

## AMERICAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL ETHICS IN THE MURRAY TRADITION: POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

Two authors synthesized their papers on John Courtney Murray and then fielded questions from the sixty persons attending. Both J. Leon Hooper's "A Survey of John Courtney Murray's Influence Twenty-five Years after His Death" and Todd David Whitmore's "From Religious Freedom to the Conditions for Witness: Developing the Heritage of John Courtney Murray" proceeded from an interest in addressing contemporary problems with the help of Murray's work. Each presented a carefully nuanced reading of Murray within a hermeneutical perspective linking Murray to contemporary issues.

Hooper surveyed 112 texts (1965-1990) making explicit appeal to or challenging Murray on religious freedom, censorship, American public philosophy and natural law, just-war criteria, nuclear policy, the role of the laity, trinitarian doctrinal development, and ecumenism or intrachurch discipline. The coverage was more than encyclopedic since the perspective adopted was Murray's own subsuming of religious freedom and church-state relations into the problematic of church-society interactions, understood by Hooper to be matters of understanding, judgment and commitment.

The writings were divided thematically into six topics. The first, "The Atheist's Civil and Social Status," traced the fate of Murray's argument for civil religious freedom. The second, "The Uses of Civil Law," took up Murray's and post-Murray applications of his public order criteria to problems of civil law. In the next, "Cultural Criticism," he identified several modes in Murray's critique of culture then sought to present usage of them. A fourth section, "Public Theology in America," considered authors pushing Murray's work into service of an American public theology, while "Economic Rights" noted the competing readings of Murray in regard to a comprehensive Catholic theory of human rights. The sixth section discussed views on "Pluralisms and Truth Claims." "In Murray's case," Hooper pointed out in closing, "discovery of a positive ground for pluralism in the church" led him "to speak of freedom in the church as a moral requirement for the church" for the sake of the social good and the mission of the church.

Whitmore's paper proposed that Murray's own principle of the "valid growth" of Catholic understanding can be retrieved and used to explicate Murray's idea of religious freedom as immunity from coercion so that an implied capacity to witness to values comes to the surface. Part 1, "The Historically Conscious Method of Valid Growth," expounded Murray's "The Problem of Religious Freedom" (1964) as a conversion to an historical approach eschewing fixation on formulae, archaism, misplaced abstractness and anachronism. But part 2, "Murray in Con-

text: Religious Freedom as Empowering Immunity” argued that whereas Murray could presume upon the integrity of moral traditions, this is no longer a valid supposition as Alisdair MacIntyre has shown. Part 3, “The Problem of Integrity,” held that social fragmentation has minimized the capacity of traditions to offer moral guidance and amounts to a sign of the times. In this condition, David Hollenbach’s search for a communitarian concept of human rights as “conditions for participation in community” has unusual importance as a way of overcoming an individualism easily but mistakenly associated with Murray’s concept of rights as immunities.

Whitmore concluded that Murray’s method of valid growth can be applied to Murray’s work, that doing so elucidates a presupposed capacity for witness to moral values implied by Murray’s idea of rights as immunities, and that changed cultural conditions require extending Murray’s thought on the virtues and centering it in the concept of the common good without removing his precise, juridical definition of religious freedom.

A lively, wide-ranging question and answer period evinced continuing familiarity with the work and increasing interest in the resourcefulness of John Courtney Murray.

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