

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

### 1904-1984, KARL RAHNER, THEOLOGIAN

During this past winter as I began remote preparations for my talk I read all the presidential addresses since the first. Although our society was conceived in Washington in 1945 and came to birth in New York in 1946, the first formal presidential address did not occur until 1953 at the eighth meeting when Monsignor John Fearn of Dunwoodie spoke of the theological productivity of Pope Pius XII. A presidential address does not then pertain to the *esse* of our Society, some might say not even to its *bene esse*. The addresses differed notably in length from seven pages to thirty-five, the longest that of Lawrence J. Riley prepared for 1960, a text that would have taken him two hours to deliver. Their literary genres varied considerably: a position paper on a subject dear to the president's heart; a report on the progress and future of the Society; or a comment on the state of theology. At least three of the presidents went on to become bishops, though I doubt that their addresses contributed much to that honor.

At first my plan was to compare Catholic theology in the years 1904 and 1984, since 1904 was the year of birth for John Courtney Murray, Yves Congar, Bernard Lonergan, and Karl Rahner. I began reading what various theological journals were publishing that year. As the weeks advanced and my research progressed, I paused on March 5 to commemorate the eightieth birthday of Karl Rahner. When I heard the news from Innsbruck that Rahner had passed into eternal life on March 30, I decided then to devote this address to his life and work. In so doing I wish not only to pay tribute to him, but to help us understand the journey that the CTSA has made from 1946 to the present, years that coincide with Rahner's theological activity.

Karl Rahner never addressed our Society, though the possibility of inviting him has been discussed by the board of directors. His presence among us has been felt through others. Among his 43 Doctoranden from Innsbruck, Munich and Münster, some of our members figure: John Sheets, William Dych, Leo O'Donovan, Harvey Egan and David Roy. Other CTSA members such as Robert Kress and John Galvin followed his lectures at Innsbruck. Thomas O'Meara attended Rahner's classes in Munich. Still more of our colleagues have contributed to a theological appreciation of Rahner: James Bresnahan, Anne Carr, Daniel Donovan, Donald Gelpi, Gerald McCool, Edward Vacek, William Van Roo, to name only a few. During the first ten years of our Society's existence (1946-1955) Rahner was never cited in any address. Only at the eleventh meeting in 1956 did Francis Keating, S.J., of St. Peter's College, Jersey City, refer to him in a footnote regarding the laity. Next his notion of dogma was mentioned by Cyril Vollert, S.J., as was his theology of the Sacred Heart

by Edward J. Hogan, S.S. (1957), then his theory of biblical inspiration was cited by David M. Stanley, S.J. (1958), and his view of sacramental causality by Paul Palmer, S.J. (1959). All this before any English translation of his works existed. Extensive expositions of his thought began in 1963 with a presentation by the late Robert Richard, S.J., on Rahner's theory of doctrinal development. Then came further explorations by Charles Henkey (1964), Carl Peter (1965), and in 1966 by both Edward Kilmartin, S.J., and George Lindbeck who analysed aspects of his thought. Since then interest in him has been a constant factor up to the publication of *A World of Grace* undertaken by a cross section of our membership. Prior to the publication in 1961 of the first volume of *Theological Investigations* by Cornelius Ernst, O.P., English readers had available of Rahner's writings only a few scattered fragments: an abstract in *Orate Fratres*; a couple of articles in *Cross Currents* and *Woodstock Letters*; summaries in *Theology Digest*; a pamphlet on prayer; and the mini-volume *Free Speech in the Church* (1959). Gerald Van Ackeren, S.J., co-founder with Cyril Vollert of *Theology Digest* in 1953, after finishing doctoral studies in 1951 at the Gregorian went to Austria and met Rahner. From this acquaintance came the decision to publish summaries of his articles in *Theology Digest* which whetted appetites for projected translations of *Theological Investigations*.

It is appropriate for the CTSA to honor this profound German Catholic theologian who left a precious legacy, especially at Georgetown University where twenty years ago, with John Courtney Murray, Rahner participated in this university's one hundred seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations during the Patrick F. Healy Conference on Freedom and Man (November 30 - December 2, 1964).

#### RAHNER'S LIFE

Karl Rahner was born in 1904 in Freiburg, 34 years after the closing of Vatican I.<sup>1</sup> That year Pius X was inviting Catholics to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the definition of the Immaculate Conception. Three years later would appear Pius X's *Pascendi*, the condemnation of Modernism; four years earlier had appeared the Vatican decree stating that the United States was no longer a mission territory under the *Propaganda Fide*. Rahner's life would often be touched by the upheavals that marked contemporary history. Most of his Jesuit training did not occur in Germany where, since the *Kulturkampf*, religious orders were not welcome. For theology studies (1929-1933) in preparation for ordination he attended the large German scholasticate in Valkenburg, the Netherlands. After ordination he began doctoral studies in philosophy at the University of Freiburg, participating in seminars under Martin

<sup>1</sup> For biographical data see: P. Imhof and H. Biallowons, eds., *Karl Rahner, Im Gespräch*, Bd. 1: 1964-1977; Bd. 2: 1978-1982 (Munich: Kösel, 1982-83). Also useful introductions are: Robert Kress, *A Rahner Handbook* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982) and Karl-Heinz Weger, *Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1981).

