

- Topic: The Bible and the Bodies of Women: Development of Doctrine,
Definitive Teaching and the Case of Loisy
- Convener: Ellen M. Leonard, University of St. Michael's College
- Moderator: Susan M. St. Ville, University of Notre Dame
- Presenters: Ellen Leonard, University of St. Michael's College
Mary Rose D'Angelo, University of Notre Dame

This session consisted of a shared presentation which explored the case of Alfred Loisy and its implications for contemporary problems of the relationship between theologians and the magisterium. The case of biblical scholarship in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries provides an interesting study in the development of doctrine, especially for those who chafe at the anthropological and biblical dubieties put forth in Vatican pronouncements on women and sexuality. In 1908, the year after *Pascendi*, Alfred Loisy was excommunicated. The theories which caused his excommunication proceeded from the central insight of his life work, the viewpoint described in the older *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* as "a sensationally novel defense of Catholicism." Loisy rejected Harnack's search for "the essence of Christianity" in the teaching of the historical Jesus, describing the Gospels as products and documents of the faith of the early communities and insisting that "we know Christ only by the tradition, across the tradition and in the tradition of the primitive Christians."

The years which succeeded his excommunication have been characterized as a "dark age" for Roman Catholic biblical scholarship; silencing on the part of the authorities and circumspection on the part of scholars were substituted for investigation and theology. The Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) pronounced a series of restrictive (though carefully worded) decrees; scholarly work like that of Lagrange appeared in the form of compendious commentaries that presented insights basically by citing opinions of others, leaving conclusions to the reader while acknowledging hierarchical restrictions. The more adventurous of seminary professors followed his lead. In 1940, Loisy died; in 1941, the PBC published a condemnation of overly conservative approaches to biblical scholarship; in 1943 Pius XII published *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. In 1979 the late Raymond E. Brown published a theory about the Gospel of John which presupposed Loisy's basic insight that the Gospel attested the life of the early church; *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* appeared with an imprimatur.

Moving from the case of Loisy to the more recent history of biblical scholarship offers an example in which both official teaching and common practice among Roman Catholics have certainly developed and, indeed, very nearly reversed themselves in less than forty years. Three aspects of this history suggest darker issues. First is the contrast between the processes which produced *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and *Dei Verbum* and those which led up to *Humanae Vitae* and the *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood*. In the most sensitive areas of their treatment of biblical

criticism, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and *Dei Verbum* relied heavily upon the work of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. By contrast in the case of *Humanae Vitae* and the *Declaration*, the papal and curial authorities solicited reports from carefully selected advisory commissions but rejected the carefully produced and worded advice of those commissions.

Secondly, the treatment of the Bible in *Humanae Vitae* and the *Declaration*, and the subsequent papal reaffirmation, raises real questions about the degree to which the Vatican officials are willing to subscribe to the developed church teaching about appropriate treatment of the Bible.

Third, and most problematic of all, this undermining of the developments in teaching about the character of the Bible seems to proceed from the need to enforce developments in another area of doctrine. Increasingly in the last thirty years, the touchstone of Catholicism has become adherence to a set of prohibitions that center not on revelation in the Scriptures but on the status of the bodies of women. These prescriptions have been enforced by disciplinary actions against those who call for continued ethical and theological thought in the area of sexuality, those who suggest that the question of ordination should not be a closed one, those who rethink Marian theology in the interest of the liberation of women and of men. This pattern constitutes a kind of doctrinal shift in which gender orthodoxy has become, if not the center, then the boundary determinant of Roman Catholicism.

Even a reversal of the strictures on the lives of women in the foreseeable future may be too late to repair the losses of gifts and devotion of those who have been turned away, as well as of faithfulness to the tradition and attentiveness to the spirit of God in the church.

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- Topic: The Faith/Morals Distinction
and the Development of Moral Doctrine
- Convener: Joseph E. Capizzi, The Catholic University of America
- Moderator: Michael J. Baxter, University of Notre Dame
- Presenters: John R. Berkman, The Catholic University of America
Joseph E. Capizzi, The Catholic University of America
- Respondents: James T. Bretzke, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley
Paul J. Wojda, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul

More than 45 people were present for a lively discussion about the past, present, and future of moral theology. Presenting first in a session devoted to an evaluation of much postconciliar moral theology, Dr. Capizzi explored the issue