

THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

Topic: Faith and Historicity  
Convener: Michael T. McLaughlin, Saint Leo University  
Presenters: Michael T. McLaughlin, Saint Leo University  
James Keating, Providence College  
Respondent: Gary Culpepper, Providence College

Dr. McLaughlin presented an assessment of the extensive project of Ben Meyer on the theological interpretation of scripture in the categories of Lonergan's method in theology.

A key notion is that amateur philosophizing by exegetes is counter productive in light of the challenges of deconstruction, structuralism, and naturalism. Meyers attempt to determine the character of the horizon within which the New Testament should be interpreted was judged to be successful. In response to questions from exegetes who were present, it was stressed that doctrines about priesthood and the role of women in the church are a separate moment from the interpretation of scripture in Lonergan's method.

Meyer noted that the intended sense of the author is primary, but this does not rule out theologizing or raising questions which were not in the mind of the biblical author. McLaughlin said that theological foundations do go to the authenticity of the theologian in Lonergan's method. There can be violent clashes between those of opposed horizons since religious conversion is not always present in all interpreters.

Dr. James Keating indicated that the question of how to relate faith and history continues to bedevil Christian theology, especially in light of continuing Jesus research. The paper raised some issues by looking at the positions of three scholars: John P. Meier, J. A. DiNoia, and N. T. Wright. While Meier self-consciously prescind from Christian faith in his search for Jesus, DiNoia is sharply critical of any approach which views Christian tradition as an obstacle to the truth of Jesus. Wright holds a middle position. Explicitly working out of a traditional Christian standpoint, Wright allows the possibility that in honest historical inquiry the evidence may conflict with settled opinion. The foundational importance of Jesus in Christian theology means that historically credible conclusions ought to have an effect on faith. An example of such an effect has been the recovery of the Jewishness of Jesus for Jewish-Christian relations. Dr. Gary Culpepper responded briefly to both papers and there were a number of follow up questions from those present.

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