

FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY AND METHOD—TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Daniel Rober, Sacred Heart University
Moderator: James Keating, Providence College
Presenters: Anne Carpenter, Saint Mary's College of California
Richard Barry, Providence College

This year's Fundamental Theology and Method session featured two papers, both of which dealt with the conference theme of Ecology. Anne Carpenter's paper was read in her absence by Jennifer Martin. It focused on theological aesthetics as a resource for ecology, engaging with Gerard Manley Hopkins and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Richard Barry's paper dealt with Erich Przywara in dialogue with Jewish temple theology, also connecting theological aesthetics and theology. The papers were connected both by the biographical relationship of Balthasar and Przywara as well as by the thematic connections drawn between the theological aesthetics and ecology.

Carpenter, in her paper "Why Theological Aesthetics at All?" sets out to analyze the relationship between theology and aesthetics, which she argues is not as obvious as it might seem. She begins by analyzing Balthasar's distinction between theological aesthetics and aesthetic theology, tying it in to Hopkins's discussion of inscape and instress in his journals. She argues that Hopkins provides resources for thinking about theological aesthetics as a kind of dialogue between God and the human person. Ecology, for Hopkins, is Christological and runs deep; it is a much more profound relationship than simply preservation. Carpenter engages Charles Péguy to continue her argument, claiming that he united *mystique* and *politique* in his thought in a way that many Catholics of his age did not, and thus teaches us that, when the political does not pay attention to what is eternal, it does violence to the world. Carpenter concludes by raising questions about what a Christologically and theologically informed ecology would look like and notes that remembering eternity would make us more rather than less ecologically aware.

Barry's paper, "The Temple as the First Draft Concrete *Analogia Entis*" responds to Pope Francis' call for an "integral ecology" by probing how Przywara's metaphysics focused on the analogy of being can help contemporary theologians in this effort. To this end, the first part of Barry's paper gives an account of this metaphysical vision, culminating in Przywara's formulation of "God beyond-and-in the creature." Having established this point, Barry turns to the Jewish Temple as a subject of theological aesthetics. Drawing upon biblical and other ancient Jewish resources, the paper sketches two visions of the Temple. The first, as primary locus of God's dwelling in the world, reflects the broader relationship of God with the world in Genesis 1. The second, drawn primarily from the Deuteronomists, sees the Temple rather as the mirror of heaven. Using Przywara's thought, Barry sketches out the dangers of both of these visions—one to "pan-the-ism" and another to "Theo-pan-ism." The paper concludes with a response to N.T. Wright's challenge for Christian theology to take the Temple more seriously, arguing that rather than troubling theological concepts that developed in dialogue with Greek ideas it might in fact support them.

Vigorous discussion followed concerning Barry's paper. There was thoroughgoing debate in particular about the appropriateness of Temple imagery within Christian theology. Other suggestions were made as to how Barry could expand upon and deepen the impressive argument made in his paper. The administrative team

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was pleased that the question and answer took up the entire time allotted, particularly given that only one of the presenters was available to answer questions about his paper. Feedback from attendees was very positive in terms of the quality of papers presented and the substantive discussion that ensued.

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