

CHRISTOLOGY

Topic: Bishops and the Development of Christology
Convener: Tatha Wiley, Metropolitan State University
Moderator: Cheryl Peterson, Trinity Lutheran Seminary
Presenter: Gerard S. Sloyan, The Catholic University of America

Professor Sloyan discussed the role of bishops in the historical development of Christology. How did their participation in the highly political conciliar history promote authentic development? The twenty participants of the group then engaged Fr. Sloyan in discussion about the issues classical Christology presents to us today in our post-modern context. How can this early achievement remain meaningful in a different cultural and conceptual framework? What is called for from today's bishops in this new framework? A short time at the end of the session was open to reports from participants about works-in-progress. Projects that might fit the convention theme for 2008 were given consideration as potential papers. The new team who will convene next year's convention program for Christology introduced themselves: Kathleen McManus, Michael E. Lee, and Mark Fischer.

In his account of the tradition, Fr. Sloyan began with scriptural terms and meanings and their changes from the context of ancient Israel to the New Testament proclamation of Jesus. Titles given to Jesus originated with God's raising him from the dead. Redemption is the work of God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The earliest followers looked upon Jesus as savior, as the deliverer who will save them from the coming wrath, as Paul writes. Early church theologians contributed new terms and ways of conceiving of Christ and his work, e.g., Irenaeus of Lyons, the Gnostics, and recapitulation. Augustine's understanding of Adam's sin as literal history centered Christ's purpose on the removal of original sin. Anselm changed this argument to establish the necessary reasons for the incarnation. Christ's death came to be seen as satisfaction paid to divine justice. These themes are present in contemporary theological reflection. Sin remains at the center. For Karl Rahner, for example, the divine self-communication is a forgiving communication. Feminist theologians critiqued the implications of violence in the atonement old. The interpretation of Christ's redemption continues.

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