

KARL RAHNER SOCIETY

- Convener: Heidi Russell, Loyola University Chicago
Moderator: Paulette Skiba, Clarke College
Presenters: Kathleen O'Neill, Boston College
Richard Penaskovic, Auburn University
Shannon Craigo-Snell, Yale University

In her paper, "Rahner's Pneumatology: Source of Prophetic Hope for the World, Appealing to Reason," Kathleen O'Neil drew on Karl Rahner's understanding of pneumatology and everyday mysticism as a resource to be used among the Roman Catholic Latino community in Los Angeles to counter a trend of losing members to evangelical and pentecostal communities that place a greater emphasis on extraordinary experiences of the Holy Spirit. Among reasons given for the departure of members of the community to evangelical and pentecostal communities was the role of a direct experience of Jesus or an extraordinary experience of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues. O'Neil contended that Rahner's pneumatology with the central idea of a mystical encounter with the Holy Spirit that focuses on ordinary experience would eliminate the need to appeal to an experience of the extraordinary.

Richard Penaskovic highlighted the prophetic role of Karl Rahner in his paper, "Karl Rahner on the Shape of the Church to Come." Drawing on his own personal experience of speaking with Rahner and listening to him lecture, Penaskovic highlighted Rahner's creativity, his seemingly effortless integration of biblical, historical, and theological sources, and his sense of humor. The structure of Penaskovic's paper mirrored Rahner's work, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, asking the questions: Where do we stand? What shall we do? How should we think about the future of the Church? In these sections, Penaskovic highlighted the ways in which Rahner's vision for the Church then still holds true today, as many of the problems Rahner raised as future possibilities have come to pass. Penaskovic offered three observations in conclusion. He noted that Rahner does not give a comprehensive ecclesiology, but rather responds to questions as they arise, therefore his ecclesiology is primarily prompted by pastoral concerns and needs. Penaskovic also observed that one cannot easily categorize Rahner as "conservative" or "liberal." Rahner is passionately loyal to the magisterium and the institutional Church, but this loyalty did not prevent him from criticizing the Church. Finally, Penaskovic suggested that Rahner's ecclesiology could be enriched by Heribert Mühlen's work *Una Mystica Persona*, in which the Church is not understood as a continuation of the incarnation, an event that was unique, but rather the Church is understood as the Spirit present in Christ and in billions of human persons simultaneously.

Shannon Craigo-Snell began her paper, entitled *Kairos in the Chronos: Prophetic Calls in Contemporary Culture*, by illustrating the issues of empathy- and compassion-fatigue with the image of an overflowing email inbox filled with pleas demanding our immediate attention, each proclaiming that now is the

special moment of grace that demands and enables a response to the most recent calamity. In short, she stated that our “chronos is now overrun by kairos.” In response to this overwhelming demand, Craigo-Snell found solace in Rahner’s insight that we live out chronos within the larger reality of kairos, the fullness of time inaugurated by the Christ event, rather than understanding kairos as a moment within chronos. Craigo-Snell explained Rahner’s turning upside down of these traditional concepts of time through the scholastic notion of causality employed by Rahner in which the goal itself undergirds the movement towards that goal. Jesus Christ is the climax and fulfillment of God’s salvific will, and as such is the cause or the moving power toward that goal. Kairos serves the double function here of delineating the historical Christ-event but also the fullness of time that has been inaugurated by that event in which each of us must make the decision to accept or reject God’s offer of self. This decision is made within the chronos of our everyday lives, or as Craigo-Snell states, “Because our chronos takes place within the kairos of Jesus Christ, there is kairos in every moment of our chronos. Every mundane moment of our lives is the acceptable time of grace and opportunity.”

At our Friday morning breakfast, Mark F. Fischer (St. John’s Seminary, Camarillo, CA) gave a presentation on the development of the Christology section in Rahner’s *Grundkurs des Glaubens*. Fischer, using the editorial reports from *Sämtliche Werke*, noted that rather than using the material he developed in his lecture series in Munich and Münster in the mid-late ’60s, Rahner incorporated a series of 35 *Lehrsätze* or propositions that he had developed in 1970 for a course he later taught on Christology in collaboration with Wilhelm Thüsing. These propositions are included in the German edition of the book Rahner published with Thüsing, *Christologie—systematisch und exegetisch* (1972), but they do not appear in the English edition, *A New Christology* (1980), as by that point in time they had already been incorporated into *Grundkurs* (1976) and its English translation, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1978). *A New Christology* contains three shorter, unidentified pieces in the place of the 35 propositions that were found in the German original.

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