Heidegger. Already well read in Maréchal's neo-Thomism, Rahner prepared a doctoral dissertation which was promptly rejected by the director Martin Honegger who judged that it departed from commonly held views of Thomistic epistemology. Hence, sans doctorate, he went to the Catholic Theological Faculty at the University of Innsbruck to join his brother Hugo, and to begin anew in historical theology. No sooner had he finished his doctorate and started teaching there, when the Nazi *Anschluss* of Austria forced the closing of Innsbruck. He moved to Vienna in 1939, where until 1944 he lived at the Kirche am Hof with Joseph Jungmann and Karl Prümmer, collaborating at the Vienna Pastoral Institute, teaching and doing parochial work. In the final days of the war, life even in Vienna became precarious so he relocated to a parish in Mariakirchen, Lower Bavaria. After the war he resumed teaching theology in Pullach (1945-1948), also preaching in nearby bombed-out Munich on the blessings of prayer. He then returned to Innsbruck where he remained until 1964. Rahner characterized these years at Innsbruck as marked by monotony, but he probably meant to say years marked by unglamorous regularity. Soon came the announcement of the Council, his move to the University of Munich (1964-1967), followed by Münster (1967-1971), and then a 13-year active retirement at the Jesuit philosophate in Munich and finally in Innsbruck.

From the late 1930s on, Karl Rahner collaborated closely with his brother and fellow Jesuit Hugo Rahner (1900-1968), a distinguished scholar of the early church and Ignatian spirituality.<sup>2</sup> In his early sixties Hugo was afflicted with Parkinson's disease. Although his mind remained clear, muscle disintegration crippled his hands and he needed an amanuensis to assist him until his death in 1968. Karl survived Hugo by 16 years. If he considered that he too might become physically handicapped or die at a relatively early age, this possibility must have seemed less and less likely as the years passed. A *Festschrift* appeared for his sixtieth birthday, his seventieth, his seventy-fifth and finally his eightieth. More likely Karl Rahner would approach the longevity of his mother to whom, for her one hundredth birthday, he dedicated the twelfth volume of *Schriften* (1975). I remember in 1973 when Rahner was asked to provide the Jesuit community at Munich with points for meditation on the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola he began by reading to us a letter he had just received from his mother, in which she scolded him for not handing over the theological reins to the new generation. You are working too hard, the time has come, *lieber Karlchen*, to take it easy. With a twinkle in his eye Rahner noted this was not the first time he had not followed his mother's advice. His stay at Munich's Berchmanskolleg as honorary professor was a happy one. There I observed what residents knew: Rahner carefully guarded the morning hours for study and writing.

<sup>2</sup> K.H. Neufeld, "Unter Brüdern. Zur Frühgeschichte der Theologie K. Rahners aus der Zusammenarbeit mit H. Rahner," in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Wagnis der Theologie: Erfahrungen mit der Theologie Karl Rahners* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979), pp. 341-54.

Many an unknowing visitor was promptly escorted to the door, so that he could carry on with his work. Afternoons were for visits. He renewed contacts with university professors and students and radiated *Weltfreudigkeit*, a joy in the world, and fascination for his environment, never losing his *Stauenskönnen*, the ability to be amazed.

### CONFLICTUAL SITUATIONS

Although Rahner was a peaceable person, he sometimes found himself in theological controversies. It is informative at our present juncture of Catholicism to mention some of these controversies and how he reacted. An early example occurred during World War II while he was with the Vienna Pastoral Institute sponsored by Cardinal Innitzer. On January 18, 1943, the Archbishop of Freiburg, Conrad Groebner, wrote a 21-page letter to the German and Austrian bishops outlining seventeen objections regarding the erroneous teachings of Viennese activists, liturgical agitators, kerygmatic theologians, proponents of the Eastern Church Fathers. These theologians were encouraging mystical attitudes, overemphasizing the universal priesthood, even maintaining that the reception of communion by the faithful belonged to the integrity of the Mass. Cardinal Innitzer asked the Pastoral Institute to prepare a response and Rahner drew up his 53-page refutation which was characteristically scholarly, comprehensive and irenic.<sup>3</sup>

At Innsbruck in the 1950s Rahner was a watched theologian because of his teachings and public utterances. Although not identified with the *nouvelle théologie*, he was scrutinized in the wake of *Humani generis*, and delated to his local bishop and to the Vatican and Jesuit curias.<sup>4</sup> To some his *Free Speech in the Church* appearing first in *Orientierung* (1951) then as a book (1953) contained doctrine decidedly *non tuta*. The Jesuit General Jan Baptist Jansens sent a visitor to Innsbruck during the academic year 1954-55 to scrutinize its theology and Karl Rahner but he chose as visitor a well-disposed Dutch theologian, Felix Malmberg. The visitor gave Innsbruck and Rahner high marks for orthodoxy but in order to prevent objections from the Roman Curia he was required to restrict public appearances to strictly academic and scientific activities. Not unlike his US colleague, John Courtney Murray, Rahner needed to submit his writings for Roman approval besides Jesuit censorship and a diocesan bishop's *imprimatur*. This was the period that Pope Paul VI later described to Rahner as the "tempus flendi." Rahner's 500-page manuscript on the Marian doctrine of the Assumption, a study which might have had considerable ecumenical impact on Orthodox and Protestants who were troubled by Pius XII's definition, was rejected by his censors.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> H. Vorgrimler, *Karl Rahner: His Life, Thought and Works* (New York: Paulist, 1966), pp. 32-42.

