

COMMUNICATION THEOLOGY

- Topic: Ecclesial Reception, Communication,
and the Development of Doctrine
- Convener: Bernard R. Bonnot, Unda-USA and the Odyssey Network
- Moderator: Mary McCormick, St. Mary Seminary, Cleveland
- Presenter: Richard R. Gaillardetz, University of St. Thomas, Houston
- Respondents: Frances Forde Plude, Notre Dame College, Cleveland
Paul A. Soukup, Santa Clara University

Richard Gaillardetz defined reception as "the process by which some teaching, ritual, discipline or law is assimilated into the life of a church." Theologians have been reflecting on tradition since 1600, on reception only since Vatican II. He sketched two models of reception, one within a pyramidal/hieratic concept of church, the other within *communio* ecclesiology. While the church conceived herself in early centuries as "a spirit-constituted interdependent web of reciprocal relations among persons and communities," reception was the common mode of sharing. In that context, dialogical reciprocity made sense. As a hieratic concept of church gained ascendancy, a more juridical notion of obedience prevailed as the proper response to formal teaching.

Gaillardetz elaborated on the dynamic between magisterium and *sensus fidelium*, one of Ormond Rush's 12 *loci* of reception. There is a triangular process: the community's (A) expression of faith (in liturgy, devotion, art, etc., as well as in word) is *received* by the magisterium, which gives it (B) official formulation. The community *receives* this official teaching by (C) an assimilation that transforms the community and gives rise to renewed expressions of faith (A). Two moments of reception are involved (versus one in the hieratic-obediential model). The starting point is the community's lived experience and testimony rather than official teachings. Both magisterium/bishop and church community receive from and transmit to one another. Thus the church functions as a "community of reception." In both moments, nonreception can occur.

After briefly reviewing some of the contributions from the field of hermeneutics and literary theory, Gaillardetz noted that communication theory has moved from a transportation model to a forum model. The latter entails communication as a reciprocal act of sharing in which the listener selectively appropriates what is communicated. The forum model emphasizes the interactive, dialogical dimension of communication. It is a reciprocal act of sharing. Paul VI opened the theological door to this emphasis in *Ecclesiam Suam*, which proposes dialogue as a transcendent opening of the divine and a constitutive dynamic of the church. Conciliar thought regarding communication matured from the weak *Inter mirifica* (1962) to the strong *Communio et progressio* (1972), a document grounded in *communio* theology.

Gaillardetz concluded that disciplined and intentional conversation between theologians and experts in communications theory can advance theology much as has theology's dialogue with philosophical and literary hermeneutics.

Vince Miller suggested that communication is still seen as a transmission of content more than as a *bricolage* of symbols to be negotiated. Jane Redmont focused on who gets to participate in the conversation. What publics are significant and get heard? Paul Lakeland noted that outside the *communio* model there is only one authoritative moment. Bob Bonnot encouraged study of the historic move to juridical obedience as the proper response to church teaching.

Frances Forde Plude discussed how interactive communication technologies affect reception. Communication and theology should not be separate fields but one—*communication theology* (like feminist theology and liberation theology). Obediential reception parallels communication as proclamation while reciprocal reception parallels communication as exchange, the model preferred today by anthropology and cultural studies. The interactive dimension of communication, with feedback loops, is as important as the move from verbal to visual communication. The internet, the telephone, the fax and now computers facilitate interaction. Equity of access is important. When people can participate, they insist on talking. Such interaction is a metaphor for a more dialogical church. Computers constitute an epistemological turning point, opening (cyber)space for the soul for the first time since Dante. The way audiences receive mass media programs parallels the developing theology of reception (Lynn Schofield Clarke). The process is conversation rather than proclamation. Schreiter's *New Catholicity* reflects this.

Frank Buckley requires students to use e-mail with him and among themselves. This transforms the learning process. Interactivity affects a community's unity or lack thereof. These notions must get into seminary education and the training of future leaders (Redmont).

Paul Soukup observed that there are many different fields within communication studies. Mass media studies give rise to a transportation model but classical rhetoric and studies of conversation require a different model. Walter Ong articulates what happens to human consciousness when communication technology changes, as from oral to literate to print to electronic. This evolution begs the question of how open our "democratic dialogue" really is. Who gets to speak? Who uses the internet (currently 50 million do, 6.5 billion do not!)? In fact, technology enables people to live within self-selected communities, isolated rather than open to one another.

Discussion explored who counts among the *fideles* consulted to determine the faith of the community. To be Catholic means that we cannot really shut anyone out. Bishop Remi DeRoo reported on a "dialogical synod" in Victoria British Columbia during which he experienced many of the notions being discussed. People insist on participating and refuse to be marginalized because they care about the truth. Through dialogue they discover things in the tradition that were never taught. Much lies there unrecognized, much is not "word."

Orlando Espín commented on the nonreception of popular faith expressions by church authorities. John Thiel urged a retrospective line from the church's current faith expression backward to the tradition. What the people have received and assimilated into their faith life is the tradition!

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MEDIEVAL THEOLOGY

- Topic: Development of the Doctrine of Salvation in the Middle Ages
 Convener: Michael Gorman, St. Francis Xavier University,
 Antigonish, Nova Scotia
 Presenters: Matthew Levering, Boston College
 Joan M. Nuth, John Carroll University

The CTSA's Continuing Group for Medieval Theology heard two papers on the topic of the development of the doctrine of salvation in the Middle Ages. The program was put together on the basis of an open paper call with blind refereeing.

The first paper, by Matthew Levering, discussed the role of analyses of the Old Testament in the development of medieval soteriology. Medieval Christian theologians considered the Old Testament to be a full part of God's providential revelation and action, not merely a bygone phase of the divine plan. Their analyses differed from Patristic approaches, primarily in that they were extensively concerned with the literal (as opposed to the spiritual) sense of the OT books; indeed, under the influence of Jewish authors, especially Solomon of Troyes and Moses Maimonides, they argued for the reasonableness of Jewish law literally interpreted. They also focussed on how Christ fulfills the Law, a difficult topic in light of the fact that there are many parts of Jewish law that Christians do not follow. They solved this problem by making distinctions among types of laws and then making corresponding distinctions among different senses of fulfillment.

In the twelfth century, such interpretations were carried out by figures such as Andrew of St. Victor, Peter Abelard, Gratian, and Peter Lombard. In the thirteenth century, Christian reflection on the Old Testament continued in the same vein, led by such authors as Alexander of Hales, William of Auvergne, Robert Grosseteste, and Albert the Great. It is not until the *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, however, that we find systematic reflection on the OT and its relation to salvation in Christ. This work features a very long (if unwieldy) consideration of the OT and how Christ fulfills it. Only by making use of this *Summa* did Thomas Aquinas develop his own theory of Christ's fulfillment of the law,