

little work with undergraduates is the classic systematic exposition of the content of the religious tradition. In fact, what we are doing is a kind of fundamental theology for the modern world, reflecting on the conditions of possibility for belief today.

Vince Miller explored the development of his teaching during his time at Georgetown, stressing the modifications that need to be made, and those that should not be made, to accommodate the postmodern sensibilities of students. He then offered two different implications for the theologian's work for the church that arise from working with undergraduates. First, we provide early warnings of cultural changes, which our proximity to young people places us in a privileged position to identify. Teaching them as we do, our capacity for refining fundamental theology may be increased. Rather than hermeneutics, we have to address questions about the attachment of a skeptical and yet credulous generation to traditions, communities and institutions. Second, more closely related to the systematic task of the theologian, we need to face the question of theological literacy. What should we really expect students to know when they come to class, and what can we realistically expect to add in one or two courses?

The ensuing lively discussion focused on the ways in which our tasks change in response to the so-called postmodern imperatives of globalization, pluralism, relativism, and so on. The group, in other words, seemed to take up the implicit theme of the panelists that the undergraduate teacher as theologian is engaged in the creation of a new fundamental theology.

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RELIGIOUS PLURALISM  
AND THE VOCATION OF THE THEOLOGIAN

Topic: Dialogue and Doctrine  
Convener: Catherine Cornille, Boston College  
Presenters: Paul Griffiths, University of Illinois at Chicago  
David Burrell, University of Notre Dame  
John Keenan, Middlebury College  
Monika Hellwig, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

The four panelists in this session offered remarks on the relationship between interreligious dialogue and Christian doctrine, or on how their involvement with other religions had affected their attitude toward doctrine in general or toward particular doctrines. Paul Griffiths, who is both a renowned specialist in Indian Buddhism and a Catholic theologian and philosopher, argued that the need for

dialogue is given in the very nature of Catholic doctrine, in what he called its "omnivorous" orientation toward truth in whatever form it may be found. As a Christian one cannot but hold to a Trinitarian and Christological structure of truth. Dialogue with other religions may however serve to "ornament, elaborate and develop" Christian doctrine. This is based on the fact that, as Griffiths put it, "what the Church teaches, she does not fully understand."

David Burrell similarly based his reflections on the hermeneutical openness of the Christian tradition by pointing to Frege's distinction between "meaning" and "reference" and to the fact that all language at best imperfectly signifies God. Moreover, in order to understand the meaning of Christian doctrines, one must always consider the questions to which these doctrines present themselves as answers. In doing this, one will come to understand that most of the Christian claims to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ had originally little or no implications for the relationship to other religious traditions. Interreligious dialogue and the conscious or unconscious borrowing of categories belonging to different philosophical and religious traditions has been a reality throughout Christian history. However, the contemporary context offers, for Burrell, genuinely new possibilities in so far as true friendship between believers of different traditions can now form the basis for sharing not only in similarities but also in difference.

John Keenan, who is both an Episcopal priest and theologian and an expert on Mahayana Buddhism, proposed that the latter's philosophical tradition may serve as a way out or as a viable alternative to the impasse of the traditional Christian models for coming to terms with religious pluralism. According to this Mahayana philosophy, all judgements of the truth of other religious traditions are meaningless since one always only understands the world from one's own perspective and experience. Instead of the positions of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, Buddhist thought offers the possibility of adopting a stance of "no stance" or "no viewpoint," which avoids the epistemological difficulties confronting the more well known positions.

Monika Hellwig pointed to some of the necessary conditions for dialogue which revolve around intellectual honesty, or the ability to stop imposing one's own categories upon the other and to think according to different categorical frameworks, and the willingness to take risks. She discussed particular beliefs and practices which had inspired her in her contacts with the various world religions, and concluded with the remark that all religions are ultimately inadequate to the truth and that every person is faced with a lonely journey into that mystery.

Discussion focused in part on the moral decency and the philosophical possibility of "using" elements from other religions within a different religious context. While panelists did not regard this instrumental use of other religions as a sign of disrespect, a discussion ensued on the essence and the flexibility of Christian doctrine. While some suggested that the dialogue with other religions might also lead to a "correction" of Christian doctrine, Griffiths insisted on a distinction between Christian doctrines and their formulation and went so far as

to admit that while doctrines may be impervious to correction, their formulation might be. Lively discussion developed around these issues, but was cut short by constraints of time.

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#### EXPERIENCE AND THEOLOGICAL VOCATION

Topic: Eastern European Catholicism Emerging from Silence:  
 The Role of Memory and Narrative in Theological Reflection  
 Convener and Moderator: Sally Ann McReynolds, Saint Mary College in Kansas  
 Presenters: Margot Patterson, Senior Writer, *The National Catholic Reporter*;  
 Margaret Nacke and Mary Savoie, Sisters of Saint Joseph of  
 Concordia, Kansas; NCCB/LCWR outreach to Eastern European  
 Catholics; Community development facilitators, Kansas City MO

Over the last ten years each panelist has had extensive personal contact with Eastern European Catholicism, particularly in Romania and the Czech and Slovak Republics. They gathered to share compelling stories which are emerging from the oppression and silence imposed by fifty years of communist domination. These memories have the potential to become valued resources for theological reflection and inspiration. Each panelist spoke for about fifteen minutes and then the floor was open for comments and discussion.

Sally McReynolds is a member of the Omaha, Nebraska province of the Notre Dame Sisters whose motherhouse is in Hradec Kralove, The Czech Republic. On two separate occasions she spent one month in the Czech and Slovak Republics, participating in a general chapter and also researching the experiences of sisters under both Nazism and Communism. McReynolds provided a brief overview of the theological methodology necessary to draw insights, categories, and concepts from the wealth of resources available. She argued that when theology is recognized as a prophetic work of the entire believing community, the vocation of the theologian involves the vital task of bringing memories to ritual and to narrative. The theologian's professional vocation is an expression of the sacramental grace which involves each of the baptized in Jesus' prophetic ministry.

Drawing on the work of a number of contemporary theologians, notably Paul Ricoeur, D. N. Power, and J. Ruffing, McReynolds identified four aspects of theological method that contribute to this task: (1) *Hermeneutics* as the identification and critical interpretation of symbol, ritual, and narrative particularly as these are expressed by the poor and marginalized. Hermeneutics incorporates