

AMERICAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND ECUMENICAL DIVINITY SCHOOLS

This *special session* of the continuing seminar on American Catholic Experience was devoted to a consideration of the study, "Partners in the Conversation: The Role of Ecumenical Divinity Schools in Catholic Theological Education." Discussants for the session were: Prof. Margaret Farley and M. Shawn Copeland (Yale Divinity School), and Prof. Maura Ryan (College of the Holy Cross). Copies of the report were made available prior to the session.

Profs. Copeland and Farley fielded questions on the report and the conference; Prof. Ryan, who had been a participant in the conference on the study, reflected on her own experience as a student in an ecumenical divinity school at the doctoral level.

In sketching the genesis of the study, Copeland stated that in the summer of 1990 the Lilly Endowment awarded a grant to the Roman Catholic Task Force of Yale University Divinity School to conduct a pilot study on the role of ecumenical divinity schools in Catholic theological education. The primary researcher was Prof. Henry Charles (St. Louis University); the consulting sociologist was Prof. Dean Hoge (Catholic University of America). In April 1991, 187 questionnaires were mailed to Roman Catholic students and 239 alumni of Candler School of Theology at Emory University, the University of Chicago, Harvard Divinity School, the Pacific School of Religion, and Yale Divinity School.

The working conference held March 13-15, 1992 was an occasion for sustained conversation among divinity and seminary school administrators and faculty, Catholic Church leaders and administrators, and pastoral ministers. Copeland said that the Roman Catholic Task Force at YDS

considered [the conference] as an opportunity to address (1) the skepticism about the adequacy, effectiveness, and appropriateness of ecumenical schools in the theological, ministerial, and spiritual formation of Catholic students for ministry in the Catholic Church; (2) issues in the formation of Catholic identity and spirituality among students enrolled in these schools; (3) the emergence of new forms of collaborative ministry; and (4) the future of clericalized theology.

The conference opened Friday evening, March 13, with an interpretative address by Prof. Henry Charles. Saturday, March 14, was devoted to three plenary panel sessions, comments by designated observers, general conversation, and a small group working session. The discussants treated the following topics: the nature and meaning of the call to ecclesial ministry, new emergent forms of collaborative ministry, and the future and future contexts of Catholic theology. The fourth plenary session consisted of formal responses to the study and its

findings. The fifth session raised questions for future research and work.

Prof. Farley observed that the study was a "beginning"; there are questions and issues about the education of Catholics in ecumenical divinity schools as well as in Catholic schools that still require investigation. Farley also noted that while the survey was primarily directed toward M.Div. degree students, a small body of literature on the education of Catholics at the doctoral level emerged and was relevant to the concerns of the researchers. This interest accounts for the inclusion of Ph.D.s in the population.

Ten persons participated in the discussion. Topics raised included the division between laity and clergy, the failure of Roman Catholic universities to do first-rate research and work, the ministry of the nonordained, the tension between "Church definition" and "self definition" of the pastoral minister, the ecclesial generation gap which results from the decreasing numbers of Catholics who have firsthand knowledge of the Church prior to the Second Vatican Council, the future of Catholic theology.

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