

CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY—INSeCT
(International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology)

Topic: The Agenda of Catholic Theology Outside North America
Convener: Anne E. Patrick, Carleton College
Presenters: Peter Hünermann, University of Tübingen
Marcio Fabri dos Anjos, Sociedade de Teologia e Ciências
da Religião (SOTER), São Paulo

The founding officers of INSeCT (estab.1996) prepared this session. Vice-president Anne Patrick welcomed more than twenty participants, President Peter Hünermann spoke about Europe and Africa, and Vice-president Marcio Fabri dos Anjos discussed Latin America.

Hünermann drew on Joseph Doré, *Le devenir de la théologie catholique mondiale depuis Vatican II, 1965–1999* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2000), to describe the dramatic process of institutional diminishment undergone by the church in western Europe since 1900. By the 1950s priestly vocations in France had declined 33%, and from 1950 to 1970 annual ordinations dropped from about 1000 to 500. By the late 1990s, there were fewer ordinations than the 96 dioceses to be served. A similar process has gone on in Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Ireland. He spoke of the consequences for theological institutions, mentioning that only Maynooth Seminary remains to serve all of Ireland, with just 14 students entering last October. Theologians in western Europe, he added, find frustration in their attempts to deal with Rome, because "the methodology and ecclesiology of professional theologians and the Vatican are dramatically different."

Eastern Europe meanwhile must deal with the impact of communist rule, and with the compromised episcopacy that sometimes resulted. Many citizens are indifferent to Christianity, and theological faculties have been defensive against both western influences and communism. When the Catholic seminary was integrated into the university at Prague after 1989, they "froze the ladies out," and Catholic women transferred to the Hussite faculty. Polish theologians were pressured not to join the public universities, but they are now integrated with these faculties to some extent. Catholic professors in Lithuania and Hungary are also linked with universities. These theologians face the challenge of relating to people who no longer practice Catholicism.

Africa, by contrast, has seen an enormous growth in Catholic population, which now numbers more than 100 million. Most African theology is done in academic centers begun after Vatican II, with English faculties in Nairobi, Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Port Harcourt, and Iboland, and French faculties in Madagascar, Abidjan, Kinshasa, and Cameroon. There are outstanding thinkers developing indigenous approaches to theology, but, with rare exceptions, the "prophetic people" have not been "allowed to teach in regional seminaries, where the Roman approach is dominant." Financial independence is needed in order to "get a proper African theology," and African perspectives should enter more fully into the international dialogue.

Fabri dos Anjos described what government recognition of theological degrees and religious studies programs means for Brazil. Clerics are becoming more interested in civil degrees than Vatican ones, federal rules have affected some theology programs, and theological societies are taking on a "civil" character. How to develop this "citizenship" of theology remains a vital question. Theology also has new partners, themes, insights, and concerns. Women and laymen now study and teach theology, many Catholics are enrolled in Protestant universities, and the influence of feminist and African-American approaches has been felt, while "Thomistic philosophy is no longer the foundation for all theological discourse." Some clerics fear a loss of power and jobs, and there are tensions between conservative and progressive approaches. SOTER withstood Vatican efforts to control its congress on liberation theology in 2000, and although the "label" of liberation theology is not so important today as in the past, this approach has given much to the discipline and its concerns remain valid. In the new social context in which the poor are becoming "excluded, not just marginalized," theology must ask "how do we give Good News to the poor?" and seek to increase the "social effectiveness of the faith."

In the ensuing discussion there were contributions from theologians with recent experience in southern and western Africa, Asia, and Australia. Sue Rakoczy spoke of work on HIV-AIDS by an ecumenical "circle of concerned African women theologians," and described the institutional situation in South Africa, where a small Catholic theological society struggles forward. She noted the differences between ecumenical cluster seminaries of religious orders and diocesan seminaries, and mentioned the recent establishment of the country's first Catholic university, St. Augustine's College, in Johannesburg. Paulinus Odozor observed that more than half the population in West Africa is Catholic, and theology there has been coming from religious studies institutes, supported by state salaries. A plan for founding a Catholic University of Nigeria has met with enthusiasm. Issues important to theology there include dialogue with Muslims and Pentecostals, and inculturation. Much theological writing cannot reach the world press, but is available from local printers. Noni Getzler spoke of the very different situation in east Asia, where Catholicism is a small minority, and some theologians need to overcome a tendency to remain ghettoized and learn instead to contribute positively to religious plurality, with concern for the "nonchristian religious poor." She sees "signs of hope" in a meeting of an Asian "ekklesia" of Catholic women this November and in a program to train lay theologians in Asia, expected by 2005. Finally, Gideon Goosen declared that Australian theologians have common issues with colleagues elsewhere who object to Vatican efforts to "control" theology, and mentioned that the "third rite" of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is now a major issue in his country. He observed that where the next generation of seminary professors will come from remains a question.

Follow-up note: In an INSeCT Network Council meeting immediately after this session, a new set of officers was elected for three years: Bradford Hinze of CTSA (president), and Paulo Fernando Carneiro de Andrade of SOTER and Thomas Fliethmann of ET (vice-presidents).

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