

philosophy in order to show how it makes the order of questioning in theology more manifest.

The first respondent, Paul Lakeland, questioned whether Blanchette's rather classical definition of theology is adequate for contemporary theology, which includes various forms of theology such as liberation and correlational theology. Contemporary Christian theology is not primarily rational discourse about God, but rather an intellectual exploration of the meaning of faith in the present moment of history. Because theology attends more to the act of faith in history than it does to the essence of the divine, the social sciences, politics and history, even literature and the arts are as important as philosophy to the work of the theologian. Moreover, any philosophy that is blind to its own historical and linguistic conditioning will be suspect for contemporary theologians.

The second respondent, David Schindler, thought that in the contemporary context more should be said about a practical as opposed to a theoretical denial of the possibility and/or legitimacy of metaphysics. Drawing on ideas from both Gilson and Blondel, he argued that one can show that the relevant point is not *whether* a metaphysics will inform and/or guide one's practice but *whether* this de facto operative metaphysics will remain unconscious or conscious. Schindler also contended that some kind of implicit faith is integral to all acts of knowing, including the metaphysical, and that, since the transcendence and immanence of *esse* imply one another, natural theology is just so far never merely negative theology.

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MARRIAGE AND FAMILY ISSUES

Topic: Contemporary Theology on Marriage and Family Issues
 Convener: Julie Hanlon Rubio, St. Louis University
 Presenters: Thomas Kelly, Creighton University
 Julie Hanlon Rubio, St. Louis University
 William P. Roberts, University of Dayton

The Second Vatican Council read the signs of the times in the early 1960s when it realized that what married couples understood and experienced within marriage was quite different than the definition of marriage given in the 1917 Code of Canon Law. Accordingly, the Bishops of that council stopped talking about marriage as a contract and began to speak of it as a covenant, "an intimate partnership of life of love." Since that time, both the Magisterium and Catholic lay theologians have paid much greater attention to marriage and family issues, developing what might be called a theology of the family. The purpose of this

session was to ask how theologies of the family can address more recent signs of the times. Presenters focused on three specific "signs": a deeper understanding of the social aspects of marriage among married couples, the growing home schooling movement with its alternative view of parental vocation, and the reality that some Catholic marriages are deeply scarred by spousal abuse.

Thomas Kelly began the conversation by arguing that the notion of sacramentality in John Paul II's *On the Family* is insufficient for the social mission the pope wants to advocate. Despite the fact that the document's concept of sacramentality is extrinsic, passive, and linked primarily to obedience in the context of sexual issues, it has a strong notion of the family's social engagement in the world. This unresolved tension is problematic, according to Kelly. He proposed that a more dynamic understanding of sacrament (focused on God's grace made present in the love between the couple and their love for others) would better ground the social mission of the family that the Pope wants to advocate. Domestic church imagery seems to point the way toward a sense that God's love and grace exist in all dimensions of a family's existence. Moreover, many Catholic couples already know and act on this understanding.

Julie Rubio asked how contemporary Christian parents might best/better fulfill their responsibility for the moral and religious formation of their children. Most contemporary theologians of the family agree that parents have a dual vocation that obligates them both to care for their own children and to contribute to society through work. The unacknowledged family model is the dual career family in which children spend at least some time in other-care, from the early childhood through school years. Yet, Rubio argued, many alternative groups, especially home school movement, call that model into question. Rubio briefly outlined the motivations of home schooling parents and showed that for most, a desire to be responsible for the moral formation of their own children is of a piece with a belief that more progressive pedagogical methods would be beneficial to children's growth as individuals and as members of individual families. Home schooling parents value the time and influence their alternative lifestyle allows. Since recent historical theology on children shows that the moral and religious formation of children is the most important parental responsibility, Rubio claimed that Christian parents ought to find in the home school movement a powerful challenge to contemporary norms.

William Roberts argued in his presentation that the marriage bond in a valid sacramental, consummated marriage can be irreversibly broken in such a way that it no longer obstructs the possibility of another valid marriage during the lifetime of the couple. He reasoned that the marriage bond is rooted in the marriage relationship created by the mutual commitment of two people with the grace of God. The bond is built on mutual fidelity to an intimate, exclusive, permanent partnership of life and love. The faithfulness and self-giving love of the believing Christian couple sacramentalize the fidelity and love that the crucified and risen Christ has for all. Given this understanding of marriage, Roberts posed a question, "When mutual fidelity, respect, trust and love have irreversibly

disappeared from the marital relationship—as exemplified in chronic spousal abuse—what remains of the marriage bond that prevents another valid marriage?”

Brief discussion followed each presentation. Although the papers were very different, conversation often returned to three common themes: the tension between the interpersonal and social responsibilities of families, the gap between the experience of married couples and official Church teaching in some areas, and the need for a dynamic concept of sacramentality to serve as the foundation of Christian family life.

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THE NEW AMERICAN RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

The New American Religious Pluralism as a Sign of the Times

Convener: Francis X. Clooney, Boston College/Oxford University

Moderator: Robert Schreiter, Catholic Theology Union

Presenters: Jeannine Hill Fletcher, Fordham University

Jonathan Tan, Catholic University of America

Edward Ulrich, University of St. Thomas

This panel presupposed the reality of an increasing ethnic and cultural pluralism in the United States, along with a greater religious diversity due to the arrival of increasing numbers of immigrants from Asia and Africa and other previously underrepresented areas of the world. The panelists also accepted that pluralism is theologically significant, a sign of the times. Finally, all used as a jumping off point Harvard professor Diana Eck's 2001 book, *A New Religious America: How the United States Became the World's Most Diverse Nation*, in which she reflects on a decade's research on the United States' changing religious scene. The three panelists were appreciative of the book and its portrayal of this new pluralism, but all highlighted issues not prominently featured in Eck's work, with respect to community and ecclesiology (Tan), the distinctive Christian command to love our "religious others" (Hill Fletcher), and the challenge of participation in other people's religious practices (Ulrich).

Reflecting on the East Asian immigrant community, Jonathan Tan proposed two major points in order to stress the complex meanings of the new immigration for religious America. First, Asian immigrants have contributed to religious diversity in the United States not only by bringing the major Asian religious faiths to the United States, but also by introducing Asian forms of Christianity and establishing new Asian immigrant churches apart from other mainstream Christian churches. Indeed, the two largest groups of Asian immigrants to the