

Jewish cynic, who practiced opened commensality, radical egalitarianism, and a kind of "magic."

O'Keefe wonders if theological response to Crossan and Borg has not been too defensive. Have not theologians softened the sharper edge of Jesus' message by failing to take some of the noncanonical writings more seriously? And yet, are not theologians justified in asking Crossan and Borg to make their religious and theological assumptions more explicit?

In the ensuing discussion, the most frequently heard points were: (1) Crossan's and Borg's portraits of Jesus as nonapocalyptic just do not ring true. Have they not read Albert Schweitzer? E. P. Sanders? (2) The precise relation between historical reconstruction and Christian faith needs more work. Crossan and Borg would help matters by showing more sophisticated awareness of this relation. It is a pity that Crossan has studiously avoided Schillebeeckx's work, especially the first chapter of the Jesus book where Schillebeeckx lays out a detailed view of the relation between historical research and theology. (3) There seems to be an implicit anti-Jewishness in Borg's reconstruction that leaves some uneasy. (4) Theologians cannot take refuge in airy speculation. They must be conversant with the work of social scientists and historians.

THOMAS H. WEST
College of St. Catherine
St. Paul MN 55105

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

- Topic: Discussion of Joseph Bracken's *The Divine Matrix: Creativity as Link between East and West*
- Convener: James L. Fredericks, Loyola Marymount University
- Moderator: Bradley Malkovsky, University of Notre Dame
- Opening and Closing Remarks: Joseph Bracken, Xavier University
- Respondents: Whalen Lai, University of California, Davis
 Christopher K. Chapple, Loyola Marymount University

The comparative theology seminar was given over to a discussion of *The Divine Matrix: Creativity as Link Between East and West* (Orbis, 1994), by Joseph Bracken S.J. with responses from Professor Christopher Chapple of Loyola Marymount University, a specialist in South Asian religious thought, and

Professor Whalen Lai of the University of California at Davis, a specialist in East Asian thought.

In *The Divine Matrix*, Joe Bracken offers one possible model for doing theology comparatively. Following the lead of Robert Neville, Bracken recommends abstracting principles from religious traditions so as to purify them of their particularities. The point of this effort is not to arrive at a grand, unifying, metaphysical scheme, such as Hegel's absolute *Geist*, able to encompass all religious diversity. Rather, Joe Bracken has tried to derive mediating concepts which serve as the basis for limited experiments in comparison. In the case at hand, Whitehead's notion of "creativity" (always an activity, never an entity) was refined by Joe Bracken so as to illuminate and link together aspects of Aristotle, Thomas, Eckhart, and Heidegger within the western tradition and the Hindu doctrine of Brahman, the Buddhist theory of dependent arising and the Taoist notion of the Tao in the hope of illuminating genuine similarities among all these intellectual traditions.

Chris Chapple responded by posing three questions to Joe Bracken. The first question has to do with time: If creativity arises in the form of "the song that never ends," what happens to teleology? This question is especially important in the context of Christianity's eschatological claims. The second question has to do with ethics: Are moral norms determined by the flow of creativity? This question is also timely given the current debate over moral relativism and proportionalism. Does the transreligious notion of creativity provide a basis for adjudicating conflicting ethical claims? The third question has to do with spirituality: Is there the possibility of real embodiment within Joe Bracken's notion of creativity? How is the divine matrix realized concretely in life? Does the notion of creativity provide theological foundations for a discernment of spirits?

In his response, Whalen Lai singled out for praise the risk Joe Bracken has taken in interpreting Asian religious traditions. Specifically noteworthy is his willingness to look to the periphery of these traditions identifying real tendencies of Asian thought and building creatively on them. In comparing Christianity with Asian religions, we are required to look at aspects of these traditions previously thought marginal and thus open up for ourselves possibilities for understanding both Christianity and the other traditions in new ways.

JAMES L. FREDERICKS
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles