

theological development rests in negatively stated criteria. Positive criteria would cast the norms within a particular cultural coding. James resolves the conflict in Acts 15 with four injunctions which delineate Christian behavior vis-à-vis pagan ritual. Do not (1) eat food dedicated to idols; (2) participate in fornication rites; (3) eat meat of strangled animals; nor (4) drink blood of animals. The decision does not center on mandates of a positive nature, e.g., customs which would have prevented Gentiles from embracing Christianity: circumcision, dietary laws, etc. Identity often is served with negative markers and therein, suggested Schreiter, may be found the most sure pointers for setting criteria helpful in determining the validity of development and continuity within the tradition.

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METHOD IN THEOLOGY

- Topic: Doctrinal Pluralism in a Postmodern Context
 Conveners: J. Michael Stebbins, Woodstock Theological Center
 M. Shawn Copeland, Marquette University
 Moderator: Tatha Wiley, St. John's University, Collegeville
 Presenter: Paul F. Lakeland, Fairfield University
 Respondents: Nancy C. Ring, LeMoyne College
 Anthony J. Godzieba, Villanova University

Paul Lakeland began his presentation by examining Bernard Lonergan's analysis of doctrinal pluralism. (The background reading for this year's session was Lonergan's 1971 *Père Marquette Theology Lecture*, published as *Doctrinal Pluralism* [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1971].) On Lakeland's reading, Lonergan distinguishes three forms of pluralism, all of which have an apologetic function. The first, a "pluralism of communications," refers to the flexibility with which the saving truth has to be expressed if it is to take root in different cultures. The second form, which Lakeland labeled a "pluralism of the interim," is constituted by the fact that divergent theological methods, viewpoints, and opinions have developed in the wake of scholastic theology's collapse. Lonergan expects this situation eventually to be rectified by the emergence of a new, comprehensive theological method. The third form of doctrinal pluralism, the "pluralism of inadequate conversion," results from inauthenticity on the part of theologians. Lakeland took aim at Lonergan's negative assessment of the "pluralism of the interim." In the context of postmodernity, he maintained, most theologians find this diversity not only inevitable but desirable, and consider the search for a totalizing theological synthesis pointless.

Lakeland suggested that, given this state of affairs, the primary function of apologetics is to present the face of Christianity to the non-Christian world. Since there is a radical incommensurability between Christianity and some of the other world religions (here Lakeland drew on the work of Herder), presenting that face is a matter not of a "narrowly evangelical call to preach the gospel" in a way that overwhelms its recipients without ever truly encountering them, but rather of "the Christian responsibility to love the world for God" through a sacramental presence of humble service. As the church encounters the world, "story and doctrine should be understood as lying *behind* the church" as a rhetorical background, "and not placed *in front of* the church as a kind of blueprint for history or a program for reform of the world." Lakeland illustrated the sort of postmodern theological understanding that could support this apologetic task. It would acknowledge, for example, that God is experienced as present in the mode of absence, "like the presence in absence of an expected guest"; yet it would also maintain that God intends this mode of presence precisely because it is best suited to allowing human beings to become more fully what they are. And its recognition of Christ, "the God who is totally human," as the expression of God's kenotic, noncoercive love would open naturally into a theology of religions. Lakeland concluded by remarking that to Lonergan's religious, moral, and intellectual conversions he would add a fourth: a "conversion to openness to the other" even in the face of radical incommensurability.

In her response, Nancy Ring explained that during the course of the convention she had been "trying on" the idea of keeping the Christian metanarrative "behind" the church and had found it very helpful. She explored the question of how the context of postmodernity might affect our understanding of prayer and divine providence, and went on to suggest that Lonergan's understanding of the dynamism of consciousness, and of the biases that distort or block that dynamism, might provide a self-critical basis for finding common ground between people with incommensurable stories. Anthony Godzieba described our situation as not simply postmodern but contemporary, i.e., characterized by a "contention between still-vital modern values and postmodern critique." While acknowledging the gains of postmodern critique, he contended that postmodern culture's commodification of reality paradoxically tends to undermine the very plurality it celebrates and "erases the criteria for ethical evaluation." Hence he proposed a form of praxis-oriented apologetics that is, on the one hand, fully engaged in postmodern culture and committed to "situation-specific incarnations of discipleship" and, on the other, steeped in the Catholic tradition and capable of subjecting postmodern culture to a critique grounded in the metanarrative—and, more fundamentally, in the reality—of God's emancipative love.

The discussion that followed gave Lakeland an opportunity to spell out the difference between a radically postmodern position and his own. He indicated that the eclecticism of images, stories, meanings, etc., that he advocated was for the sake not of "spinning off in some highly private direction" but of illuminating and playing off of the Christian tradition; that his proposed apologetics would

embody Habermas's principles of communicative action; and that he considers it legitimate to believe in the objective superiority of one's own metanarrative, provided one does not use it to submerge or colonize the other.

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THEOLOGY AS A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

- Topic: Perfecting Sodomy:
 The History of a Category from Antoninus to Alphonsus
 Convener: Paul Giurlanda, Saint Mary's College of California, Moraga
 Moderator: Jack A. Bonsor, Santa Clara University
 Presenter: Mark D. Jordan, Emory University

Mark Jordan sees his presentation as part of a conversation between historians of Catholic moral theology and practitioners of the emerging discipline of "gay and lesbian studies." To attempt discussion of same-sex relations without engaging these inquiries and their techniques for analyzing moral speech would betray a lack of seriousness. The growth of meticulous taxonomies and classifications of *sodomia* as category in Catholic moral theology during and after Trent, taxonomies used by elaborate ecclesiastical and secular bureaucracies struggling for jurisdiction over "sodomites," especially in the clergy, can thus be seen as a particularly interesting case study of how assertions of "development" can serve to conceal deep changes of theological purpose.

Jordan starts with St. Thomas's authoritative definition of the *peccatum contra naturam* and then demonstrates how a single verbal formula can change meanings across different rhetorical programs of moral theology. This demonstration is intended to support and illustrate three hypotheses Jordan wants to set before us: First, there are important contradictions hidden under the categories and identities used by theologians to condemn same-sex desires. Second, there are important contradictions hidden under claims for an unbroken Catholic tradition of moral theology. Third, the hidden contradictions in sexual matter and the practice of moral theology are curiously *linked*. These three hypotheses mark one intersection between moral theology and gay and lesbian studies, one episode in their conversation.

Thus, what in Aquinas is part of a larger rhetorical program leading to beatitude, becomes, for the Dominican Antoninus of Florence, a highly colored and even hysterical condemnation of what Antoninus likens to a political and ethnic community ("Sodomites") who have a "captain" and a "king." Where for Thomas, the way to deal with sodomy is to see it as a sin linked to a larger understanding of the end of human living, for Antoninus, the way to deal with