

SPECIAL SESSIONS

CHURCH, ACADEMY, AND SPIRITUALITY IN TENSION

Moderator: Darren Dias, University of St. Michael's College
Presenters: Kathleen Dolphin, St. Mary's College, Notre Dame
Gloria L. Schaab, Barry University

In her paper entitled "Grace-full Balance or Precarious Wobbling? Church, Academy and Spirituality in Tension," Kathleen Dolphin explored the disequilibrium between three dimensions of the Roman Catholic Church—its institutional face, its intellectual life, and its spiritual tradition. This disequilibrium results in a "dis-integration" in the conversations and dialogues that could otherwise take place amongst these three necessarily integral dimensions of the Church. Drawing parallels between Friederich von Hugel's own time and the present situation Dolphin suggested von Hugel's analytic model with its emphasis on balance as a fruitful resource to redress the imbalance. Dolphin argued that regaining balance demands the difficult task of identifying and resisting the specific temptations identified by David Tracy inherent in each of the three dimensions. The three temptations are the abuse of power (inherent in the institutional dynamic), rationalism (inherent in the intellectual life), and superstition (inherent in the spiritual and mystical dimension). To each of these three temptations Dolphin adds a respective corollary: timidity resulting in the failure to exercise authority responsibly, the lack of sensitivity to pastoral concerns, and wild claims based upon personal religious experience.

In analyzing the "dis-integration" that characterizes the Church today Dolphin paid particular attention to the need for dialogue between bishops and theologians. Using the USCCB website, she surveyed the types of resources that USCCB provides American Catholics as well as the educational background of some 172 active bishops. While careful not to suggest the "professionalization" of what is essentially a pastoral role, Dolphin did suggest that bishops receive adequate training and consult with theologians and professional scholars regularly in order to make well-informed decisions simultaneously redressing the imbalance between the intellectual and institutional dimensions of the Church. The paper concluded in raising the question of what governance, whose theology and which spirituality are normative in the three aforementioned dimensions.

Gloria Schaab examined and extended the questions raised in Dolphin's presentation in her paper entitled "Christic Servanthood: A Transformative Model of Eucharist, Discipleship, and Leadership." She offered a "paradigm for a spirituality of ecclesial leadership" based on what the Church declares as normative, "the

source and summit of Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium 11*): the Eucharist. Schaab connected Eucharistic spirituality to leadership and discipleship modeled on her notion of “Christic Servanthood.” In her gleanings from biblical and theological sources, Schaab elucidated upon Christic Servanthood under the three headings of attributes, relationality and praxis. The *attributes* of Christic Servanthood are based primarily upon the notion of self-emptying and humility found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. This means embodying Christ’s presence in imitation of Christ’s own life and ministry, particularly with the marginalized. The *relationality* of Christic Servanthood is most apparent in Jesus’ table-fellowship with the marginalized and excluded. Mutuality, inclusivity and collegiality are examples of the modes of relationship found in Luke 22:14-27. In his table-fellowship Jesus subverts relationships of dominance and is radically inclusive of both friend and foe alike. Schaab describes the *praxis* of Christic Servanthood as “prophetic solidarity and pro-existence.” The connexion between Eucharist and service is clearly attested to in the Johannine Last Supper narrative. The challenge of prophetic praxis to work for the liberation of humanity and the earth, to overturn structures of violence and oppression, and to stand in solidarity with the rejected and abandoned is the risk of Eucharistic spirituality, leadership and discipleship modeled on Christic Servanthood.

Schaab concluded her presentation by highlighting the significance of her proposed model of leadership and discipleship for the episcopacy: “A Eucharistic spirituality of Christic Servanthood reminds ecclesial leaders that *imago Christi* extends to all members of the Church. This . . . is especially true of those underrepresented and marginalized in ecclesial ministry. In them the body of Christ suffers.” She then cited some contemporary examples of how the body of Christ suffers as well as how it is healed through the ministry and witness of certain paradigmatic figures.

A lively and extensive conversation followed the presentation of these papers. Several issues came to the fore such as the interpenetrating existential and ecclesiological dimensions of the Eucharist, the need for catechetical initiatives at the parish level, the state of relationships between the various ministers in the Church, the responsibilities of theologians to speak publicly and in dialogue with the episcopacy on significant issues as well as to aid in theological education outside of the academy.

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