

KARL RAHNER SOCIETY/ HANS URS VON BALTHASAR SOCIETY

- Topic: Rahnerian Appreciation of von Balthasar
and a Balthasarian Appreciation of Rahner
- Convener: Robert Masson, Marquette University
- Moderator: Melvin Michalski, St. Francis Seminary
- Presenters: Leo O'Donovan, Georgetown University
David Balás, University of Dallas

At this year's convention the Karl Rahner Society and the Hans Urs von Balthasar Society held joint sessions. Leo O'Donovan's presentation was entitled "Two Sons of Ignatius: Drama and Dialectic." O'Donovan grouped Rahner's "Dialectic" into four periods: (1) Early foundations, *Geist in Welt*; (2) Programmatic years, *Schriften zur Theologie* IV–VII; (3) Late development, *Schriften zur Theologie* VIII–XII; (4) Final dialectic (1976–1984), *Schriften zur Theologie*, XIII–XIV, XV–XVI. In these last eight years of his life Rahner expressed concern for both unity and diversity in the Church.

O'Donovan stated that Balthasar was influenced by Goethe from whom he learned "reverent objectivity." In an early review of Rahner's *Geist in Welt*, von Balthasar critiqued the book for its tendency to absorb the objectivity of the object into the subjectivity of the subject. In *Cordula oder der Ernstfall* (1966), he criticized Rahner for (1) having too transcendental a starting point, (2) his theory of the anonymous Christian as a relativizing of Christian faith, (3) for not having a theology of the cross, and (4) for having a tendency towards modalism.

In O'Donovan's concluding section "Attempting an assessment" he writes that Rahner and von Balthasar embody two styles of Ignatian spirituality: dialectical and dramatic.

David Balás's presentation was entitled "An Evaluation of K. Rahner's Theology from a Balthasarian Perspective." His criticisms focus primarily on Rahner's philosophical and theological anthropology. Balás noted that the Maréchal transformation of Kant's transcendental analysis is a substantially valid method. However, that does not mean that all aspects of it are equally convincing. For example, Balás questions whether the *Vorgriff* [auf das Sein] (a preunderstanding of Being), which in Rahner's interpretation implicitly affirms the existence of an Infinite Being, only reaches what in Thomistic terms is called the *esse commune*. With regard to Rahner's theology of the trinity and the incarnation Balás questions whether Rahner reduces God to one person and whether

Rahner's *Subsistenzweisen* is a form of modalism. Balás also has difficulty with Rahner's formulation of a "supernatural existential" and whether the idea of the "anonymous Christian" coupled with the "supernatural existential" leads to the possible misunderstanding that all human beings who freely accept their authentic humanity would be essentially Christians. For Balás, although Cordula's criticisms are exaggerated, they should not be dismissed. According to Balás, von Balthasar was very much aware of the terrible rejections of God in history.

In the discussion of the two presentations the strong cosmological dimension in von Balthasar's writings was brought out. In addition, it was asked whether the dialogue with Hegel might not be a point of consensus between Rahner and von Balthasar.

Both Balás and O'Donovan suggested that in the last analysis Rahner and von Balthasar are complementary and that both in different ways emphasize our Christian tradition and today's values.

MELVIN MICHALSKI
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- Topic: Rahner and Balthasar on the Eucharist
Convener: David Schindler, John Paul II Institute
Moderator: Mark McIntosh, Loyola University of Chicago
Presenters: William Dych, Boston College
 Peter Casarella, Catholic University of America

This year the Karl Rahner Society and the Hans Urs von Balthasar Society held joint sessions. Peter Casarella gave a brief overview of his paper "*Analogia donationis: Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Eucharist*" (. . . *secundum mensuram donationis Christi* Eph. 4:7). The neologism that serves as the title, *analogia donationis*, points to the unity in difference of the encounter of God's love with finite freedom (the central reality of the Eucharistic event, according to von Balthasar) and to the thanksgiving and praise offered by the community. The quote from Ephesians indicates that the analogy of the gift has its measure in the giving person of Christ.

In the "Trinitarian" section Casarella stressed the fact that the God we worship is never a *Deus* but always a triune God. The *ekstasis* of love of the triune God penetrates to the heart of the world. "Through the marriage of Christ and the Church, this love takes a concrete and eucharistic form."

Casarella pointed to Dorothy Day as someone who embodied Balthasar's approach to the Eucharist. She exemplifies what von Balthasar urged followers of Christ to do, namely, to serve those who have experienced abandonment in the world.

William Dych's paper entitled: "Karl Rahner's Theology of the Eucharist," addressed three areas: (1) Eucharist and the Paschal Mystery, (2) Eucharistic Controversies, (3) Unfinished Agenda.

Regarding the first two areas, the Paschal Mystery (not just the cross) is *the* mystery not *a* mystery, and belief in the risen Jesus and belief in the real presence were one and the same belief for early Christians.

For Dych, one way of approaching the unfinished agenda of Rahner's theology of Eucharist would be to draw out the implications of seeing Eucharist more in the context of the reign of God than of the church. This would be to see the church's eucharistic theology in the context of the liturgy of the world. Furthermore the priesthood entrusted with the liturgy of the world is the priesthood Jesus "instituted" when he issued the call to the disciple to "take up his cross and follow me" (Mk. 8:34).

Casarella pointed out that von Balthasar spoke in terms of a cosmic liturgy rather than of the liturgy of the world. In the following discussion David Balás asked what the relationship was between the offer of grace and the acceptance of grace. O'Donovan replied that Rahner's "supernatural existential" should be thought of in terms of what one *is* rather than as something one *has* and Bob Masson noted that the context for Rahner's explanation of the "supernatural existential" is his theology of grace.

Moderator, Mark McIntosh, concluded the session with a reference to Simon Weil who says that "at the end we are devoured by God."

The papers presented at both joint sessions of the convention will be published in *Philosophy & Theology*.

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