RETRIEVING RAHNER FOR ORTHODOX CATHOLICISM

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In the ongoing polemic between revisionist and traditionalist Catholic theologians, Karl Rahner's monumental project in transcendental method stands on somewhat of a precipice. Many traditionalists who have read his work have respect for the sheer breadth of Rahner's knowledge of the tradition and his varied accomplishments. But at the same time, traditionalists are acutely aware that Rahner himself in his later work,1 and the majority of Rahner's interpreters, have fallen off the precipice into some degree of a revisionism that is incompatible with the Catholic faith.

One approach to this problem is to surmise that there must indeed be something fundamentally wrong with Rahner's very method.2 For this view, however much one might respect Rahner's effort and integrity, he is simply mistaken methodologically and must be dismissed. But as George Vandervelde has noted:

Rahner's stature is beyond dispute. Given his stature and his brilliance, and given the profound way in which he has addressed the core of theology, i.e. the meaning of grace, any theologian worth the name must come to grips with his thought.3

Hence, a more positive approach is taken in this article, based on several presuppositions. First, all methodologies are theological hypotheses <about> the Faith, and ought never be confused with the Faith itself. Second, all methodologies have their inherent weaknesses. When dealing with the Christian faith, one is thrust into a variety of startling paradoxes—not least of which is the one Rahner wrestled with most of all, the relationship between nature and grace—and a rationally consistent methodology may very well falter at one point or another or at least have tensions inherent within it. Third, one need not agree with a particular methodology in order to appreciate it and recognize its apologetic value. I might think that the moment one takes Kant seriously one has taken a posture inimical to the Christian faith, but a method like Rahner's may be just the item to make a Kantian reflect further about the credibility of Christianity.

Given these presuppositions, I contend that Rahner's method can indeed be used in a way fatal to orthodox Catholicism, but that this misuse is not inherent in his method. Indeed, the method, whatever its limitations, when properly used can make a genuine apologetic contribution.

This inquiry presupposes certain central themes from the Rahnerian corpus. There is a fundamental distinction between transcendental and categorical experience. The former is our inescapable orientation (philosophically grounded in the notion of the <Vorgriff>) to the absolute mystery of God, the latter our everyday lives experience. With these foundational concepts, Rahner refigures the nature/grace relationship inherited from

neo-scholastic extrinsicism, wherein grace was super-added to a nature that already had its own integrity. There is indeed room for debate about the various aspects of such refiguring. But the present inquiry looks instead to the impact of Rahner's method on doctrine.

Rahner himself, and many of his interpreters, have driven a sort of wedge between the fundamental transcendental experience of the human person and the full mosaic of the doctrinal heritage. One gets the impression from many Rahnerian texts that doctrines no longer have ontological validity but rather serve as humanly conditioned approximations of the transcendental experience of mystery in human life. Such a view of doctrine is incompatible with the Catholic faith as defined by the Magisterium, and as demanded of Catholic theologians by the recent oath of loyalty.4 Is it possible, however, to recover the genuine insights of Rahner's achievement without denigrating the doctrinal heritage? Can orthodox Catholic theology truly "come to grips" with Rahner, meeting Vandervelde's request, rather than abandoning such an influential figure in theology?

I. Doctrinal Ambiguity in Rahner's Work

The doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation and Grace ultimately point us to the absolute mystery; and indeed the entire Catholic doctrinal heritage is intelligible in this light:

But let us try to understand the whole structure of Christianity, with all its detailed implications and explications, in the light of this ultimate essence of Christendom. Once we do this then, as Catholic Christians, we have no need to maintain that there is any official doctrine of the Church absolutely binding upon us against which we are compelled to assert an absolute negation as a matter of our own subjective conscience with regard to truth, and of our own intellectual honesty. For all the individual statements in the whole doctrinal structure of Catholic Christianity are capable of being read and interpreted as so many concretizations and variations of that quite simple truth which we have just pointed to as the true substance of the Christian revelation. He who posits a rejection of <this> must of course reject the whole of Christianity and the Church. But where are the compelling grounds for such a rejection?5

It is easy to see two different conclusions about the doctrinal heritage working simultaneously in this text. On the one hand, Rahner shows how the entire heritage coheres together in light of "the ultimate essence of Christendom," which is our <a priori> transcendentality that in turn is rooted in the Incarnation.6 On the other hand, there is a clear sense in which that heritage is relativized: as long as one accepts the core truth, which all the other "truths" are stammering to articulate, one can justifiably hesitate in the face of those doctrines that do not correspond with experience. While Rahner speaks positively of the particularities of Catholic doctrine in a variety of places, there are numerous other places in the Rahnerian corpus that undergird this second attitude; one sample must suffice here:

