

Humble Confidence: Spiritual and Pastoral Guidance from Karl Rahner. By James J. Bacik. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014. iii + 185 pages. \$19.95 (paper).

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In a tribute published on Rahner's death in 1984, David Tracy observed: "There are only four or five thinkers in the rich tradition of Catholic theology of whom it can be said: after that work, nothing can be the same again. Karl Rahner was one of those few." Clearly this places Rahner in the company of figures like Augustine and Aquinas, and it is no exaggeration. His influence reached beyond the boundaries of Catholic theology: in 1964, George Lindbeck compared him to two giants of twentieth-century Protestant theology, Paul Tillich and Karl Barth, and judged that "for balance," he could be the greatest of the three. Yet, a little more than thirty years since his passing, many well-read people who would be embarrassed not to know at least something about Einstein, Darwin, and Freud have scarcely even heard of Rahner. Bacik's book represents a significant attempt to make the riches of Rahner's spiritual theology more widely known. Bacik calls his book "an act of gratitude for enriching my spiritual journey and pastoral practice for over 50 years" and makes a strong argument for Rahner's continuing relevance, expounding the foundations of his thought and developing its implications for contemporary spirituality.

To approach Rahner's thought through spirituality is highly appropriate, as his theology is deeply rooted not only in Thomistic philosophy but also in the Catholic mystical tradition, particularly in its Ignatian form. Prayer is at the heart of nearly everything he wrote: one of his first published works, later translated as *Encounters with Silence*, was a series of meditations on God, Christ, and the activity of praying itself. At the center of these meditations is an all-encompassing sense of the divine Mystery, which permeates the whole of the vast Rahnerian corpus, and becomes the basis of a radical rethinking of Catholic theology—an enterprise both totally orthodox and revolutionary in its implications.

Bacik notes how Rahner foresaw fifty years ago the secularization of society and the precipitous decline in church membership and religious practice. Rather than condemning it, he accepted it as the new form in which the gospel would have to be realized—a "diaspora community" of believers amid an increasingly secular world. "A worldly world is being created by humans which is not meant to be sacralized but experienced in its depths, which God has sanctified," he wrote in 1966. As Bacik makes clear, Rahner's theological vision, emphasizing the universality of God's grace, is inclusive enough to accommodate this and other unforeseeable future developments while

maintaining the core aspects of Christian faith. The center of that vision is always God, the absolute divine Mystery, which reveals itself as ineffable love: “God, who is the center, makes Christ the center.”

As the title *Humble Confidence* suggests, Rahner’s thought is profoundly optimistic, based on ultimate trust in the Creator-God to make good on the promises implicit in creation, despite human waywardness, ignorance, and sin. Bacik makes good use of that fundamental optimism in his pastoral practice. The final chapter of his book—almost half the text—interweaves personal reflections on ways Rahner has influenced his ministry with summaries of Rahner’s thought on such important topics as forgiveness, priesthood, original sin, resurrection, and ecumenism. Bacik refers to contemporary figures from Mother Teresa to John Updike, and treats such recent topics as the sexual-abuse scandal, Christian-Muslim dialogue, and the New Atheism. In all, Bacik’s own thought shows how deeply he has absorbed Rahner’s vision and applied it to pastoral life in the church. An epilogue defends Rahner against his critics on the right and left, and discusses his influence on emerging theologies in Asia. The book is not just an illuminating tribute to Rahner but also a synthesis of the author’s own life and work—intellectual, pastoral, and spiritual. To those unfamiliar with Rahner it can serve as a fine introduction, and for those already imbued with his spirit, as a review and renewal of his basic themes. Recommended especially for graduate students and advanced undergraduates.

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A Godly Humanism: Clarifying the Hope That Lies Within. By Francis Cardinal George, OMI. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015. xiv + 207 pages. \$19.95 (cloth).
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Originally entitled *Integrating Wisdom and Discipleship*, this handsomely produced, concise volume offers eight essays tracing Cardinal George’s intellectual journey since the Second Vatican Council, as he endeavored to assimilate its theological teaching and spiritual wisdom according to popes Paul VI, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. Nine days before his death from cancer, George submitted the manuscript of *A Godly Humanism*, the last of a trilogy based on lectures given in his archdiocese of Chicago. The volume comprises eight chapters, which according to the preface (xi) trace the cardinal’s personal integration of intellectual insight and discipleship as these have been informed by Vatican II and subsequent papal interpretation. Each