

## FOLLOW-UP SEMINARS

### **“Do Not Stifle the Spirit!”: The Legacy of Vatican II and Its Urgency for Today’s Theology**

Moderator: John W. Alverson, Carlow College

Panelists: Cyprian Davis, St. Meinrad School of Theology  
Mary Catherine Hilker, University of Notre Dame  
Marc Ouellet, St. Joseph Seminary, Edmonton

The purpose of this seminar was to generate a follow-up discussion to John Randall Sachs’ opening address to the convention. The title of the address is stated above and the entire text appears in this issue of the *Proceedings*. Randy Sachs’ address presented us with a dual retrieval—that of the legacy of Vatican II’s “pneumatological awareness” and Karl Rahner’s “pneumatologically oriented anthropology,” both of which contest what Sachs suggests “are ever increasing signs of retrenchment” in the Roman Church today. Rahner’s famous appropriation of the Pauline dictum “Do not stifle the Spirit!” is employed to remind the “Church officialdom” that irruptions of the Spirit are not subject to official pre-approval. Sachs’ presentation, it seems to me, was a most appropriate one for the opening of the convention in that it laid the Rahnerian foundations for a much needed openness to the movements of the Spirit in the Church today. But he appropriately left undeveloped, as respondent Catherine Mowry LaCugna pointed out, the discernment processes concerning the “will of the Spirit,” and the trinitarian and christological implications of the notion of the “normativity of Christ and the universal availability of the Spirit.” These latter concerns provided the impetus for many of the presentations and discussions in the various seminars throughout the entire convention. These concerns were also the major concerns of the panelists of this particular seminar.

Cyprian Davis addressed what he called the apparent “tension between the pneumatological and the institutional.” In particular, he suggested that, historically at least, Black Catholics in America have not perceived a severe tension between the two. He cited two examples where the “irruptions” of the Spirit came through the institutional Church’s hierarchy rather than from the grassroots level. The first example was Pope Gregory XVI’s 1839 condemnation of the slave trade in the document *In Supremo Apostolatus Fastigio*. The second example was the relatively recent document by the American bishops which referred to racism as a sin. The Black Catholic experience in America redresses the

balance of a contemporary "dominant consciousness" of a hermeneutics of suspicion toward the institutional Church when it comes to discernment of the Spirit.

Mary Catherine Hilkert continued somewhat in the vein of her colleague, Catherine LaCugna, and raised questions about how to discern the authentic actions of the Spirit. These questions become especially acute when we consider the finite and sinful condition of humanity. A theology of *δοξα* does not relieve us of the vigilant process of discernment in a humanity beset by limitations. Hilkert suggested that Schillebeeckx's notion of "negative experiences of contrast" might provide an appropriate nuance to some of Rahner's categories for openness to the spirit, especially when attempting to discern "the prophetic and unsettling irruptions of the Spirit." In a sinful, unjust world, there are human experiences which constitute a "no" to the way the world is. But these experiences, according to Schillebeeckx, are possible only because there is an already "open yes" to the possibilities of a better world.

Marc Ouellet provided, if I interpret him correctly, a Balthasarian slant to the discussion. His primary concern was that a purely Rahnerian approach to pneumatology presented a "pneumatology from below" perhaps at the expense of a "pneumatology from above." He pressed Rahnerians to respond to the question, "What is the relationship between the human spirit of openness in transcendence and the Holy Spirit?" Another concern was the apparent lack of scriptural and traditional warrants in a Rahnerian pneumatology. Do we deal with the Spirit of the Gospels or with the systematic idea (via German idealism) of the Spirit? Ouellet ended his presentation with a suggestion that an adequate pneumatology must be not only trinitarian and christological, but even Marian (a refreshing Balthasarian nuance, I presume).

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### **Seminar on Elizabeth Dreyer's "Narratives of the Spirit: Recovering a Medieval Resource"**

Moderator: Mary McKay, Mount St. Mary's College, Los Angeles

Panelists: Raymond Lucker, Bishop of New Ulm

M. Carmel McEnroy, "Tir na nOg"

Harry McSorley, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto