

## SEMINAR ON THE NATURE AND METHOD OF THEOLOGY

### WHAT IS SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY?

The convener prepared several pages of proposals excerpted from David Tracy's book<sup>1</sup> for the sake of discussion since *The Analogical Imagination* became available only just prior to the convention. Regrettably a number of participants were unable to obtain copies of the advance materials; as a result, the seminar lacked clear focus the first day. The discussion tended toward a "question and answer" format concerning Tracy's positions on major issues especially those related to the meaning of foundational theology in *Blessed Rage for Order: The Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Seabury, 1975). As is not surprising, questions surrounded the meaning and status of the Resurrection of Jesus as the focus of systematic theology, the nature of validation in theological argument, and the public role of faith in the theologian. With regard to all three issues, it became clear that Tracy's position has become more nuanced by further attention to the nature of hermeneutics.

The second day of the seminar, though participants were fewer in number, developed major themes. The focus was systematic theology but the practice of the participants themselves rather than the positions of others about systematic theology. The issues "what constitutes the public character of theological discourse?" and "what is the possibility of *universal* claims by a particular religious tradition?" dominated the conversation.

The participants during the second day's session spent some time offering suggestions for the development of the seminar. We preferred to see ourselves as a "working group" on the topic at hand. Many felt that some collaboration throughout the year in preparation for the yearly convention would contribute significantly to the fruitfulness of the seminar. In the evaluations taken the first day, several members offered their services for the augmentation of that continuity.

A probable text for next year's discussion will be *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*.

<sup>1</sup>The text for the seminar was the chapter, "A Theological Portrait of the Theologian," in David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 50-104.

A tradition of interpretation will have developed thus making our continued conversation that much the richer.

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