

the inculturated mind and find ways of doing God's work through new forms of governance. To find unity in the Church we must turn to the inculturated mind. Six principles specific to American mind are: democracy, due process, equal rights, right to choose, voluntary participation, tolerance and pluralism.

Discussion followed. The universal Church exercises authority efficiently but people feel a weak sense of belonging. The local church shows a greater respect for diversity, identity, and participation while it lacks in efficiency. Do we get our negative images of the Church from the media? Were the seminar papers too negative? American Catholics seem to want authority when they are in trouble; when all goes well they do not want it. On the other hand, in today's "neoclerical" Church many lay people experience great obstacles and frustration in the way authority is exercised. The meaning of Church documents was discussed. Will people continue to read them? Will they be taken seriously at all? To be credible the whole church must be in dialogue and continue to be countercultural.

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HANS URS VON BALTHASAR SOCIETY

JESUS CHRIST: CRUCIFIED FOUNDATION OF THE COSMOS

Moderator: Christophe Potworowski, Concordia University

Presenter: Raymond Gawronski, Marquette University

Gawronski argued that Catholic art often shocks contemporary sensibilities by its detailed depictions of the Passion of Christ. This artistic focus on the concrete found articulation in the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar who conducted a steady polemic against all forms of abstraction. Without the Incarnation, all human thought tends ultimately towards a false abstraction.

Platonism has been perhaps the greatest "abstractor," positing a soul-essence which survives the dissolution of the human form in death. Religiously, all extra-biblical religion, for Balthasar, is an attempt to evade suffering and death. The single greatest alternative to the Christian understanding of suffering is that of Buddhism. If Platonism "saves" the soul of the human subject while being forced to forget the body, Buddhism dissolves both. The religion of the Old Testament

is radically different from either in that it does not flee the "fact of the corpse" into a mythical underworld, but holds unflinchingly to both the reality of death and the life-giving character of its God. This was a preparation for the revelation of that form of the bodily resurrection of Christ which alone offers the solution to the ultimate human tragedy.

In Gawronski's view, the becoming flesh of the Word gives Christianity its uniquely concrete character, where Christ is neither a principle nor a program, but a man of flesh and blood who henceforth is the center of the cosmos. His bodiliness shares the human reality in which the human being only comes to know God the Creator concretely through his creation. In his sense-based epistemology, Balthasar sees spiritual suffering as only possible because of corporeality. Community itself is grounded in the "bumping" of bodies, the friction of incarnate freedoms. The very redemption of humanity is possible only because of the body which Christ shares with the rest of the species, and in which he undergoes his substitutory suffering, the "concretissimum" of His concreteness.

Christ is thus the "concrete universal," that union of essence with concrete existent which solves the riddle of the One and the Many. Christ in the flesh is the Omega towards which all previous history leads, and the Alpha revealed from heaven as the first of that which is to come. The risen body of Christ is the central fact of the universe, that around which all centers, that through which all must pass. In his body, he creates a "space" for the world in the very life of God.

Gawronski responded that humanly Christ is dependent on Mary's "yes" to God, physically, spiritually, and culturally. At Calvary, Mary becomes analogously the concrete universal of the Church, born from the pierced side of Christ from which flow the sacraments which continue his incarnate presence in the Church, his body. His life is continued in that grace incarnate which are the missions of the saints. Peter whose office in the Church is based on his humiliation illustrates this imprinting of the Christ form which is here concretely present in the world throughout time: to depart from the Petrine office is to head into abstraction. The saints are the concrete norms of the *Catholica*, the ongoing exegesis of Christ, a Christ who can only be understood in the context of the constellation of saints who surround him.

Finally, Gawronski argued that the Church herself exists for the salvation of the cosmos. The world's history of horrors finds its redemption in the God who in his very being is absolute sacrifice, a sacrifice revealed on Calvary. Theology must avoid abstract generalizations and rather lead to a contemplation and interpretation of the "irreducible" fact of Christ crucified and risen.

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