

THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

- Topic: Responses to Kathryn Tanner's *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity*
Convener: Anne M. Clifford, Duquesne University
Presenters: Mary Catherine Hilkert, University of Notre Dame
John R. Sachs, Weston Jesuit School of Theology
Phyllis H. Kaminski, Saint Mary's College

Dr. Hilkert began her presentation by outlining the basic theological direction of Kathryn Tanner's text, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity*. Christian anthropology and ethics need to be situated in a theological scheme of things that centers on Christ and the Trinity. The most adequate starting point for Christian anthropology is Christology, and, in Tanner's judgment, a revitalized Alexandrian neo-Chalcedonian theology of the incarnation. Nonetheless, Tanner had outlined in an earlier text a more fundamental starting point, that of God as beneficent giver of all good gifts, which encompasses the noncompetitive relation between creatures and God. The Christian vocation is to be structured in a way that reflects God's own gift giving. However, since our human efforts inevitably fail due to both human finitude and sinful resistance, Tanner concludes with a discussion of Christian hope, where her basic strategy is to shift the concern of eschatology from the future of individuals, history, or the cosmos (which may indeed have no future), to the question of creation's relationship with God. Immortality becomes the final gift to creation, all of which is taken into God, but in Tanner's reading, this may at the same time mean the loss, rather than simply the transformation, of our creaturehood and particular identity.

Hilkert then outlined several points for further discussion. Questions about Tanner's schematic theology which leave unanswered methodological questions about her selection of resources and lines of argument should to be addressed. Why Tanner turns to Chalcedonian doctrine rather than to some sort of historical reconstruction of the concrete life of Jesus of Nazareth remains unclear. And, the dearth of social analysis and context framing her ethics seems to limit its universal applicability.

According to Dr. Sachs, Tanner's vision of faith-filled human living in God's world is refreshing and valuable despite the (neo-)Chalcedonian Christology and trinitarian theology upon which it is built. Fundamentally, Barthian (and reminiscent of Balthasar), it nonetheless shares much in common with Rahner and Schillebeeckx. Flowing from a renewed appreciation of God's transcendence and self-giving abundance, she insists on the noncompetitive relationship between divine freedom and human freedom. The divinity of Christ is displayed in the specific of his life and mission, and the power it has to transform the lives of believers and draw them into his mission of divine beneficence. A deeper appreciation of the active spontaneity and creativity of human freedom might be found in dialogue with John MacMurray. Holiness is not understood as

blamelessness or moral perfection. Rather, it is characterized by a growing wholeheartedness for the love and life of God, which God desires for all.

Tanner describes her theological anthropology as "a task- or vocation-oriented one" (68), commented Dr. Kaminski, which enables us to engage our fundamental vocation as theologians. Tanner's depiction of Christ's assumption of humanity and our assumption as human beings by Christ should be assessed. Rhetorical repetition of "assumption by Christ" allows Tanner to depict human agency showing forth God's glory, but my line of vision gravitates to the repeated references to human passivity, spontaneous receptivity, and the whole of our lives being shaped from beyond. Tanner moves quickly through the effects of assumption by Christ on the human community and the cosmos, to ethical responses and hope in a dying world. At this point, the sketch opens wide spaces for imagining all that it will take to complete the picture. Into those spaces, Kaminski introduced two questions. The first looks towards the anthropological consequences of incarnation when we imaginatively put Mary in Tanner's sketch. In developing a vocation-oriented anthropology within a conflictual historical incarnational process, how do we draw and position Mary in relation to flesh and blood women and men? The second question asks how dialogue with feminist theory might help draw in ethical principles for reshaping existing communities. What are the social consequences of the theological lines Tanner draws between intratrinitarian life and a Christian response to a lavish gift-giving God? The question needs to be raised as to the usefulness of principles of unconditional giving and noncompetition as anthropological realities.

A large part of the discussion after the presentations revolved around the seemingly perennial questions about the relationship between nature and grace, human and divine agency. One participant wondered whether lines were being drawn in an almost predictable way, that is, Catholic and Reformed theologies. The respondents determined that the answer would be forthcoming when Tanner herself builds the theological framework which underpins the schematic arguments in *Jesus, Human, and the Trinity*. It seems that Tanner is working within a larger Christian perspective, which will become clearer in time.

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