<sup>4</sup> M. Alcalá, "Das Spannungsverhältnis von Theologie und kirchlichem Lehramt im Leben und im Werk Karl Rahners," in *Wagnis*, pp. 355-69.

<sup>5</sup> K. Lehmann, "Karl Rahner," in H. Vorgrimler and R. Vander Gucht, eds., *Bilanz der Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*, Bd. 4. *Bahnbrechende Theologen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1970), pp. 143-81.

Although Rahner was not a liturgical theologian he wrote on sensitive issues connected with the celebration of the eucharist, the fruits of the Mass, concelebration, and the role of personal faith in the sacraments in his "The Many Masses and the One Sacrifice" (1949).<sup>6</sup> Pope Pius XII in a 1954 allocution seemed to be directly opposing Rahner's views when he stated: "When the matter is thus regarded, an assertion which is being made today, not only by laymen but also at times by certain theologians and priests and spread about by them, ought to be rejected as an erroneous opinion: namely that the offering of one Mass, at which a hundred priests assist with religious devotion, is the same as a hundred Masses celebrated by a hundred priests. This is not true. With regard to the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice, the actions of Christ, the High Priest, are as many as the priests celebrating. Not as many as the priests reverently hearing the Mass of a Bishop or a priest, for those present at the Mass in no sense sustain, or act in, the person of Christ sacrificing, but are to be compared to the faithful layfolk who are present at the Mass."<sup>7</sup> Rahner clarified his views several times but he remained in the unenviable position of being in opposition to the pope's own views.

By the end of the era of the Piuses and the election of Pope John XXIII, restrictions against Rahner were eased at first. He was appointed consultant to the theological preparatory commission for the forthcoming Council although he was never invited to Rome to help prepare schemata. One essay published on the eve of Vatican II shows how he anticipated much of its eventual outcome (*Theol. Inv.* V, 244-267). There were efforts right up to the opening of Vatican II to discredit him and have him barred from the Council, especially after his speech to the Austrian Katholikentag on June 1, 1962, "Do Not Stifle the Spirit!" (*Theol. Inv.* VII, 72-87). There he stated: "The spirit of true obedience is present not so much where the official machinery of the Church is running smoothly and without friction, not so much where a totalitarian regime is being enforced, but rather where the non-official movements of the Spirit are recognized and respected by the official Church in the context of a universal striving for the will of God, while the 'charismatics' for their part, while remaining faithful to their task, maintain an attitude of obedience and respect towards the official Church" (p. 82). The support of Cardinal Koenig whose *peritus* he became, and his association with Cardinal Doepfner protected him. Nonetheless, that year attempts were made to silence him, which prompted various academicians and leaders including Konrad Adenauer to lodge a complaint to Pope John XXIII. At the Council his impact was especially felt in the formulation of collegiality and the episcopate. During the Council he became better known to bishops and theologians. Trips to Notre Dame, Washington, Toronto, St. Louis, gave him a wider exposure to the North American church.

<sup>6</sup> *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 71 (1949) 257-317; 77 (1955) 94-101. Also his volume with A. Häussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist* (New York: Herder, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> *The Pope Teaches* 1 (1954) 375-85, here 378. Original text in *AAS* 46 (1954) 666-77. See also *The Pope Teaches* 3 (1956) 273-86; *AAS* 48 (1956) 711-25.

When Paul VI published his encyclical on conjugal life, *Humanae vitae*, on July 25, 1968, Rahner was on vacation in Yugoslavia. His superior general, Pedro Arrupe, summoned him to Rome to discuss how Jesuits should react in face of what was sure to be strong public negative reaction. He published his assessment of the encyclical (*Theol. Inv.* XI, 263-287) and supported a letter of the German bishops on the possibility of dissent from the ordinary papal magisterium. His position was tightly reasoned, nuanced, courageous, one which encouraged theologians and bishops. As he noted in his essay on pluralism: ". . . we cannot allow a well-considered answer to mature in the silence and privacy of our individual minds. Rather we must have the courage to think aloud and in public in order to have any unequivocal results to offer" (*Theol. Inv.* XI, 3-4).

