

CHRISTOLOGY

- Topic: The Firstborn of Many
Convenor: Tatha Wiley, St. Olaf College
Moderator: Lou McNeil, Georgian Court College
Presenter: Donald L. Gelpi, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley
Respondent: Alexander Garcia-Rivera, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley

Addressing thirty participants, Donald Gelpi outlined the major elements of the argument constructed in his three-volume work, *The Firstborn of Many: A Christology for Converting Christians* (Marquette University Press, 2001). Gelpi's remarks and those of his respondent, Alexander Garcia-Rivera, sparked a vigorous exchange of questions and responses moderated by Lou McNeil.

Gelpi opened by discussing the method he used for the formulation of his Christology, the philosophical presuppositions on which it rested, and the way in which a theology of conversion structured his theological argument.

The method guiding *The Firstborn of Many* blends elements from Bernard Lonergan's *Method in Theology* and the work of Charles Sanders Peirce. Gelpi takes Lonergan's understanding of the task of theology as mediation between a religion and the culture in which that religion roots itself, his definition of method, and his theory of functional specialties. He explained why he believes that Peirce's logic and metaphysics offer a sounder grounding for Lonergan's theory of functional specialties than Lonergan's own transcendental method and modified Transcendental Thomism.

The philosophical metaphysics structuring Gelpi's Christological argument is an application of Peircean logic to philosophical thinking. Gelpi interpreted metaphysical thinking as the elaboration of a fallible hypothesis about the nature of reality by giving inferential elaboration to a root metaphor for reality, which needs verification in human perceptual experience, in shared, lived, social experience, in the results of close scientific and scholarly investigations into reality, and in the events which reveal the Christian God. For testing, Gelpi proposed a fallibilistic metaphysics which takes "experience" as its root metaphor and which defines experience as "a process made up of relational elements called feelings." He identified three kinds of feelings in the higher forms of experience: evaluations, decisions, and tendencies.

This metaphysics of experience grounds Gelpi's theory of a fivefold conversion. He showed how the construct of conversion structures his Christological argument. In this present multivolumed work Gelpi develops a foundational Christology of conversion, which asks how commitment to Jesus Christ in justifying faith transvalues other forms of conversion—affective, intellectual, personal moral, and sociopolitical.

When justifying faith transvalues affective conversion, it gives rise to Christological hope, which both the kerygmatic theology of Paul and the

apocalyptic Christology of Revelation illumine. When justifying faith transvalues intellectual conversion, it transforms the intuitive dimensions of faith into narrative Christology and the inferential dimensions of faith into doctrinal Christology. The transvaluation of personal moral and sociopolitical conversion in justifying faith completes the doctrinal elaboration of the theoretical meaning of the hypostatic union by elucidating its practical consequences in an ethical context. The transvaluation of the two forms of moral conversion forces a rethinking of the meaning of Christian charity and gives rise to a liberation theology for the United States.

A "Works in Progress" period followed the session's formal presentation and discussion. Participants reported on recently published and current projects underway. This dimension of the Christology meeting will be a part of the 2003 program. Participants are encouraged to offer short explanations of their current work. Distribution of an abstract is welcome.

TATHA WILEY

St. Olaf College

Northfield, Minnesota

+ + +

CHRISTOLOGY SPECIAL SESSION

Topic: *Jesus, Symbol of God: A Discussion with Roger Haight*
Moderator: Tatha Wiley, St. Olaf College
Presenter: Roger Haight, Weston School of Theology

In this special evening session convened by the Christology Group and attended by some 300 members, Roger Haight engaged in a dialogue with reviewers of his book and attendees about the thrust, assertions, and import of his recent volume, *Jesus, Symbol of God*. Haight offered a synopsis of and response to the book's 38 reviews by summarizing ten key assertions of the volume, the questions or criticisms most frequently raised by reviewers about those ideas, and his response or clarification of the central ideas.

Haight emphasized the legitimacy of his genetic method—a "Christology from below" that works from what can be known about the original process by which the church's doctrines were constructed in response to the life, death, and resurrection of the historical Jesus. He offered and defended this method as a important framework for posing Christological questions and formulating a credible contemporary Christology.

The ten key assertions specifically engaged and defended by Haight included the following.

(1) *A Genetic Method*. Christology from below represents a major shift of imaginative framework. A genetic method leads one through the process and