

REPORTS OF DEVELOPING AND AD HOC GROUPS

CRITERIA FOR CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

- Topic: The Eucharist and the Real Presence of Christ
Convener: Matthew Lamb, Boston College
Moderator: Robert Imbelli, Boston College
Presenter: Robert Sokolowski, Catholic University of America
Respondent: Joseph Wawrykow, Notre Dame University

Robert Imbelli introduced the seminar, attended by about sixty members, situating Sokolowski's presentation within the criteria for Catholic theology which emphasize Christocentrism and sacramental worship. He presented Wawrykow as showing continuity with the past in disclosing complementarity between the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas and that of Sokolowski.

Sokolowski began his lecture by raising two major issues of Catholic faith in the Eucharist: (1) the identity of the sacrifice between Calvary and the Mass, and (2) transubstantiation as the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The proper context in which to understand both issues is the celestial focus of the Eucharistic action, set by the canon as a great prayer addressed to the Father in the company of the angels and saints. While the celestial liturgy is beyond time and world history, the saving action of the incarnate Son of God in accepting his suffering and death were temporal actions of the eternal Logos in loving obedience to the Father. The temporal actions of Christ touched eternity, they divinely transcended the limitations of time. It is the eternal aspect of Christ's sacrifice that is sacramentally reenacted at Mass. The Eucharist proclaims the faith of the Church that the sacrifice of Christ as a historical event is eternally present in the Trinitarian life of the Son toward the Father in the Spirit. This celestial focus also aids in understanding transubstantiation. The Eucharist realizes the presence of the eternal Christ who suffered and died to bring us, through the mission of the Church, into His eternal banquet with the Father and Spirit. The substance of the bread and wine in the Eucharist become the glorified body of Christ. To understand transubstantiation Sokolowski first set out the biblical view of creation in which the spiritual and personal dimension of being precede and create the material (in contrast to materialism and Aristotelianism). Only this biblical view discloses the Eucharist as not just a concealed presence of one worldly substance under the appearances of another, but the presence of the full mystery of God's being and action in the glorified body and person of Jesus Christ. Sokolowski ended by showing how the logic of the Incarnation

leads to the doctrine of transubstantiation, and contrasted the Transfiguration with transubstantiation.

Wawrykow's response indicated how Sokolowski's book *Eucharistic Presence* with its theology of disclosure parallels aspects in the eucharistic theology of Thomas Aquinas. He raised important issues on ontology and disclosure relative to Sokolowski's treatment of Aquinas in the book. He then sketched how the theology in the book is deepened in Sokolowski's lecture, especially in linking transubstantiation with the great mysteries of creation, redemption, Incarnation, and Trinity.

In the appreciative discussion that followed, Robert Wilken raised the issue of iconic representation and how it both illumines and differs from the real presence of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine.

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