When the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published on January 27, 1977 (dated October 15, 1976), *Inter insigniores*, its declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, Rahner wrote a commentary (*Theol. Inv.* XX, 35-47) in which he questioned whether it was certain that the Christian revelation in its unchangeable substance excludes women from the priestly ministry. He stated that the instruction was in principle a reformable declaration from which error was not certainly a priori excluded. "The theologian has the right and duty of critically examining this Roman Declaration, even to the point of regarding it as objectively erroneous in its basic thesis" (p. 38).

In Germany conflicts developed between Rahner and other theologians, especially Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger. For example, in his *Theodramatik*, Balthasar questioned the orthodoxy of certain of his views.<sup>8</sup> (Vorgrimler has recently supervised a research project in Münster which he hopes to have published that attempts to prove that Balthasar misrepresented Rahner's views.) Ratzinger grew estranged despite their earlier amicable relationship while collaborating on *The Episcopate and Primacy*. Ratzinger and a colleague Hans Maier published a work on the limits and dangers of democracy in the Church, *Demokratie in der Kirche, Möglichkeiten, Grenzen, Gefahren* (Limburg, 1970) criticizing Rahner's views in *Freiheit und Manipulation in Gesellschaft und Kirche* (1970) especially the proposal for a national German synod composed of bishops, priests and laity. Several years after Ratzinger had been named Archbishop of Munich he vetoed two recommended appointments to the faculty of theology at the University of Munich, Johann Baptist Metz and Theodor Maas-Ewerd. Rahner was distressed and spoke out in an open letter dated November 16, 1979.<sup>9</sup> Regarding Rahner's publication with Heinrich Fries, *Einigung der Kirche, Reale Möglichkeiten (Quaestiones disputatae 100)*, Ratzinger described their book as "an artificial configuration of theological acrobatics with,

<sup>8</sup> L. Roberts, "The Collision of Rahner and Balthasar," *Continuum* 5 (1967), 753-57.

<sup>9</sup> *Doctrine and Life* 30 (1980), 34-39.

unfortunately, no correspondence to reality."<sup>10</sup> Ratzinger contended that Rahner and Fries jumped over the truth-question "by a couple of ecclesiastico-political manoeuvres." Stung by this charge, Rahner cited it in the preface to his *Schriften XVI* (1984), adding: "I hope that readers of this volume of essays will come to a more favorable conclusion."

When John Paul II appointed Paolo Dezza as his personal papal delegate to the Jesuit order, Rahner made no secret about his concern for the possible loss of theological freedom in the Society of Jesus. He was perplexed by an instruction from Dezza dated March 25, 1982, "Guidelines for Implementing the Wishes of the Holy Father." Rahner addressed members of the Upper German Jesuit Province in Freising on April 14, 1982. His message has pertinence beyond the confines of his own Order. In this talk "Zur Situation der Jesuitenorden nach den Schwierigkeiten mit dem Vatikan" (*Schriften XV*, 355-72), he expressed grave concern about Dezza's proposal to have theology done by Jesuits aligned with the pope's teaching. He argued: "Jesuit theology would lose its credibility to the outside world, if it were to be judged as a simple megaphone (*blusses Sprachrohr*) of authoritarian teaching power" (p. 362).

We can not discuss here Rahner's relationship with the Vatican's International Theological Commission of which he was a member from 1969 to 1974, nor his discouragement about the German Pastoral Synod (1972-74). In the sixties and seventies Rahner faced what *Publik* called a *Zweifrontenkrieg*, conflict on two fronts, opposition from those who thought him too cautious, and from others who considered him lacking in respect and orthodoxy. One of the most severe attacks, although not the most scholarly, came from Joseph Cardinal Siri in his book *Gethsemane*.<sup>11</sup>

Just two weeks before he died Rahner gave support to the liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez in a letter he addressed to Cardinal Juan Landazuri Ricketts, Archbishop of Lima. He told the Peruvian Episcopal Conference that he was convinced of the orthodoxy of Gutiérrez. He added that he was "fully convinced that a condemnation of Gustavo Gutiérrez would have dire consequences for the climate necessary to ensure the continuation of a theology which is at the service of evangelization."

In conflicts within the Church Rahner never felt intimidated. He did not sign joint protest letters, because he often disagreed with their tone, but individually he spoke out "in season and out of season." Walter Kasper in his tribute in the *Tübingen Theologische Quartalschrift*, praises him for his fidelity despite suspicion, slander, official censure, public abuse and hierarchical cautiousness.<sup>12</sup> Although in his final years Rahner did not entertain dark thoughts about the post-Vatican II Church as had

<sup>10</sup> *International katholische Zeitschrift: Communio* 12 (1983), 573.

<sup>11</sup> *Gethsemane: Reflections on the Contemporary Theological Movement* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1981), especially pp. 70-90.

<sup>12</sup> "Karl Rahner, Theologe in einer Zeit des Umbruchs," *Tübingen Theologische Quartalschrift* 159 (1979), 263-71. Summary in *Theology Digest* 28 (1980), 203-07.