We are not people who always and in every case have to uphold all that they actually state with the deep notes of ultimate interior conviction and with an 'absolute assent' (as with the dogma of the Church) as though we were convinced of the fact that we are already in absolute and total possession of the truth in its fullness. Precisely so long as we are neither willing nor able to do this, precisely as long as we are, in this sense, humble individual Christians, subject to the influence of historical conditions, there is a difference between the official teaching of the Church and that which concerns the concrete content of the personal faith of each particular individual. And this difference is not only inevitable, but perfectly justified. . . . There is, in fact, a wholly justified attitude of indifference towards this or that particular doctrine of the Church, an indifference affecting the concrete existence of the individual which constitutes something approximating to a process of ridding oneself of a burden in one's own personal life. Under certain circumstances such an attitude is in principle justified. We do not in any sense need, so far as our own personal concrete lives are concerned . . . to act absolutely as though we were in some great chemist's shop in which we had to watch over all the various doctrines of the Church, drawn off, so to say, in so many bottles.7

It is precisely this type of analysis which undergirds Rahner's request for immediate ecumenical unity:

What we are thinking about is the actual, average sense of faith of Christians in the different Churches. We are thereby presupposing the normative character of this actual faith. . . . We are further presupposing that the variations in the sense of faith . . . are quite legitimate in the context of the existential hierarchy of truths which belongs to faith. . . . But given these presuppositions we would say: the average faith of contemporary Christians in the various Churches hardly shows any differences. And so we must ask: why, really, should the official doctrinal differences between the individual Churches forbid that institutional unity which is a factual identity in the actual faith held in the individual Churches?8

It is just such passages that put Rahner's contribution on the aforementioned precipice. For Rahner simultaneously takes two paths: a focus on the full range of doctrine and on only the essentials. However, it is possible to use Rahner's own understanding transcendentality and to support the former and exclude the latter.

II. An Orthodox Understanding of Transcendentality/Doctrine

According to Rahner's method our transcendentality is always present as the horizon of all categorical experience, whether or not categorical experience affirms it. Hence, it could be argued that even though people don't experience the meaning or relevance of the doctrinal heritage, that entire heritage (which is like a window opening upon the transcendent, fully accurate as far as it goes) is on the horizon of what they do in fact experience, implicitly present, just as transcendentality is. In fact, it can be argued that this doctrinal heritage, like Revelation itself, is our transcendentality, though not in its

fullness. That is to say, if doctrine is accurate there is a certain identity between it and <a priori> transcendentality.

Rahner would admit this, but insist equally on the non-identity. This simultaneous identity and non-identity is rooted in his theology of the real symbol. As one commentator has noted:

At the root of a being's dynamism for self-expression there is a tension between the being itself and that which expresses it, and so ultimately between the being and the words which we use to speak of it. This is preeminently true of the dynamism through which the divine Be-ing communicates himself to the world and through which worldly being hears that self-communication. The believer is thrust into the ambiguity of language as well as into its clarity by the very fact that God has spoken his 'word' at a particular point in history, and by the fact that the believer dares to speak of God and of his 'word' from the limited context of his own particular understanding, history, community, culture and expectations. Intrinsic to the dynamism of historical being towards God, then, is a tension between the word and that which it expresses, between the believer's words and God's 'word'."9

However, the question is whether Rahner and many of his commentators have properly located the "non-identity" aspect of the relationship between doctrine and its term. Might it exist not in or at the doctrines themselves, which are accurate, but at that point where the transcendent is obviously larger than what is revealed through doctrine?10 Then, to repeat the analogy, doctrine is like a clear window opening out to the Transcendent. The window certainly limits what we can see but it gives us a very accurate picture of what we are meant to see. If this is true, we can use the theology of the real symbol but conclude differently than Rahner.

