



THE IN-BETWEEN CHURCH IN AN IN-BETWEEN TIME

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DISLOCATION

Paul Crowley, *The Unmoored God: Believing in a Time of Dislocation* (Orbis, 2017)

The way we understand the world has changed. The order and boundaries of the old dispensation have given way to uncertainty and ambiguity, to being dislocated

Expressions of Dislocation

- **Society**—“climate emergency”, social-political polarization, and increasing economic inequality
- **Values**—“misinformation/disinformation”; “artificial intelligence”; “virtual” relationships
- **Church**—clerical sexual abuse/episcopal dishonesty; continued lack of inclusiveness; and resistance to possible changes; “nones”/“dones”

The Dislocated God

The God who was once familiar, because God was 'locatable' in a religious geography and scientific cosmology is no longer easily found. The God who was once situated in a known universe of reference and meaning has moved elsewhere.

- Paul Crowley, *The Unmoored God*, 21

Dislocated Catholics

Those with a Catholic heritage, however nominal, who cannot find Catholicism central to the everyday project of their lives and are in varying degrees of distance from what they take to be normative or prescribed Catholicism

- Tom Beaudoin, “Secular Catholicism and Practical Theology,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 15 (2011): 24

Dislocating Responses to Dislocation

- A desire for certainty and the removal of complexity to overcome flux
- A desire to “return” to how things were, to a “golden age,” to a past that might never have existed and certainly no longer exists
- Identifying and blaming those “responsible” for the dislocation

The Dislocating God-1

“God” [the word itself] is an almost ridiculously exhausting and demanding word. If we were not hearing it *in this way* ... we would have heard something which has nothing in common with the true word “God” but its phonetic sound.

- Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 51

The Dislocating God-2

The reality of the living God is a mystery beyond all telling. The infinitely creating, redeeming, and indwelling Holy One is so far beyond the world and so deeply within the world as to be literally incomprehensible.

- Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*, 17

Dislocating Faith-1

If the Rock you lean on is too miniscule to support the range of your life's desires, faith will collapse as you grow into maturity. For a community like the church, if the God they lean on together is inadequate, they will lead a cramped religious life.

- Elizabeth Johnson, *Abounding in Kindness: Writings for the People of God*, 31

The Dislocating Church

To resist cultural imperialism and racism, as church we must *repudiate all exclusionary symbols, values, criteria, and practices*. At the same time, *we must support creative initiatives in the development of new symbols and practices*.

- M. Shawn Copeland, “Knit Together by the Spirit as Church,” in *Prophetic Witness: Catholic Women’s Strategies for Reform*, 22

A Spirituality for “In-Betweenness”

- God who comes to meet us (in Christ through the Spirit) where we are, drawing us into a future beyond our calculation
- The “dislocation of discipleship”: openness to God is inseparable from openness to others
- “Holiness is the most attractive face of the Church” (Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018), 9)

A Faithful In-Between Church

“Authentic ecclesiology” is able to speak truthfully about concrete realities and faithfully about the historical and present promise of the Spirit, enlivening the church.

- Clare Watkins, “Practical Ecclesiology: What Counts as Theology in Studying the Church?,” *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, 178-79

True love for the Church is no dreaming enthusiasm, yet it is also not self-righteous or hard-hearted. It is realistic through and through and must stand the test in realism, faithful perseverance and constantly new forgiving.

- Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 134