Jacques Maritain, Louis Bouyer, Jean Daniélou and Henri de Lubac, he grew disturbed about the present climate. Seventy-one days before he died he stated rather ominously and cryptically on January 19, in Freiburg: "In some areas (of Church life) we are heading into a wintry climate, on a journey that is gloomy, depressing, and aimed at restoration." (Wir sind in einigen Bereichen auf einem restaurativen, griesgämigen und kümmerliche Marsch in eine winterliche Zeit.)<sup>13</sup> Yet again in Freiburg several weeks later at an academic celebration of his eightieth birthday, he seemed more optimistic as he eloquently summarized his experience as a theologian and described movingly his sense of expectancy for his encounter with the Primordial Mystery.<sup>14</sup>

#### RAHNER'S PUBLICATIONS: GENESIS AND SCOPE

I wish now to comment on Rahner's writings.<sup>15</sup> Rahner's style, with its lengthy parenthetical remarks and carefully honed periodic sentences, has been the butt of many jokes. Contests, I am told, have been held to discover the longest Rahnerian sentence. Still, he was awarded in 1973 the Sigmund Freud Prize for Scientific Prose by the German Academy of Language and Poetry. Karl Rahner's first scholarly article appeared not in German but in French for the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* (1932), a study of the spiritual senses in Origen. It reflects the interest he and his brother had for the return to patristic sources underway in France. In his years in Valkenburg, he studied not only transcendental metaphysics, but the history of the early church. He was especially impressed by the work of Marcel Viller, S.J., *La spiritualité des premiers siècles chrétiens* (1930) which he himself adapted and expanded for the German version, *Azese und Mystik in der Väterzeit* (1939). After the war when he had better access to research materials Rahner published four editions of Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, editions 28 (1952), 29 (1954), 30 (1955), 31 (1957).<sup>16</sup> Had other pressing responsibilities not prevented him he would have continued but instead he invited Adolf Schönmetzger to prepare the reorganized edition 32 (1963), in which he had only a consultative role. In 1948 Rahner took over editing a kind of German Denzinger, *Der Glaube der Kirche in den Urkunden der Lehrverkündigung*, begun by J. Neuner and H. Ross in 1938 and he prepared all its editions up to the seventh (1965). In 1967 an English translation of its sixth edition was published.<sup>17</sup> Though Rahner cautioned

<sup>13</sup> *Orientierung* 48 (February 15, 1984), 34.

<sup>14</sup> *Orientierung* 48 (April 15, 1984), 74-75; *America* 150 (1984), 452.

<sup>15</sup> For a chronological listing of Rahner's publications up to 1984, see: R. Bleistein and E. Klinger, eds., *Bibliographie Karl Rahner 1924-1969* (Freiburg: Herder, 1969); R. Bleistein, ed., *Bibliographie Karl Rahner 1969-1974* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974); P. Imhof and H. Treziak, "Bibliographie Karl Rahner 1974-1979," in *Wagnis*, pp. 579-97; P. Imhof and E. Meuser, "Bibliographie Karl Rahner 1979-1984," in *Glaube im Prozess: Für Karl Rahner*, eds. E. Klinger and K. Wittstadt (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), pp. 854-71. See also: C. Pedley, "An English Bibliographical Aid to Karl Rahner," *Heythrop Journal* 25 (July 1984).

<sup>16</sup> See, J. Schumacher, *Der 'Denzinger': Geschichte und Bedeutung eines Buches in der Praxis der neueren Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974).

<sup>17</sup> *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* (Cork: Mercier, 1967).

against careless use of Denzinger, an undifferentiated, mechanical use of the sources without an appropriate hermeneutic, he had profound respect for those sources.

From 1957 to 1967 Rahner prepared the second edition of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* in collaboration with Josef Höfer. The earlier lexicon, the work of M. Buchberger (1930-1938), badly needed updating. Rahner felt that a reworking was a necessary preparation for collaborative works of synthesis that would follow. He himself authored 134 of the nearly 30,000 articles, but further influenced the finished product by his choice of authors and editing (sometimes so extensively that his name should have been listed at the end of the article). The lexicon's ten volumes and index were barely completed when he asked Herbert Vorgrimler to supervise with him the publication of three supplementary volumes on Vatican II. This collaborative work was promptly published in English as *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*.

In 1958 Rahner began to edit with Heinrich Schlier the series *Quaestiones disputatae* in which some of his best studies appeared on Scriptural inspiration, the dynamic nature of the Church, the episcopate, death, hominization, priesthood and ecumenism. One can imagine his satisfaction on Easter 1983 when he saw appear volume 100, a volume of collaboration with Fries. (For a variety of reasons, only 19 of these 100 were published in English translation.)

Rahner's favorite project was a major work in the planning stages since his stay at the Vienna Pastoral Institute, the *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie, Praktische Theologie der Kirche in der Gegenwart* (5 volumes in 6, appearing from 1964 to 1970) for which he wrote 37 major articles. Bernard Lonergan was one of the first English-speaking theologians to recognize the importance of this monumental study which he cites in *Method in Theology*. This reassessment of ecclesiology and ministry was marked by Rahner's conviction that "the future of the Church has already begun" (IV, pp. 744-759). It is a puzzle why English-language publishers never provided a translation of the work. The demise of Herder and Herder played a role in that, but only a few chapters of the *Handbuch* appeared in English as *Theology of Pastoral Action* (1968).