For example, someone, i) attempts to lead a good life, ii) has a vague belief in God, and iii) experiences many concrete doctrines as meaningless. Rahner would see an <a priori> transcendentality as operative in this case and suggest that Vatican II's notion of the hierarchy of truths offers such a person a chance to place the "meaningless doctrines" in perspective and become a candidate for what he calls the "third church."11

What we are seeking to convey is this: the various aspects and perspectives from which any Christian regards his personal life as it unfolds, or alternatively the totality of Christian doctrine from his own individual standpoint, vary very greatly. And this is quite as it should be. In this context we may do something which is also done in other departments of human life with regard to the various areas of knowledge as they are presented to us, namely we may, with full deliberation, go out of our way to avoid this or that theological question because we instinctively feel that we cannot cope with it in the concrete circumstances of our lives. It is also possible to bring a certain subjectivity to bear in selecting certain special and preferred truths of faith to live by, and in this to allow other truths, which are just as valid and important, to recede into the background when we notice that this 'subjective attitude' is healing and liberating.12

Could it not be, however, that regardless of this person's experience the full range of doctrine as a definitive aspect of transcendentality always exists on the horizon as the ontological truth toward which this person is oriented, though experientially it may remain meaningless? There is an inner dynamism within the person which strives toward that truth, whether that dynamism is fulfilled or not.

Rahner's sociological analysis concludes to the experiential meaninglessness of much of the doctrinal heritage, and he places too much weight on that data, allowing it to control the question of truth itself rather than remaining a pastoral concern. This affects the <sensus fidelium> within the Catholic tradition, the "faith instinct" of the faithful, the "sense" or "mind" of the faithful.13 It seems that Rahner has reduced this instinct to a subjective level in which the mind of the faithful regarding truth is equated with what the faithful experience phenomenologically as true. However, according to Tradition the cause of the <sensus fidelium> is not subjective experience but Revelation grasped or possessed in its totality as objectively given to all mankind, and is not privately but publicly rooted in the full doctrinal heritage of the Church.14 The <sensus fidelium>, rather than something the individual creates,15 is something participated in, and the inner dynamism toward the truth is a dynamism toward such participation.

This dynamism strives toward explicitness and concreteness, and is caused by the concreteness of Revelation. This dynamism is intrinsic to Rahner's theology, but can easily be misconstrued or ignored (by Rahner himself as well as his readers). Consider the typical criticism: given <a priori> transcendentality which allows for the phenomenon of anonymous Christianity, Christianity itself can lose its importance, and the particularities of Christianity, especially the sacraments as means of grace, can disappear. As Ratzinger says:

It is part of the Church's ancient, traditional teaching that every man is called to salvation and de facto can be saved if he sincerely follows the precepts of his own conscience, even without being a visible member of the Catholic Church. This teaching, however . . . has been put forward in an extreme form since the Council on the basis of theories like that of "anonymous Christians." Ultimately it has been proposed that grace is always given provided that a person—believing in no religion at all or subscribing to any religion whatsoever—accepts himself as a human being. That is all that is necessary. According to these theories the Christian "plus" is only that he is <aware> of this grace, which inheres actually in all people, whether baptized or not. Hand in hand, then, with the weakening of the necessity of baptism, went the overemphasis on the values of the non-Christian religions, which many theologians saw not as <extraordinary> paths of salvation but precisely as <ordinary> ones.16

Rahner himself at times gives the impression that Christianity and the sacramental order can be relativized.

. . . anyone who courageously accepts life—even a shortsighted, primitive positivist who apparently bears patiently with the poverty of the superficial—has really already

accepted God. He has accepted God as he is in himself, as he wants to be in our regard in love and freedom—in other words as the God of the eternal life of divine self-communication in which God himself is the center of man and in which man's form is that of the God-man himself. For anyone who really accepts <himself>, accepts a mystery in the sense of the infinite emptiness which is man. . . . And if Christianity is nothing other than the clear expression of what man experiences indistinctly in his actual being . . . what reason could I have then not to be a Christian?17

One might ask, looking at such a passage, "what reason could I have to <be> a Christian?" for Christianity appears drained of all particularity. Christian particularity involves a sacramental view of history as instantiated in the efficaciousness of the sacraments themselves. As for particular sacraments, Rahner says that we should <not> understand salvation on the model of baptism,18 which is to say that the efficacious nature of the sacraments is not at the heart of the Christian mystery. Rahner wishes instead to emphasize the sign value of the sacraments, convinced that contemporary man does not relate well to the worldview (and understanding of salvation) implied by the causal nature of the sacraments. Emphasizing the sign value "is at least more intelligible and easier to reconstruct for people today."19 He continues: "In particular it gets away from the idea that salvific grace necessarily takes the form of an intervention by God from outside at a definite point in space and time: an idea which for people today somehow savours of the miraculous and mythological."20

