

## THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

- Topic: Theological Anthropology in Dialogue  
with Racial and National Identity
- Convener: Anne M. Clifford, Duquesne University
- Moderator: Phyllis H. Kaminski, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana
- Presenters: Karen Teel, Boston College  
Dorian Llwelyn, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles
- Respondents: Diana Hayes, Georgetown University  
Anthony J. Godzieba, Villanova University

In a paper entitled "Racism and the Image of God," Karen Teel, a white woman of European descent, engaged the sixteen attendees with two key questions: "Why did Christian (including especially Roman Catholic) theology not only fail to prevent the institution of slavery, but actively support it? And why has our belief in the image of God in every human being still not eliminated racism for good?" In unpacking her questions Teel drew attention to conventional treatments of Christian theological anthropology's central symbol, *imago Dei*. Noting the emphasis on human cognition, she argued that neglect of bodily differences, such as sex and race, in imaging God contributed to persons in power (white European males) making patriarchal and racist judgments about who is fully human.

In crafting her response to this problem, Teel drew upon the work of the Protestant womanist theological ethicist Katie Geneva Cannon, chosen because her implicit understanding of the image of God attends to ethical imperatives revealed through bodily similarities and differences. Specifically, Cannon draws attention to the concrete ways in which black women have imaged God through their struggle. Given this society's hostility to blackness, Teel noted Cannon's identification of survival as a primary virtue for black women and Cannon's emphasis on the need for black women to exercise creativity to reinvent conventional (white defined) virtues.

In response, Diana Hayes praised Teel for not shying away from her own "white privilege." Hayes acknowledged that as a womanist scholar, she also is a person of privilege. Since Teel herself acknowledged that Cannon does not address *imago Dei* in depth, Hayes questioned her use of Cannon as a source. Perhaps it would have been more helpful for Teel to draw upon the work of Kelly Brown Douglas, who has written more extensively on the Black body, as *imago Dei*. Hayes suggested that Teel consider engaging in dialogue with Catholic womanist scholars Shawn Copeland and Toinette Eugene. Finally, Hayes questioned Teel's argument that racism (and American slavery) emerged as a result of Christian anthropology ignoring the body. Hayes argued that while Catholic and Protestant theology has promoted a negative dualism between the body and the spirit, it has not ignored the body but rather has treated it as inferior to the spiritual.

In presenting "Nationality in Vatican II and in the Teaching of John Paul II," Dorian Llwelyn (originally from Wales, "a small country with a strong nationalist sentiment") argued that since nationality is a fundamental human experience, we

should expect to find theological reflection and magisterial pronouncements on it. Yet historically in Catholic social teaching, a systematic treatment of nationality and nationalism is conspicuously lacking. To provide a context for his treatment of nationality in Vatican II and in the writings of John Paul II, Llywelyn surveyed papal statements in the pre-Vatican II era, finding that they condemned extreme patriotic nationalism (e.g., Pius XI—Fascism in *Non abbiamo bisogno*, 1931 and Pius XII—Nazism (*Summi pontificatus*, 1939).

At the Second Vatican Council nationalism was addressed in *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) in the context of its treatment of culture. There nationalism's superioristic manifestations were critiqued. Pope John Paul II, fourteen years later in *Redemptor hominis* (1979), treated nationality as a theological category. Coupling nationalism with imperialism, John Paul drew attention to nationalism's potential for idolatry and inhuman exploitation of others. What is needed as a counter balance is an "authentic love of country." In his later highly personal writings during the dissolution of Poland as a communist state, John Paul treated nationality from the perspective of the family, giving nationality a role in theological anthropology. In his last book *Memory and Identity* (2005), John Paul spoke of cultural diversity as a medium for salvation. Yet, he also maintained that national particularity must be counterbalanced by the universality of the church.

Anthony Godzieba responded that nationality, as a social construction, is not fixed but malleable; it does not have the ontological weight assigned to culture, nor does it possess the metaphysical aura claimed for it in German Romanticism. If nationality and culture are not differentiated, which seems to be the case in John Paul II's approach, one is left with muddled thinking. Godzieba invited us to reflect on the symbolism of the German pope, Benedict XVI visiting Auschwitz and saying "We must always learn that we are Catholic, and thus one's nationality is inserted, relativized and also carefully located in the great unity of the Catholic communion." This statement points to the relativity of nationality and leaves us with the question: What does nationality have to do with "the point of Christianity" (cf. Timothy Radcliffe)?

In the lively discussion that followed, cautions were raised about not essentializing white versus black and not reducing slavery, a complex historical issue, to whites dehumanizing blacks. Elements of meaningfully attending to nationality in Catholic theological anthropology, including some of their pros and cons, surfaced and were explored.

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