Almost simultaneously Rahner edited with A. Darlap *Sacramentum Mundi: Theologische Lexikon für die Praxis*, a work appearing in German from 1967 to 1969, then in English, Dutch, Italian, Spanish. Rahner wrote 68 key articles. Together with its concise edition, this encyclopedia created a growing international consensus among students of theology.

Rahner belonged to the first generation of *Concilium* editors. Together with Edward Schillebeeckx he wrote the general introduction to the whole series in which they addressed those with pastoral responsibilities in the Church to keep them abreast of world theology for a world Church. *Concilium* recently celebrated publication of its volume 190 (only 170 in English), for which Rahner agreed to write reflections for the jubilee issue. He noted he did not agree with everything that had been written in

*Concilium* (a healthy sign he thought), and regretted its occasionally uncharitable tone. Still he felt it had achieved its purpose as he wrote: "For my part I believe that *Concilium* has no need to be ashamed of its past, but, on the contrary, can be grateful to God and to the men and women who have kept this journal going."<sup>18</sup> His comments seem addressed specifically to its critics from *Communio*. After founding *Concilium* Rahner also edited with Otto Semmelroth an occasional German series entitled *Theologische Akademie*, 13 volumes (1965-76).

Rahner is sometimes criticized for not having written his own summa (something which *Foundations* is certainly not), along the lines of his plan for dogmatic theology first outlined in 1954 as "A Scheme for a Treatise of Dogmatic Theology" (*Theol. Inv.* I, 19-37). This criticism is misplaced if one recognizes that he envisaged a summa achievable now only through collaboration. He wrote in 1969 on "The Future of Theology" (*Theol. Inv.* XI, 137-146): "It must be recognized that in terms of sheer time and energy it is quite beyond the resources of any one individual Christian and theologian to achieve a comprehensive grasp of all the material with which each theology has to work at the scientific, social, and cultural levels, and so to incorporate it in (one's) own theology" (p. 139). His writings were often what he called second-level theology, described in "Some Clarifying Remarks about My Own Work" (*Theol. Inv.* XVII, 243-248). One has the right and the duty to state one's convictions without having subjected them to a process of reflection down to the very last detail. What needs to be said today can not always be stated with scholarly exactitude.

Rahner was well informed about works in progress such as the *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte* edited by Michael Schmaus, Alois Grillmeier, and Leo Scheffczyk begun in 1951. He contributed to the work edited by H. Fries, *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*. But for Rahner the *magnum opus* of the German Catholic theology was clearly *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, edited by J. Feiner and M. Löhrer, 6 volumes in 8 (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965-81). As stated in the forward, this enterprise was directly inspired by Rahner's programmatic essay. To this series he contributed six major articles, two of which exist in English translation: *The Trinity, Kerygma and Dogma*. The French translated the series into 20 volumes, but the English world has not deemed it feasible to translate except in bits and pieces. Does the fault lie with publishers, or with our failure to provide translators and a reading public?

Another undertaking was the widely consulted *Kleines theologisches Wörterbuch*, edited with Herbert Vorgrimler, now in a second revised English version (1981). Also his *Herders theologisches Taschen-Lexikon*, 1972-73, and the little known 30-volume mini-encyclopedia edited with four others, *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft* (1980-1982), a reformulation of Christian beliefs in contemporary form.

<sup>18</sup> P. Brand et al., eds., *Twenty Years of Concilium: Retrospect and Prospect (Concilium 170)*, New York: Seabury, 1983, 89.

All these publications would of themselves have been a rich legacy, but do not include his *Theological Investigations* nor his monographs. In the early 1950s Richard Gutzwiller, S.J., urged Rahner to gather individual essays into a volume of *Schriften*. The project was rejected by several publishers on the grounds that such high level material would not sell well. The publishing firm Benziger, to its credit, agreed. The volumes did sell well, and translation rights have produced reasonable financial returns. Translations have appeared in the Western European languages, as well as Hungarian, Japanese, Korean, Swahili, even Braille. In 1978 the leading Soviet journal of philosophy, *Voprosy filosofii* (*Questions of Philosophy*) published an account by B.J. Kuzmickas on "The Transcendental Anthropology of Karl Rahner," based on essays from the *Investigations*.

First some data about the *Schriften*: 16 German volumes (extending from 1954 to 1984) of which only the first 14 have been translated into English. The appearance of the last two German volumes caught off guard even the current British translator, Edward Quinn, who had just announced with a sigh of relief that his task was completed.<sup>19</sup> The German volumes contain 395 essays not in chronological order. Only 334 have been translated into English to date. The numbering of the English volumes does not correspond to the German system. Most of what Rahner published in the last four years of his life is not available to English readers. This is especially regrettable given the new themes he investigates in these years: nuclear disarmament; the peace movement; Latin American liberation theology; feminist theology; ecumenical consensus statements; basic Christian communities. What we badly need now, and which I hope members of our Society will collaborate in, is a *Pathway through Theological Investigations* that would do for those volumes what *A World of Grace* attempted to do for *Foundations*.