III. A Sacramental Method

In fact, however, Rahner's method when looked upon as a whole does not relativize Christianity nor does it <necessarily> relativize any of the particularities therein. I make this claim notwithstanding Rahner's own mislocation of the non-identity aspect of doctrinal particularity and notwithstanding his uneven analysis of sacramental efficacy. In an article about the complaint that anonymous Christianity destroys missionary zeal, Rahner denies charges of relativization:

Even though anonymous Christianity is prior to explicit Christianity it does not render it superfluous. On the contrary, it itself demands this explicit Christianity in virtue of its own nature and its own intrinsic dynamism.21

Even though it is true that anonymous Christianity is "prior to explicit Christianity," according to Rahner's understanding of sacramental causality, the converse is also true since the explicit sacramental particularities of Christianity are causes of and prior to all instances of anonymous Christianity. Here Rahner is indeed being faithful to the tradition as regards sacramental efficacy.

However, Rahner risks being misunderstood by the manner in which he explicates the explicit/implicit relation. When he places the implicit first, he runs the risk of being quoted and understood outside of the broader context which includes the whole relationship. Rahner himself paves the way for this misunderstanding by speaking of

implicitly present grace without at the same time pointing to grace as caused, thereby dichotomizing the two dimensions of sacramental efficacy.

Immediately following the above passage, Rahner states:

In the general economy of salvation it is a perfectly logical process for the grace that creates salvation, and indeed constitutes the individual as saved, to be both logically and temporally prior to the sacramental act which signifies it. Yet as such and in virtue of its own intrinsic dynamism it itself demands to be realized in this visible sacramental mode and in the dimension of the Church. It presses forward toward this sacramental incarnation of itself, and thereby insures that it is not impossible for this effective sacramental symbol of this same grace to be itself a cause of the grace and not merely an outward expression of it such as ultimately speaking would make no difference. 22

Here Rahner <admits> that if the sacraments and Christianity itself are mere "expressions" of the implicit, then those expressions are dispensable—precisely the point of his critics. His understanding of symbolic causality saves him from that critique, allowing him to claim that:

Anonymous Christianity does not render explicit Christianity superfluous, but rather itself demands it, and that there would no longer be any anonymous Christianity . . . if he upon whom it is bestowed as offering were radically to close himself to any explicit Christianity.23

Consider this example: I have within me a capacity to receive a gift; I receive one, not knowing who it is from or even what exactly it is, though I know it is valuable and can admire it; I desire to know what it is (or does) and who gave it to me; the already existing capacity for reception is placed within me by the giver of the gift, because the giver has a specific gift he wishes to give. Now we can ask which came first, the receptivity or the gift? One can argue both ways, since the causality works both ways—and such is the nature of a properly sacramental causality. We observe two points: first, there exists an obvious dynamism toward explicitness, such that when the explicitness occurs it ought never be termed a <mere> explicitness. And second, that which the dynamism is striving toward <is> that which caused the dynamism in the first place.

The roots of this vindication of Rahner's theology lie in his theology of the symbol, and the dual-directional causality here prevents reductionism:

[Sign causality is] a type of causality . . . which is proper to the sign as such and is not something added to the sign. In sacramental theology it is not that the qualities sign <and> causality are attributed to the sacramental process with regard to grace and then other categories of instrumental causality of a physical or moral type are applied to cover this sign causality and interpret it. It is rather the case that the sign is the cause. . . . insofar as a sacrament can and should be conceived of as a "real symbol," as a historical and social embodiment of grace, where grace achieves its own fullness

of being and forms an irreversible gift (<opus operatum>), to this extent the sign is a cause of grace, although the sign is caused by this grace.24

Thus, the sacraments can properly be seen as causing salvation, even for those whom Rahner would term "anonymous Christians."

