

## KARL RAHNER SOCIETY

Topic: Resurrection of the Body and the Transformation of Creation  
in the Theology of Karl Rahner

Convener: Howard Ebert

Moderator: Miguel Diaz

Presenter: Denis Edwards, Flinders University, South Australia

Respondent: Peter Phan, Georgetown University

Denis Edwards presented a summary of his paper followed by a response from Peter Phan. The full text of Edwards' paper was available in advance on the Society's webpage. Following the two presentations an extended discussion occurred among the sixty-three participants.

Edwards argued that Rahner through his many articles presents the foundation for a coherent and systematic theology for the understanding of the internal relationship between Jesus Christ and the universe. This foundation also provides the basis for an ongoing conversation between the natural sciences and theology. For Edwards there are six interrelated systematic principles, which can be gleaned from his various work, and which form the basis of Rahner's theological project: (1) the Self-Bestowal of God as the Meaning and Purpose of Creation; (2) Self-Transcendence as the Way God Acts in the World; (3) the Resurrection of Jesus as the Beginning of the Transformation of the Universe; (4) God as Absolute Future: The *Docta Ignorantia Futuri*; (5) Human Action as Finally Significant; and (6) Hope as Trust in God in the Midst of Perplexity. Edwards noted that the first two principles, divine self-bestowal and creation self-transcendence are "the twin systematic foundations for the rest." These two along with the other four assertions established "an intelligible and orthodox" connection between Jesus of Nazareth and the Cosmic Christ, between soteriology and cosmology.

Resurrection Theology both speaks of a radical transformation of the world and also a *Docta Ignorantia Futuri*. Theology of God as an absolute future offers a basis for a Christian political theology and a foundation for hope in the midst of perplexity and uncertainty. Edwards went on to note that three critical issues need to be addressed in science and theology (i.e., how the self-transcendence can be interpreted against the scientific determinism, ecology and theology [e.g., how does God self-bestowal relate to nonhuman creatures and the Creator's spirit], the relationship between the Trinitarian and spirit theology).

Peter Phan in his response complimented Edwards for his succinct and comprehensive summary of Rahner's theological position. He noted that Edwards correctly stated Rahner's achievement of maintaining an intimate relationship between individual and collective eschatology centered on the resurrection of the body. He also agreed with Edwards' assessment that Rahner's theology forms a basis for a critical dialogue between science and theology. Phan went on to note that Rahner's contention of the intimate connection between creation and incarnation is worked out through the use and elaborations of such concepts as

quasi form and of casuality and the act of self-transcendence. While these terms must never be interpreted universally, they do provide a creative and provocative framework for articulating God's way of relating with the world. Phan credited Rahner for undertaking the task of providing new articulations of the God-world relationship. He stated that further work is needed on the modes of God's self-communication suggesting that while there is harmony between Word and Spirit, the two may relate and act in the world differently.

After the presentations, numerous issues and questions were raised: for Rahner the incarnation is not simply an isolated event, but a communication, the very history of God; the Pascal mystery includes and encompasses all of the world; the transformation of self-transcendence will surprise us, consequently the Church needs to recognize and be challenged by the continued revelation of God; finally, the very notion of self-transcendence is built in from the start.

The Annual Karl Rahner Society Meeting was attended by sixty people. Terrance Klein, a member of the KRS Steering Committee, presided at the meeting. After the prayer, there were several announcements. (1) Mark Fischer, the society's webmaster, updated the group on the website. (2) Several new or upcoming publications on Rahner were announced: *God in the World: A Guide to Karl Rahner's Theology*, by Thomas O'Meara; *The Cambridge Companion to Rahner*, containing a collection of twenty articles (to be published this summer); and *The Foundations of Karl Rahner*, by Mark Fischer (online edition is now available; hard copy to be published by Crossroad in November). (3) Terrance Klein announced that there was an opening on the society's steering committee, and invited nominations. (4) Ann Riggs, editor of *Philosophy and Theology*, informed the group that there had been a delay in printing the most-recent issue and consequently members have not yet been billed. Members were reminded to watch the society's website for a call for papers for next year's CTSA convention. After the announcements, there was an extended time of table discussions focusing on current research related to Rahner, on the continued significance of Rahner's thought, and on possible future topics for the Rahner session. The meeting concluded after representatives from each group shared a summary of their respective discussions.

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