The English volumes are the work of 10 different translators with the inevitable inconsistencies that entails. As North Americans we need to remember that Rahner's *Investigations* are available, not because of our efforts, but because of the vision of a British publishing house: Darton, Longman and Todd. The US distribution has been handled successively by Helicon, Herder and Herder, Seabury and currently Crossroad. The English-speaking world was attracted to Rahner's thought from the early years. As early as 1952 we find J. P. Kenny in Australia discussing Rahner's notion of concupiscence and in 1960 P. de Letter from India was expounding Rahnerian views about sacramental causality. From the Philippines came studies done at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila. The English-speaking world does not sponsor an annual Rahner Workshop, a Rahner Newsletter, a Rahner Journal, Rahner Archives, as for Lonergan. This is because of language and geographic barriers, and the nature of Rahner's writings. As Bishop B. C. Butler noted in his London *Tablet* obituary, Lonergan has wider appeal as a philosopher than

<sup>19</sup> "Farewell to Rahner: Autobiographical Development of a Translator," *Downside Review* 101 (1983), 171-81.

Rahner as theologian. Still esteem for him is no less real.

No other language of translation has been as successful. Rahner has not had a major impact on French readers. Spanish-speaking countries have produced some Rahner studies in part by Spaniards and Latin Americans who came to Innsbruck. Among his students at Innsbruck from 1958 to 1962 was a Jesuit from El Salvador named Ignacio Ellacuría. In Rahner's *Befreiende Theologie, der Beitrag Lateinamerikas zur Theologie der Gegenwart* (1977) he drew upon the collaboration of several colleagues including Jon Sobrino, a theologian whose orthodoxy has recently been questioned. Rahner in turn developed a fascination for the Latin American church. In 1977 at the Seventh International Congress of Jesuit Ecumenists in Frankfurt, I saw Rahner present at an evening workshop conducted in Spanish and broken German in which a Mexican Jesuit was explaining how his *comunidad de base* fostered conscientization through comic book catechetical resources.

Apart from the encyclopedias, lexica, and the *Investigations*, Rahner has an impressive number of monographs. The 68 English titles in the Rahner bibliographies include variant titles for books published in England and the United States. There are 55 English monographs, comprising philosophico-theological reflections, popularizations of doctrinal themes, as well as devotional, hortatory material. Despite my contribution to a commentary on *Foundations of Christian Faith*, I would regret it if students were to begin with that book as an introduction to Rahner. Its merits are real, but an initiation to his thought it certainly is not. The recent Rahner collection, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*, is a better starting point.

#### THEMES

In my final section I wish to point to characteristic themes of Rahner's thought and method. What is said here is obviously painted in broad strokes. Assessing his importance will be a collaborative effort reaching well beyond the end of this century. Rahner is here assessed in himself and not in comparison to any theologian. In 1961 at a symposium on neo-Thomism held in La Tourette, France, the philosopher P. Bouëssé, engaged in a lively conversation with Rahner, showed him an oil painting of Père Sertillanges and said: "You certainly resemble Sertillanges very much." To which Rahner retorted: "I prefer to resemble myself."

I predict that the 21st century will remember Rahner less for his contributions to transcendental method, his theory of the existential supernatural, or his views on what he only provisionally called "anonymous Christianity" than for his reflections on the core of revelation which is, as he states in his interview with Leo O'Donovan, "God as mystery and Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One, as the historical event in which this God turns irreversibly toward us in self-communication."<sup>20</sup> Throughout his voluminous writings he preserved an

<sup>20</sup> *America* 140 (1979), 180.

apophatic spirit which has the potential to make them appealing to the Orthodox were they better known. In an essay entitled "The Experience of God Today" (*Theol. Inv.* XI, 149-165), he concludes in almost Augustinian language: ". . . Man is forever occupied with the grains of sand along the shore where he dwells at the edge of the infinite ocean of mystery" (p. 159). Yet this appreciation for the mystery of God was no excuse for making theology a *Geheimwissenschaft*, an elitist activity irrelevant for ordinary people. His was not theology for the sake of theology but pastoral ministry for the Church. Through the incarnational principle he searches to "find God in all things," to discern through spirits within himself and in others how to become a better hearer, seer and doer of the Word. The God he contemplated was *Deus semper maior* but because of the centrality of the Incarnation in his thought he explored in depth the human person. These experiences of persons were not only the heady experiences, but the psychological, emotional, tactile experiences of individuals within a community in diaspora.

