any unequal separation of persons into superior-inferior categories, particularly those based on gender. In the end, Wiley asserted that doing Christology in the contemporary period is a "whole new ball game." The content of revelation is not the ontological status of the Son, but the social and political implications of the historical Jesus, which for her must be discerned and applied in a variety of ways.

Wiley's presentation was then followed by a spirited discussion, which at times resembled what a postmodernist might go through if she were to present her views at a local VFW gathering. Most of the nineteen questions centered on the limitations of historical Jesus research and the legitimacy of fashioning a contemporary Christology on this basis alone. For example, some noted that appeals to Ruether, Wink, Fiorenza, and Sanders might not be broad enough to capture what historical Jesus research represents. Indeed, one participant claimed that the findings of biblical theologians in this area are simply too disparate to form a credible foundation. Others were concerned that the findings of historical Jesus research did not match the testimony of the New Testament Church. For example, someone asserted that Paul's understanding of a hierarchically arranged ministry was incompatible with claims regarding Jesus' radical egalitarianism.

Additional concerns were raised about the role of tradition within a contemporary Christology that is so focused on biblical research. As one participant put it, such a Christology seems to represent the work of those who "stand outside the tradition" and who are not sufficiently grounded "in a Church that holds the Spirit." Although such a critique may have been too harsh, it does raise the central issue of how Christology, pneumatology, and trinitarian theology can coalesce to meet the needs of contemporary Christians—Christians who at times seem deeply aware of the practical implications of the gospel, but insufficiently informed about the importance of divinity and the trinitarian context to push ontological questions. Perhaps that is the role of next year's convention: to demonstrate how in the development of our understanding, all the pieces must be given equal consideration so that development does not signal reduction. But in the interim, Wiley delivered an effective presentation that indicated some of the central concerns of historical Jesus research and where that trajectory is headed in respect to "the Word of God."

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