

## KARL RAHNER SOCIETY

Convener: James Voiss, St. Louis University  
Moderator: Heidi Russell, Loyola University  
Presenters: Jessica Murdoch, Villanova University  
Stephen Bullivant, Christ Church, Oxford University

Two papers presented by young scholars generated lively discussion among approximately 20-25 attendees on two topics in Rahner's theology that continue to bring theologians to impasse. Jessica Murdoch's paper, "Overcoming the Foundationalist/Nonfoundationalist Divide: Karl Rahner's Transcendental Hermeneutics," examined the role of Rahner's metaphysics as a foundation for his theology, arguing that Rahner's metaphysical commitments were foundational to his theological method, but that this is not to understand his philosophical metaphysics as the foundations for his theology. Stephen Bullivant presented "The Myth of Rahnerian Exceptionalism: Edward Schillebeeckx's Anonymous Christians," which grew out of his work on 20th century Christian responses to atheism. Bullivant traces the concept of anonymous Christians and anonymous Christianity in the work of Rahner's contemporaries, most notably Schillebeeckx. He proposes that the concept became identified with Rahner when it faded from others' work in the face of von Balthasar's criticism of what he saw as theology's (especially Rahner's) too-easy accommodation to a secular age and his argument that a willingness for martyrdom is intrinsic to Christianity and thus requires an explicit act of faith.

At the traditional Rahner breakfast, the Rev. Melvin Michalski, of Sacred Heart School of Theology, talked about his recently published book, *Encounters with Karl Rahner: Remembrances of Rahner by Those Who Knew Him* (Marquette University Press, 2009) and presented those in attendance with complimentary copies. The book is based on a series of interviews conducted by Fr. Michalski in Europe during his 2001 sabbatical. The book was originally published in German in 2006 and translated into English with assistance from Andreas Batlogg (director of the Rahner archives in Munich) for publication on the 25th anniversary of Rahner's death, March 30, 1984. Anecdotes from Rahner's life have long been a staple of the Rahner Breakfast, where those sharing them have often seen in Rahner's life an example of his own theology in action.

The business of the Rahner Society is also conducted at the breakfast meeting. Two new members were elected to the Steering Committee: Jessica Murdoch and Paulette Skiba of Clark College. Continuing members are James Voiss, St. Louis University (Convener); Heidi Russell, Loyola University (membership secretary); Mark Fischer, St. John's Seminary (ex officio, webmaster); and Ann Riggs, Rivier College (ex officio, editor of Rahner Society papers for *Philosophy & Theology*). Members expressed interest in an email list based in Yahooogroups. Ann Riggs is moderator, and will send out instructions for joining through Heidi Russell's membership lists. There was also some interest in a Rahner Society blog, perhaps at the website.

Members discussed possible topics for future papers and breakfast presentations. Two areas of Rahner's work seemed to fit in very well with next year's CTSA theme on prophetic aspects of the theological vocation: his speculations about ecclesiastical authority and leadership, and his sense of a "world Church" displacing the Eurocentric Christianity that had been historically and culturally dominant, at least until the Second Vatican Council. Another idea was to ask various members to provide commentaries on how the *Sämtliche Werke* provides unique and newly available resources on various topics in Rahner's writings. This would be a multi-year project and could perhaps be coordinated with the themes of the upcoming CTSA meetings.

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