IV. The Connection to the Doctrinal Heritage

Why not carry a sacramental view one step further and connect it to doctrinal particularity? The sacraments cause all grace, and doctrine can be viewed as the linguistic embodiment of grace. By seeing sacraments and their efficacy as the ground of doctrine, one avoids the view of doctrines as juridical impositions. Also, one can conclude that the inner dynamism of man strives toward and is caused by his intrinsic transcendentality, a transcendentality that affirms a sacramental view of history and is grounded in the efficacy of the sacraments with the full range of the doctrinal heritage as its concrete and accurate expression. The full acceptance of transcendentality is the full acceptance of and trust in, despite the limits of experience, this doctrinal heritage. This heritage, as the concreteness of transcendentality, is the ground and goal within which all mankind moves. As Rahner says:

This fundamental actuation of man . . . cannot and does not want to stop in its anonymous state but strives toward an explicit expression, towards its full name. An unfavorable historical environment may impose limitations on the explicitness of this expression so that his actuation may not exceed the explicit appearance of a loving humaneness, but it will not act against this tendency whenever a new and higher stage of explicitness is presented to it right up to the ultimate perfection of a consciously accepted profession of Church membership.25

Such membership also exists in stages, and its fullness involves the embracing of the full mosaic of Catholic doctrine. In too many places Rahner hesitates before this fullness, taking a wrong turn on an otherwise admirable road. Only with this fullness, though, does the remainder of the above quotation have its complete truth:

Here alone does this belief find not merely its greatest support and source of confidence but also its proper reality and that peace which St. Augustine likened to repose in being: peace and repose which do not mean stagnation and flight but the capacity of casting oneself all the more resolutely into the inexorable will of the mystery of God, since now, as St. Paul says, one knows whom one believes and to whom one fearlessly submits in radical trust.26

V. The Critique by von Balthasar and Ratzinger

The fullness inherent in a sacramental view of history is found in part in the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger, who have also severely criticized Rahner's approach. Two examples of that criticism correctly identify some "wrong turns"

Rahner has taken, but might miss the heart of his thought which can be compatible with a fully sacramental and thereby Catholic vision.

One of von Balthasar's critiques is stylistically unique. In "Human Religion and the Religion of Jesus Christ,"27 von Balthasar criticizes the Enlightenment concept of religion by blending his own analysis with unfootnoted, italicized quotations from Rahner. He demonstrates that Rahner's theology is an example of anthropocentric Enlightenment method. (At the conclusion he indicates that he has quoted Rahner in the italics.)

[The Enlightenment was] the change from a theocentric to an anthropocentric viewpoint; for religion . . . this means the change from a positive historical religion to a religion valid for man in general, who is essentially religious. . . . <Everywhere in the world and in history, God's self-communication takes place in the Holy Spirit offered to every human being>, a self-communication <which itself already possesses as such the character of a revelation of truth and which finds in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, only its full historical tangibility.> Positive dogmas, based on history, are transcendentally outlined in human nature. . . . The better the Enlightenment understands its own program, the less it will seek this absolute in contingent historical facts rather than in the inner enforcement of truth in the subject. This also applies to the Church, which wants to make the <transposition of Christian faith into today's modes of understanding> her business. As a necessary consequence, there must ensue a <shift of accent from the objective dignity of truth in itself to recognition of and respect for the dignity of the subjective awareness of truth.>28

Von Balthasar says that this religious universality is incompatible with Christianity, in which truth has its source in Jesus Christ. Von Balthasar correctly finds within Rahner a capitulation to Enlightenment religion. But this is an unfortunate wrong turn for Rahner, who has as his basis a properly sacramental understanding of truth. Von Balthasar admits that Rahner's thought is "more subtle and differentiated,"29 but does not indicate how. (Our foregoing analysis attempts this.) Von Balthasar then asserts that, despite his unnuanced treatment of Rahner, certain "basic structures" of his thought still emerge and that those structures "by their own dynamics . . . 'lead where you do not want to go', namely towards a 'transcendent unity of religions'."30 Von Balthasar is partly correct; but we can also note that the "basic structures" of Rahner's thought are bi-directional: on the one hand, his traditional understanding of sacramental efficacy allows him a proper view of universality in which the center of grace is given its proper place as the cause of grace; on the other hand, he tends to stress the sign value of the sacraments, thereby paving the way for a capitulation to an Enlightenment view of universality which in turn paves the way for a denigration of the doctrinal heritage.

