

when that divine life exists in various relations within which the creature is incorporated."

Elizabeth Groppe began her response to the published critiques of LaCugna's work by noting that LaCugna did not abandon the immanent for the economic trinity, rather, she abandoned the "immanent-economic" *terminology* as imprecise and misleading, inadequate to the mystery of God (*theologia*) with us (*oikonomia*). Groppe identified four specific critiques about LaCugna's theology: (1) that it is phenomenological rather than ontological; (2) that it lacks an objective referent; (3) that it founders on an inadequate distinction of God and creature; and (4) that it is inconsistent with the Christian tradition (issues raised by Joseph Bracken, Thomas Weinandy, Barbara Finan, Paul Molnar, and Colin Gunton). These criticisms, Groppe argued, all result from reading LaCugna with the presupposition that trinitarian theology is necessarily structured through the paradigm of the "economic Trinity" and the "immanent Trinity" and the categories of a substance metaphysics. LaCugna, however, intended to prescind from this approach, laying the groundwork for an alternative structuring principle for contemporary trinitarian theology: the principle of the unity and inseparability of *theologia* (the mystery of God) and *oikonomia* (the mystery of salvation) construed through the categories of a relational ontology. Read in these terms, LaCugna's work proves to be ontological rather than phenomenological, grounded in the mystery of God, clear in the differentiation of God and creature, and consistent with the heart of the Christian tradition.

In discussion, Peter Phan asked if Rahner's theology of the symbol has been explored as a resource for thinking about the relationship between the economic and the immanent trinity, while William Lowe asked for a more detailed treatment of LaCugna's rejection of Augustine's speculation on the immanent trinity. At the business meeting, Anthony Keaty (St. John's Seminary, Brighton) and M. John Farrelly (St. Anselm's Abbey) offered to serve with Dallavalle as a steering committee for the seminar.

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#### COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

Topic: Theological Anthropology: Hindu/Buddhist Practice  
Convener: Bradley J. Malkovsky, University of Notre Dame  
Presenter: Francis X. Clooney, Boston College  
Respondent: Susan M. Windley, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul

Continuing a collaboration between the Comparative Theology and Theological Anthropology groups, this year's session treated the topic of Hindu Goddess

worship and its possible implications for theological anthropology. With "In the Light of Her Face: Hindu Goddess Worship and Human Nature—What Christians Can Learn from It" Francis X. Clooney presented the *Saundarya Lahari* (*Ocean of Beauty*, henceforth OB), a thousand-year-old text extolling the greatness of the "Goddess," also known as Uma and Parvati, whose consort is Shiva. The OB, which treats the Goddess as superior to and worshipped by all the other gods, sees her as creator and destroyer of the world, as font of all wisdom and power, as protector and place of refuge. She is in addition everything in nature, and her presence everywhere is explained in relation to the seven *chakras*, i.e., the seven physical and psychological points of energy encoded in the human self, the universe, and the Goddess herself.

The OB prescribes the worshipper to meditate on each of the seven *chakras*, located in the anus, genitals, navel, heart, throat, brow, and the top of the head and connected respectively to the constituent elements of the universe: earth, fire, water, wind, air, mind, consciousness. The worshipper is to visualize the Goddess as standing in each *chakra* in a specific form, along with her consort Shiva; in meditating thus one begins not only to realize the energy of that *chakra*, but also comes to see that all reality, everything outside as well as inside the worshipper, is pervaded with her divine presence. This particular *chakra*-meditation is helped along by another: the visualization and lengthy contemplation of the Goddess's many beautiful physical features (hair, forehead, breast, waist etc.). Such visualization leads the meditator to realize who the Goddess is, her superlative status, and how she relates to self and world.

Clooney speculated that the entirety of this Goddess theology is not only a praise of the Goddess, but also represents a kind of "divine projection" of human capacities and extrapolations from the human condition. Thus the praise of the Goddess as Shiva's power is at the same time a claim about the unlimited divine power latent in the *chakras* of the human body. The visualization of the Goddess's beauty is both an actualization of human potential in the (male) contemplation of the (female) other, and also an extended practice of "imagining-beyond" one's own capacities in order to find God in the other, as other. The implication of this particular theology is that one's spiritual potential cannot be realized by looking "in," so to speak, but only by looking "out" or "beyond." This complete, outward glance, enabled and imaged in meditation on the Goddess, is effectively transformative of the human person.

Clooney noted an obstacle in assimilating the OB: the author was probably a male writing for males. This is not to say that the Goddess is therefore merely a projection of male interests and potentials; we must assume that many Hindu females did and do believe in the Goddess and praise her. But in the OB the Goddess is understood in a way that measures and enables the total actualization of male potential. Clooney therefore saw the need to think about what it would mean to refashion this consideration of the Goddess from the perspective of women, to reread and critique the OB accordingly. We can perhaps read the OB as aiding devotees to transcend the issue of gender, by showing how to find both

male and female, the immanent and the ecstatic, the God and the Goddess, in each whole human person.

In her response Susan Windley noted three themes linking the OB and Christian theological anthropology: (1) "participation" in God's life through the *chakras* or the *imago dei*; (2) the mind/body conundrum; and (3) the essentialist vs. social construction understandings of gender. Participation in God's life through the *imago dei* is a common although difficult theme within Patristic anthropology. The Latin *imago dei* works as a point of contact, a capacity for the redemptive relationship engaged through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Is this capacity which resides in the rational at all analogous to the *chakras* resident in the body? The Greek fathers also discussed participation through the *imago dei*, emphasizing a participation in goodness. The resulting Orthodox formulation firmly emphasized the themes of knowing God through the divine energies and the importance of the theological aesthetic—themes analogously important to the OB. The gender issues Clooney raises elicit multiple questions. Does the OB's seemingly essentialist understanding deserve the same "social construction" criticism made by certain Christians of their own religion? And if this Goddess is worshipped by men to actualize their possibilities by transcending into the Other (in this case, Woman), how do women actualize *their* possibilities?

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#### MISSIOLOGY AND MISSION THEOLOGY

- Topic: Syncretism or Development of Doctrine:  
When Rites, Symbols and Language Meet
- Convener  
and Moderator: Lou McNeil, Georgian Court College
- Presenter: Carl F. Starkloff, Regis College, Toronto School of Theology
- Presenter: Gideon Goosen, Australian Catholic University, Sydney
- Presenter: Robert J. Schreiter, Catholic Theological Union

Carl Starkloff's presentation offered some basic points for clarification and discussion. He observed that Joseph Coulture, a Cree, notes that "syncretism is an unavowed norm for the Church." Throughout the history of Christianity the process of development has always and necessarily been an ongoing dynamic of interpretation of God's word and activity within cultural constructs. Starkloff reminded us that not even Sacred Scripture itself can make claim to being the undiluted Word of God. After reviewing the consistent instances of philosophical and cultural interpretation of God's activity in the life of Christianity, Starkloff