

and part of one another. This vision finds a more integral relationship with and responsibility for our environment.

David Toolan in his positive response emphasized the need to keep a Logos christology of this sort firmly inserted in the material world, not leaving it behind. This concern was revisited in the discussion. Toolan also emphasized the need for bringing the beauty of creation into the Christian tradition and called for a cosmic anthropology which would found cosmic christology, expressing the distinctive role human beings play in creation while also emphasizing the intrinsic value of all creatures, thus modifying how we conceive human domination and control over the world and its resources. Other issues arising in discussion were how such an approach would be compatible with respect for other religious traditions, and the deep need in Christianity to move away from world-denying spiritualities. The group suggested that some of these issues be pursued next year.

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HANS URS VON BALTHASAR SOCIETY

Topic: *The Church in America* and the New Path to Solidarity
 Convener: Peter J. Casarella, The Catholic University of America
 Moderator: Alejandro García-Rivera, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley
 Presenter: Peter J. Casarella, The Catholic University of America
 Respondent: Lorenzo Albacete, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie

Peter Casarella noted the difficulty of grasping the central theological message of the postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation "*Ecclesia in America*" (=EIA). So many different policy proposals for both church and world are addressed that one easily loses sight of the three interlocking themes identified in the subtitle: conversion, communion, and solidarity. The hermeneutical key to EIA is "the encounter with the living Jesus Christ." None of what follows in EIA about communion and solidarity makes any sense without this. Ongoing conversion is tied both to communion, "because it enables us to understand that Christ is the head of the Church," and to solidarity, "because it makes us aware that whatever we do for others, especially for the poorest, we do for Christ himself" (EIA, #26).

The trinitarian communion of the church is the specific form of communion to which we are led through conversion. EIA notes many examples of this, all of which are centered in the Eucharist and "the invitation to solidarity" that follows that "outstanding moment of encounter with the living Christ" (cf. EIA,

#35). Communion is predicated upon conversion and issues in real bonds of solidarity. Social solidarity is linked to and distinct from the process of conversion. The document distinguishes clearly between what individual believers undertake in their own name as citizens and what they do in the name of the church (EIA, #27). This distinction underscores the difference between the horizontal concept of solidarity and the vertical dimensions of ecclesial communion. Solidarity is described as "the fruit of the communion which is grounded in the mystery of the triune God . . ." (EIA, #52). There is no hint here of functionalizing spiritual communion for the purposes of fostering the social welfare. By the same token, the relationship between solidarity and communion remains intrinsic and organic. Conversion does *not* operate in a private sphere, to which ecclesial communion and social solidarity are added as separate forms of life. The implications for social solidarity are present from the beginning of one's conversion to Christ.

Casarella concluded by comparing EIA's notion of solidarity with Richard John Neuhaus' book on the Synod on America, Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Mysterium Paschale*, and Gustavo Gutiérrez's analysis of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas's methods of evangelization. (Cf. Richard John Neuhaus, *Appointment in Rome: The Church in America Awakening* [New York: Crossroad, 1999]; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990]; Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* [Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993].) The evangelization of culture in EIA is considerably more trinitarian, more focussed on the Paschal mystery of Christ, and more open to a gospel-based transformation of economic structures than is Neuhaus's "pluralist" reading of the Synod. Von Balthasar's discovery of Christ's solidarity with the dead in the mystery of Holy Saturday is, by contrast with Neuhaus, fully trinitarian and could serve as a resource for furthering the form of evangelization adumbrated in EIA. Likewise, Las Casas' defense of the Indians is based, according to Gutiérrez, upon a christology that acknowledges the intrinsic dignity of all humanity in the light of the incarnate, redemptive figure of Christ. Together, von Balthasar and Gutiérrez speak of the need for a new synthesis of the realities of trinitarian communion and social solidarity. Writing in the *New York Times* in the immediate wake of EIA's promulgation, Lorenzo Albacete referred to this option as the plea for a "postliberation theology" (Lorenzo Albacete, "The Story the Pope Wants Told," the *New York Times*, 28 January 1999).

Albacete's response further clarified that term. From Warsaw to Havana, Pope John Paul II has promoted "the politics of sanctity" as a new way of understanding how the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity affect action and power in history. The confusion between social solidarity and trinitarian communion, Albacete submitted, is easily avoided if the point of departure remains the very retrieval of the origins of the Christian claim in history. The Christian claim is neither a mere experience (i.e., an implicit desire to flee history) nor just another "historical" fact. The Christian encounter occurs first in

history as a surprising and new event. This originality is what allows the Christian claim constantly to be renewed in the midst of everyday life. The category of history is thus intrinsically related to the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, a mystery coinciding with a concrete sign received by people who belong to history. The radical concreteness of the encounter also precludes a separation of culture and politics. From the early drama *Our God's Brother* to the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II has advocated the concreteness and particularity of the Christian vision of reality. Christianity never turns its face from abysmal social injustices, yet it eschews the ideological subsumption of the Christian fact under the generic categories of social reason. The *metanoia* described in chapter 3 of EIA, Albacete concluded, implies a new style of life and a new way of reasoning about reality itself.

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CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

- Topic: Social Sin: A Contested Concept in Catholic Social Teaching
 Convener: William P. George, Dominican University
 Moderator: Thomas J. Poundstone, Saint Mary's College of California, Moraga
 Presenters: Rosemarie E. Gorman, Fairfield University
 Margaret R. Pfeil, University of Notre Dame

"Social sin" has been a key element in the development of recent Catholic social teaching. This session examined both the problematic aspects of this concept and its promise for advancing theological reflection and pastoral practice.

Rosemarie E. Gorman discussed Juan Luis Segundo's contribution to the topic. She argued that Segundo's attempt to ground social and structural sin in Paul's notion of the "power of sin . . . is a promising step that deserves further consideration." Through a critical retrieval of Karl Rahner's analysis of concupiscence, Teilhard de Chardin's understandings of *entropy* and *negentropy*, and Nicolai Berdyaev's emphasis on *means* as well as ends or values, Segundo moves beyond fixed, immobilist understandings of original sin to an evolutionary understanding that, as Gorman puts it, does "justice to the complex relationship between structural determinants and creative freedom." Segundo's mature understanding of social sin also involves, as a corollary, a retrieval of Paul's understanding of faith as that which, in Gorman's words, "counters sin's power over social mechanisms," and leads us to "reexamine our means, not in light of abstract goals but as efficacious for a creative love in the present that God will make complete in the new heaven and the new earth."