Ratzinger too has difficulty with Rahner's appropriation of universality and particularity, but Ratzinger's criticism is within the context of admiration for Rahner, whose method has something dazzling, something stupendous about it. The particular and the universal, history and being, seem to be reconciled. The uniqueness of Christianity and

the universality of man's being coincide. If one accepts the uniqueness, one has the universality as well; if one has the universality, one possesses also the uniqueness.31

Nonetheless, Ratzinger asks "is that really the answer?"32

The central problem that Rahner's method addresses, in Ratzinger's estimation, is "the dichotomy between the particularity of Christian history and its claim to the whole being <man>."33 He solves the problem (a solution that Ratzinger claims is a "squaring of the circle"34) by "designating Christianity as a particularly successful apprehension of what is always more or less consciously acknowledged."35 It is the most successful instance, or rendering explicit, of man's <a priori> transcendentality: "the particularity of Christianity with respect to the rest of history is now located in the realm of reflection; in Christianity is reflected that which, in itself, is always and everywhere."36 Hence, in this light the Incarnation becomes "the highest instance of the ontological fulfillment of human reality, the successful, perfect transcendence."37

But Ratzinger's analysis might miss the two-faceted dimension of Rahner's method that is rooted in a two-fold dynamic of sacramental causality. Rahner does focus on the sign-value of sacramentality, rendering correct Ratzinger's analysis of his method as a positing of the Incarnation as an explicit sign of man's transcendentality. But Rahner also focuses on the <causal> side of the dynamic. Rahner claims that the Incarnation <causes> our transcendentality, thereby saving the particularity of Christianity and the entire sacramental order. If this is the case Rahner does not want the particular to vanish into the universal.

If this analysis somewhat vindicates Rahner's method, Ratzinger's critique can as well be vindicated, based as it is on Rahner's <Foundations of Christian Faith>38 which does not adequately represent his method but ignores the theology of the symbol. <Foundations> appears to be Rahner's own <Summa>, and Ratzinger and others can hardly be blamed for using it as the basis of criticisms. Furthermore, Ratzinger admits that his critique might be wrong <on a conceptual level.>39 But for Ratzinger, the real "test of theological speculation" is in the spiritual consequences, what he calls the "spiritual formulation," of that speculation,40 and he judges these consequences in Rahner's case to be deleterious to the Christian message. The result is a reductionism of Christianity to the merely human:

Is it true that Christianity adds nothing to the universal but merely makes it known? Is the Christian just man as he is? Is that what he is supposed to be? Is not man as he is that which is insufficient, that which must be mastered and transcended? Does not the whole dynamism of history stem from the pressure to rise above man as he is? Is not the main point of the faith of both Testaments that man is what he ought to be only by conversion, that is, when he ceases to be what he is? Does not Christianity become meaningless when it is reinstated in the universal, whereas what we really want is the new, the other, the saving transformation [<Veranderung>]? Does not such a concept, which turns being into history but also history into being, result in a vast stagnation

despite the talk of self-transcendence as the content of man's being? A Christianity that is no more than a reflected universality may be innocuous, but is it not also superfluous? And, it might be noted in passing, it is simply not empirically true that Christians do not say anything particular that can be opposed; that they say only what is universal. They say much that is particular. Otherwise, how could they be a "sign that is rejected?" (Lk 2:34)41

Ratzinger accuses Rahner's method of granting an unconditional acceptance to reality as such, to man as he is. Instead, says Ratzinger, reality "rather bears within itself the seeds of a profound non-acceptance,"42 a refusal to base theology in experience and reason alone, a theme of von Balthasar's theology also. Ratzinger concludes by recommending von Balthasar's method over Rahner's.43 Rahner has "sought for a philosophical and theological world formula on the basis of which the whole of reality can be deduced from necessary causes."44 But, says Ratzinger, "revelation has given us no world formula. Such a concept is plainly counter to the mystery of freedom."45 Von Balthasar, in his theology of history, concurs that "it is not given to man to see and express the whole in itself,"46 that is to say, by reason alone, which von Balthasar terms "Enlightenment theology." Rahner, properly understood and contextualized, is not completely guilty of that supposition, for as noted earlier his anthropology is indeed rooted in his theology of the Incarnation. His understanding of doctrine, however, at least in his later works, unfortunately and unnecessarily deviates from an orthodox understanding of the integral nature of doctrine.

