

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR SOCIETY

Topic: David Schindler's *Heart of the World, Center of the Church*

Convener and

Respondent: David Schindler, John Paul II Institute

Moderator: Peter Casarella, Catholic University of America

Presenters: William Portier, Mount St. Mary's College

Michael Baxter, Princeton University

William Portier indicated that his purpose was to celebrate Schindler's book and give a flavor for its critique of liberalism and the christological humanism undergirding that critique; and to articulate a few reservations about aspects of the book's metaphysics. Regarding the first, Portier largely endorsed Schindler's critique of (Anglo-American) liberalism in politics, the economy, and the academy, and the alliance with liberalism claimed in the post-Vatican II era by leading Catholic intellectuals such as J. C. Murray; neoconservatives G. Weigel, R. Neuhaus, and M. Novak; and T. Hesburgh. Calling attention to what he called Schindler's sense of the "dialectic of enlightenment," Portier noted that Schindler did not simply reject liberal modernity but on the contrary sought to save its genuine achievements. The key both to Schindler's critique of liberalism and to his effort at reconstruction, in a word, lay in the more adequate anthropology which Schindler sees as deriving from the "*communio ecclesiology*" he claims as a hallmark of the council. At the heart of this anthropology is the intrinsicist understanding of the grace-nature relationship indicated in *Gaudium et spes*, 22 (and reaching back to the preconciliar work of Henri de Lubac).

In criticism, (1) Portier recorded his deep distrust of grand metaphysical schemata of the sort Schindler proposes. While insisting that Schindler's metaphysical understanding of gender is preferable to either the bland androgyny of some feminists or the dualism of "fractional sex complementarity" of their opponents, Portier objected to the immodesty of Schindler's speculative schematic regarding some analogous sense of gender (supragender) in God (special pleading to find an argument justifying the reservation of priestly ordination to men?). (2) He also questioned whether Schindler's emphasis on Mary's *fiat* did not obscure the prophetic character of the Magnificat as brought out by some liberationists, especially feminist exegetes. (3) Portier asked whether Schindler's critique of Murray is not somewhat anachronistic, since it measures Murray against the intrinsicism of de Lubac, Pope John Paul II, and Balthasar, and hence against a theology that was clearly embraced by the Church only at the council and thus near the end of Murray's life. And he asked whether

Schindler's reliance on the metaphysics of Balthasar is not in danger of falling into a scholasticism which, in its concern to disseminate Balthasar's theology, could obstruct the kind of culturally engaged theological intrinsicism that Balthasar has inspired in Schindler himself. (4) Finally, Portier recorded his scepticism regarding what seemed to him some standard Hegelian moves in Schindler's argument, with its drive to comprehensiveness, its trinitarian "logic" which cannot bear to lose anything of history and wants to overcome every dualism, and so on. To what extent does Balthasar's work involve bringing patristic and medieval theology into dialogue with the tradition of German idealism—is this Schindler or Balthasar?

Michael Baxter began his comments with a summary of the ecclesiology that establishes the basic framework for Schindler's book. Rejecting a preconconciliar integralism as well as what he regards as the two dominant but misguided attempts to forge a postconciliar, nonintegralist ecclesiology—namely, "liberationism" and neoconservatism—Schindler offers a fourth and better way: *communio* ecclesiology. The central feature of *communio* ecclesiology is that it posits an intrinsic relation of the Church to the world that by definition affirms an intrinsic openness of the world to the Church. A liberationist collapse of the Church to the world with its acceptance of secular power is thus rejected. Neoconservatism's dualism, which also entails an uncritical acceptance of secular power, is likewise rejected. And yet *communio* ecclesiology's intrinsicism avoids the dangers of integralism, because the Church's mission to the world is carried out not by juridical means but by means of the Church's own life in communion with the Trinity. It is a mission not of violent imposition, but of attraction and invitation.

Baxter noted his basic agreement with Schindler's depiction of the problematics of postconciliar ecclesiology and his proposed resolution, and, further, with the critique of liberalism advanced in the book. Baxter especially welcomed the critique of Murray—while qualifying it somewhat—as well as of the modern liberal university. Nonetheless, he found the second, constructive part of Schindler's book not as trenchant. Schindler's account of *communio* ecclesiology is rich and evocative, but, just when it starts to get interesting, it also starts to get vague. Just how is it possible to bring a society under the sway of a civilization of love while escaping the problematics of modern statecraft? What, concretely, does the civilization of love look like? Does it perform capital punishment? Does it follow Church teaching in its waging of wars? And so on. Similar questions emerge regarding what Schindler's ecclesiological argument implies concretely for economic life and the academy. Baxter pointed out that his comments were not so much criticisms as observations about how the book calls for the writing of another book which would flesh out the detail of the too abstract account of *communio* given in the present book. In this connection, Baxter noted that Schindler's scriptural references tended to be too exclusively to the "cosmic" Christ of Colossians 1:15ff. and to passages in John's Gospel where Jesus talks

in trinitarian terms about unity and love. Where are the references to the parables, the stories of Jesus healing the sick, casting out demons, denouncing the pharisees? We must, said Baxter, move from a theological aesthetics to a theo-drama, from the first part to the second part of Balthasar's monumental trilogy. Once we do this, we will find that a *communio* ecclesiology moves not only beyond liberalism in its liberationist and neoconservative manifestations, but beyond any construal of the church/world relationship that is normally associated with the word "civilization."

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CRITERIA FOR CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

- Topic: Criteria for Catholic Theology
Convener: Matthew Lamb, Boston College
Moderator: Robert Imbelli, Boston College
Presenters: Robin Darling Young, Catholic University of America
J. Augustine DiNoia, Dominican House of Studies and
Doctrinal Committee of the NCCB

Robert Imbelli introduced the seminar, attended by over sixty-five members, recalling last year's presentation of criteria by Avery Dulles. He presented Young as developing the importance of continuity with the past, while DiNoia shows how trinitarian communion calls forth fidelity to the magisterium.

Young's lecture on *Theologia* in the early Church showed how during the first centuries the term "theologia" referred only to knowledge of the pagan gods, so that the roots of criteria for Catholic theology can be found in terms like the rule of faith, tradition, dogma, and philosophy. The rule of faith is what is handed on by the apostles, while *paradosis* or tradition is the ongoing process of mediating the Word down the ages. Christian teaching is a "true philosophy" combining the practices of philosophical formation with the graces of following the *Logos*. When Christian teaching took over the term *theologia* it continued to demand intellectual, moral and spiritual formation. Young discussed five features of patristic theology which would describe the *kanon* of orthodox theology: (1) devotion to scriptural exegesis under guidance of the Holy Spirit; (2) concord with the bishops; (3) an intellectual comprehensiveness providing a disciplined