Rahner's training, personal interests and years of editing Denzinger and the LThK made him keenly aware of the sources of tradition. As Eugene Kennedy noted in his *New York Times Magazine* article (September 23, 1979), Rahner was led to re-examine the dried husks of tradition from Catholic teaching and practice to see if living cells were still present that could be scraped free and replanted in the soil of the modern world. As a theological Burbank he experimented in mutations and permutations to foster new growth. For one who looked backward, his interest in the future is remarkable. Sixteen essays in *Theological Investigations* concern the future of the Church and the world, as conditioned by science, technology, cybernetics, social unification. What interested him was less man's future in light of man's unchanging nature, but man's nature in terms of a transcendent future. To imagine the future he daydreamed and fantasized as in his famous "Dream of the Church" (*Theol. Inv.* XX, 133-42) where he records his vision of a Vatican roundtable board room that does not correspond to existing conditions, but to ones that could and should exist.

Rahner had an acute sense of personal freedom and the importance of the individual in the Church. In essays composed before Vatican II he anticipated much about charisms in the Church that was adopted by the Council. His individual was never considered in isolation but in her or his ecclesial context (*Kirchlichkeit*). Piety was ecclesial piety (*Theol. Inv.* V, 336-65). Though he had a mistrust of institutions and institutional pressures he was equally suspicious of individual subjectivism.

If one judges Rahner as an ecumenist on the basis of his book *Foundations*, one gets a faulty perspective. (Rahner later agreed with Vorgrimler's criticism that the ecclesiology of *Foundations* is triumphalistic.) Rahner's ecumenical contacts date back to 1948, a meeting in Bad Driburg, Westphalia, sponsored by the Johann Adam Moehler Institut, Paderborn, a forerunner of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, where he collaborated with Hermann Volk. His ecumenical ministry was

not in ecumenical commissions that formulated consensus statements, but in explaining the theoretical underpinnings for Catholicism's outreach to the other churches. Much of what separated churches, Rahner felt, concerned not opposing doctrinal issues but open questions (*offene Fragen, Scheinprobleme*). As would be expected, his ecumenical contacts were largely with Lutherans. Unlike Congar, a neighbor of the Institut St. Serge in Paris, Rahner had only minimal contact with the Orthodox.

From 1958 on, Rahner dialogued with humanists and Marxists through the Paulus-Gesellschaft which proved to be an ideal forum for his thought. He feared that present-day Catholicism was heading into a cultural ghetto. To my knowledge, Rahner had few contacts with members of other major world religions, but that did not diminish his interest in them.<sup>21</sup> He was convinced that Vatican II had attained a high point in *Nostra aetate* by recognizing other religions as direct sources of sanctification.

#### CONCLUSION

Since Rahner came to most of us through the printed word we need to express our indebtedness to his publishers and translators especially in England. Can we not set up close ties with the newly established Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain? We need to thank those who edit our *Zeitschriften*, our journals, men such as Walter Burghardt, Leonard Swidler, James Provost, Robert Murray, Walter Conn, and others. In North America for all our journals we still need a publication similar to *Stimmen der Zeit* (i.e., a journal somewhere between *Theological Studies* and the *London Tablet*) for second-level theology. Many of his essays first appeared in *Stimmen der Zeit*. We need to hail the contribution of deceased members of our Society who helped us discover Rahner: Cyril Vollert, Eugene Burke, John Courtney Murray, Gustave Weigel, Robert Richard, our late Belgian member Piet Franssen and others.

Rahner's astounding achievements as a co-editor and collaborator can alert us to possibilities not yet realized on this continent. We have had the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* and its supplements, the *Classics of Western Spirituality*, the *Encyclopedia of Bio-Ethics*, the CLSA seminars, and the collaboration of our Society with the CLSA on *Cooperation Between Theologians and the Ecclesiastical Magisterium*. But we still need our own *Mysterium Salutis*, our own *Sacramentum Mundi*. Perhaps several popular, collaborative projects now underway can develop into something more ambitious.

Rahner profited from the cultural scene of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. He taught in universities that demanded fewer time-consuming duties than our own with committee work, heavy teaching

<sup>21</sup> One such interfaith exchange with a Jewish religious leader took place in 1982. See: P. Lapide and K. Rahner, *Heil von den Juden? Ein Gespräch* (Mainz: M. Grünewald, 1983).

responsibilities done without the help of an *Assistent* or *Assistentin*. Rahner used religious events such as the *Katholikentag* or the *Kirchentag* to challenge theology. His media access especially to radio under a different system of programming and sponsorship gave him an audience not available to us. The countries he lectured in are tiny by comparison to the vastness of Canada and the United States, but their church buildings are more open to theologians for preaching, lectures, continuing education. If Rahner's theology was neither isolationist nor exclusively university-based, it was in part because he had access to other settings. In this hemisphere we have unique advantages we must make use of since in no part of the world is there such a concentration of theologians, especially women and non-clerical theologians, theologians with expertise in social sciences. The North American ecumenical context offers unparalleled opportunities. How can we create from our own cultural matrix what Rahner did elsewhere?

I hear Rahner turn back toward us for an instant and address to us the words he spoke at John Carroll University (April 6, 1979): "(Your) time calls (you) theologians sleeping under the broom tree of orthodoxy like Elijah in old days: Surge, grandis tibi restat via — Arise, a long journey lies ahead of you."

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