Endnotes

1 Many have argued that a shift took place in Rahner's thought. Edward Vacek argues that "This shift might be roughly described as a development beyond the simple argument from authority to a more complex argument that grounds itself in human experience wherever it is found." ("Development Within Rahner's Theology," <The Irish Theological Quarterly> 42 [Jan. 1975], 36-37) The same claim is made by Una O'Neil, <The Function of Doctrines: A Study of the Positions of Selected>, <Contemporary Roman Catholic Theologians> (Doctoral Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1981) pp. 173-78. Michael Fahey claims that Rahner's ecclesiology shifted during the late 1960's and 1970's toward a more "descriptive and phenomenological" analysis ("A Changing Ecclesiology in a Changing Church: A Symposium on Development in the Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner," ed. Leo J. O'Donovan, <Theological Studies> 38 [December 1977], 762). Likewise, J. Peter Schineller notes that Rahner began to "broaden his horizons and his sources for theologizing. . . . He draws more on contemporary experience, on Protestant theology, and on the insights of biblical scholarship." (Ibid., p. 745)

2 See, for example, Paul Molnar, "Can We Know God Directly? Rahner's Solution from Experience," <Theological Studies> 46 (1985), 228-61. For a concise and accurate critique, see Leo J. O'Donovan, "A Journey into Time: the Legacy of Karl Rahner's Last Years," <Theological Studies> 46 (1985), 625, note 24.

3 "The Grammar of Grace: Karl Rahner as a Watershed in Contemporary Theology," <Theological Studies> 49 (1988), 445.

4 The oath distinguishes three different kinds of truths, and in regard to at least the first two kinds (which involve the primary and secondary objects of infallible teaching authority) it suggests a certain seamless character of Catholic doctrine. It is to these that the present article refers when speaking of the doctrinal heritage. For the oath, see <L'Osservatore Romano> (Feb. 25, 1989), 6. For an English translation of that part of the formula added to the creed, and a concise and lucid analysis, see Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., "Some Observations on the New Formula for the Profession of Faith," <Gregorianum> 70, 3 (1989), 549-58.

5 "Faith and Doctrine," TI 14, trans. David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976), 44-45. (<Theological Investigations> is abbreviated TI throughout, with the volume always indicated. Bibliographical information is included the first time a particular volume is cited.)

Also, see "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," TI 4 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 37: "It is therefore a very existential problem, when we ask how <the> mystery stands to the many mysteries of Catholic faith and doctrine and whether the whole field of mysteries can be understood as a real unity, without of course trying to reduce all mysteries to one, rationalistically. Is Christian doctrine, where it covers real mysteries, really a highly complicated system of orderly statements? Or is it rather a mysteriously simple thing of infinite fullness, which can be propounded in an immense variety of statements while its mysterious and simple unity remains unchanged?"

Also cf. "Does the Church Offer Any Ultimate Certainties," TI 14, 57, and "On the Concept of Infallibility in Catholic Theology," TI 14, 74.

6 See "On the Theology of the Incarnation," TI 4, 105-120. "[the Incarnation of the Word of God] is the very center of the reality from which we Christians live, of the reality which we believe. For the mystery of the divine Trinity is open to us only here; only here is the mystery of our participation in the divine nature accorded us." (p. 105) Rahner recognizes that his theology is but an attempt to formulate "the necessary ontological counterpart to the ontic statements of the tradition" (p. 111) and that "ontology has to orient itself according to the message of faith and not try to lecture it." (p. 114, n. 3)

7 Ibid., p. 37. For other examples, see the present author's "The Hierarchy of Truths and Doctrinal Particularity" (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1988), ch. 3.

8 "Is Church Union Dogmatically Possible," TI 17, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Seabury, 1981), 208. Also, "it will surely be permissible to say that what we have said really represents the true state of affairs. We are not talking about the theologically highly nuanced sense of faith of churchmen and professional theologians. We are

talking about normal Christians." As we shall conclude later, all believers possess a "highly nuanced sense of faith" without being able to articulate it, just as they possess an a priori transcendentality that they may be unable to express.

9 Robert Masson, <Language, Thinking and God in Karl Rahner's Theology of the Word: A Critical Evaluation> (Doctoral Dissertation, Fordham University, 1978), p. 261.

10 Rahner himself seemed to argue this way in one of his early essays, "The Development of Dogma," TI 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst (Baltimore: Helicon, and London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961), 43-44.

11 "Third Church?," TI 17, 225-26.

12 Ibid., pp. 38-39.

13 For an overview, see Francis A. Sullivan, <Magisterium. Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church>, pp. 21-23.

