

PROGRAM GROUPS

WOMEN'S SEMINAR IN CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

- Topic: Feminism and Catholicism: Reading the Signs of the Times
Conveners: Elena G. Procario-Foley, Iona College
Jane Carol Redmont, Graduate Theological Union
Moderator: Michelle Gonzalez, Loyola-Marymount University
Presenter: Nancy A. Dallavalle, Fairfield University
Respondents: Anne M. Clifford, Duquesne University
Phyllis Zagano, New York, NY

Nancy Dallavalle led the Seminar through an analysis of "Gospel Feminism, Papal Feminism, Catholic Feminism," a portion of a work in progress. Dallavalle's provocative presentation sparked rich formal responses as well as an extensive period of questions and dialogue that manifested the challenge and complexity of Dallavalle's position.

Dallavalle's title indicates three models of approaching questions for theology raised by feminist thought. She emphasized that as models they were not meant to be identified with any single author. Gospel feminism was described in terms taken from an on-line discussion among members of the Seminar and from the *Madeleva Manifesto* (April 2000). Dallavalle pointed to the liberationist characterization of Gospel feminism and its goal of justice for women. Referencing the work of Elizabeth Johnson, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Elizabeth Dreyer, and Christine Gudorf, Dallavalle described the theological anthropology of Gospel Feminism as "multipolar" and "multivocal." Inclusivity, justice, liberation, and recognizing diverse ways of being human are hallmarks of the anthropology of Gospel Feminism.

Papal feminism, or "new feminism," refers to positions articulated by Pope John Paul II and elaborated by a variety of scholars such as Leonie Caldecott, Mary Rousseau, David Schindler and Mary Ann Glendon. The anthropology involved marks an advance from previous "explicitly misogynist stereotypes found in the tradition," according to Dallavalle, but it remains essentialist and depends on the theory of complementarity.

In response to the patterns represented by Gospel Feminism and Papal Feminism, Dallavalle argues for the carefully nuanced position of Catholic Feminism, attempting to retain positive emphases from both models (e.g. the rejection of anything that exploits and devalues women) while eschewing shortcomings (e.g. a tendency to the ahistorical). She offers three points by which

to describe Catholic Feminism. Her first emphasis is that Catholics doing theology from a feminist perspective should make clear their ecclesial position as Catholic.

Secondly, Dallavalle presents a theological anthropology of critical essentialism. (For a more complete analysis see Dallavalle's article in *Horizons* 25:1, Spring 1998, "Neither Idolatry nor Iconoclasm: A Critical Essentialism for Catholic Feminist Theology.") She uses "essentialism" to establish "male" and "female" as fixed points and "critical" to connote that there is never "unconstructed access" to these points. Dallavalle maintains that "the claim of critical essentialism is not that biological sex is always and everywhere the most important aspect of human existence, the claim is that biological sex is an important aspect of being human, one which has appropriately been exploited as a metaphor by theological reflection, and one that is particularly important for Catholic theological reflection."

Finally, Dallavalle suggests that Catholic Feminism engages tradition and institution in a productive way, whereas Gospel Feminism maintains a certain distance, while Papal Feminism makes the engagement of tradition and institution into a fetish. She explains that understandings of idolatry and iconoclasm underscore the discussion of tradition and institution.

Dallavalle completed her presentation with an analysis of the systematic perspective implied by Catholic Feminism, using trinitarian theology as a starting point and the question of the ordination of women as a test case. Skillfully analyzing uses of gendered imagery with respect to both the trinity and the priesthood, Dallavalle argued that the critical perspective of feminist theology is central to Catholic theology and that the ordination of women is needed for the Church to remain Catholic.

Clifford's response focused on a complex of at least three questions. She questioned the breadth of Dallavalle's description of Gospel feminism, the connection of the term "feminism" with papal writings, and the content of "critical essentialism." With regard to critical essentialism, Clifford asked for more explanation about how there could be a 'provisional fixed point' of reference.

Zagano's response turned to the practical applications of Dallavalle's thought. Zagano distinguished between an ecclesial and an ecclesiastical location, identifying the former with Gospel Feminism and the latter with Papal feminism. The language of "outsider" and "insider" was used by Zagano to suggest that Catholic Feminism was an argument to advance prophets from outside the system (the ecclesial location) to priests inside the system (the ecclesiastical location). Zagano maintained that Catholic Feminism was attempting to hold an inherently contradictory position.

The passionate dialogue that followed the presentations pursued the questions raised by Clifford and Zagano. In addition to asking for further clarity about the content of the models, participants were very concerned about polarization among the models. The validity of the distinction between ecclesial and ecclesiastical

was also debated. Referring to a *New York Times* op-ed article by Anita Hill (June 6, sect. A, p. 31, col. 1) that appeared the day of the seminar, several participants drew parallels to the insider/outsider dynamic with the women who broke the silence in the FBI (post-9/11) and Enron (postbankruptcy) scandals.

The Seminar concluded with the annual presentation of the Ann O'Hara Graff Memorial Award. This year's recipient was Mary Ann Hinsdale of Boston College.

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TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

- Topic: New Directions for Trinitarian Theology
 Convener: Nancy A. Dallavalle, Fairfield University
 Moderator: Miguel Diaz, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary
 Presenters: M. John Farrelly, St. Anselm's Abbey
 Ralph Del Colle, Marquette University

Two presentations on the notion of time and temporality provided a clear focus for this session. John Farrelly's presentation, "Time and the Trinity's Saving Presence," had as its thesis the idea that "how one conceives time and its relation to human fulfillment influences the way one will relate the mysteries to each other." Classically, the Trinity was related to salvation and creation in the context of the "exitus-reditus" schema. But, he continued, if we interpret the coming of the Trinity to us in relation to the kingdom of God we can present it in a context more appropriate to our period of historical consciousness. Drawing particularly on the Gospel and Letters of John, Farrelly, noted that in the early Church, the first meaning of salvation was what Jesus would do when he comes again, but quickly it was realized that what he will do then he is doing now, in part, that is, bringing about the fulfillment and liberation of history. While the Father comes to us now through the exalted Christ and the Holy Spirit, these come to us somewhat differently, a difference anticipated in the ways God's Word and Spirit are operative in creation. This scripture-based understanding of time provides some fruitful contact points, Farrelly suggested, with some insights of modern cosmology.

Ralph Del Colle, in a presentation titled "Trinity and Temporality: Issues and Questions," explored the relationship between God's eternity and temporality in a trinitarian perspective. Rejecting the notion of eternity as the "negation of time" or "timeless eternity," he proposed that God's eternity, while not dependent on temporality, is indeed the basis for time and therefore possesses the capacity for time. By understanding time as duration and the capacity for encounter, he