14 See Susan Wood, <The Church as the Social Embodiment of Grace in the Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac> (Doctoral Dissertation, Marquette University, 1986), pp. 31-33. Her analysis is dependent upon Henri de Lubac's "Le problème de development du dogme," <Recherches de Science Religieuse> 35 (1948), and his <Les eglises particulières dans l'Eglise universelle> (Aubier, 1971), as well as Josef Rupert Geiselmann, The Meaning of Tradition, trans. W. J. O'Hara (London: Burns and Oates, 1966). Referring to the <sensus fidelium>, Wood states that "since its object is revelation grasped in its totality and this revelation is given to all mankind, its object is not a private, but a public possession. Furthermore, it is public in character because this 'sense' 'always remains linked to the witness borne by the apostolic ministry and is an organic part of the testimony of the Church as a whole' [Geiselmann, p. 20]. Consequently, the <sensus fidelium> is fundamentally ecclesial in nature, the result of the work of the Holy Spirit within the Church. One may therefore conclude that a person's participation in the <sensus fidelium> is directly dependent upon his or her connection with the apostolic witness testified to by the Church." (p. 32)

15 Such reductionism is commonplace since the Council. It is often claimed that reliance on authority is a sign of immaturity, and that the secure individual trusts his own insights while, of course, taking into careful consideration the teachings of the Church. Cf. Anthony Meredith, <The Theology of Tradition> (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1971), p. 45: "This unquestioning acceptance of the Church's teaching makes life a good deal easier, though it can result in a certain degree of immaturity. Nowadays, however, the Church has begun to pay more attention to the fact that the hierarchy . . . [does] not possess a monopoly of the Holy Spirit's guidance." A paragraph later, Meredith uses the concept <sensus fidelium> for support.

16 Ratzinger, with Vittorio Messori, <The Ratzinger Report. An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church> (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985), p. 197.

17 "Thoughts on the Possibility of Belief Today," trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon and London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), pp. 7-8.

18 See "On the Theology of Worship," TI 19 (New York: Crossroads, 1980), 141-49, where Rahner spells out two "conceptual models" for salvation and rejects the one based on baptism, and also "Theology and Anthropology," TI 9, trans. Graham Harrison (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 44.

19 "On the Theology of Worship," pp. 144-45.

20 Ibid., p. 154.

21 "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church," TI 12, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1975), 171. Rahner mentions this dynamism in all of his articles dealing with anonymous Christianity. Besides the items already quoted, see: "Anonymous Christians," TI 6, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 395; "Anonymous and Explicit Faith," TI 16, trans. David Morland (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), 54; "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," TI 5, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, and London: Darton, Longman and Todd), 130, 132.

22 "Anonymous Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church," p. 171.

23 Ibid., p. 174. Also, see p. 176 where Rahner speaks in terms of the "Incarnational character" of Christianity and directly addresses the idea of missionary activity.

24 "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," TI 16, 213. Also see "The Theology of the Symbol," esp. pp. 231-242.

25 "Anonymous Christians," p. 395.

26 Ibid.

27 In <New Elucidations>, trans. Sr. Mary Theresilde Skerry (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986).

28 Ibid., p. 76.

29 Ibid., p. 86.

30 Ibid., p. 87. He points out that "the eminent American theologian, David Tracy, S.J., is likewise on a road to such a universal religion in <Blessed Rage for Order.>"

31 Ratzinger, <Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology>, trans. Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), p. 166.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., p. 163. Also, "he attempts . . . to arrive at the particularity of Christianity without, at the same time, sacrificing the identity of the particular and the universal." (Ibid., p. 164)

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., p. 165.

38 Ratzinger states that "In the remarks, I refer essentially to Rahner's comprehensive Summa, <Grundkurs des Glaubens>." (Ibid., p. 163, note 113)

39 Ibid., p. 166: "Rahner could, of course, refute all this by saying that he, too, takes as his point of departure that which is inconceivably new, the <Event> that <is> the Savior. He could say that what is universal has now become that which saves only because, in this Savior, a universality of being has come to pass that could not emanate from being itself. I prefer to leave open the question of whether this does justice, on the conceptual level, to what is particular and unique in the salvation history that has its center in Christ."

40 Ibid., p. 166.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., p. 168.

43 Ibid., p. 171, note 134.

44 Ibid., p. 169. This seems to be the case given Rahner's <Foundations>, though it is not in Rahner's theology of the symbol, as this article has argued. Though that theology allows for sacramentality, which is free, not necessitated, it can also use language which is possibly pantheistic, unfree and necessitated (for example, "man is what

happens when God gives Himself"), a result, perhaps, of Rahner's Incarnational starting point. The Incarnation is the correct foundation, but must be viewed covenantally to retain freedom and avoid pantheism and Christomonism. Freedom of the covenant is best retained by starting with the concrete expression of the Incarnation in time, the Eucharist.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

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