

EMERGENT CATHOLICITY

Topic: Emergent Catholicity:
the faculty and the Catholic intellectual tradition
Convener: John C. Haughey, Woodstock Theological Center
Presenter: John C. Haughey, Woodstock Theological Center
Respondent: William George, Dominican University
Respondent: Michael Stebbins, Gonzaga University

The presenter opened with the problematic that a growing number of professors at Catholic universities express either discomfort with or indifference to the “Catholic identity” or the Catholic intellectual tradition which, in one way or another, is stressed in the public mission statements of their respective institutions. It is not sufficient that these schools simply be hospitable to the plural voices in their midst. There needs to be an engagement of them with the Catholic intellectual tradition. This is best done by beginning with an appreciation of the innate dynamism of all the human intelligence. Bernard Lonergan is a favorite author of the presenter since his peculiar starting point for appreciating the Catholic intellectual tradition would be along the lines of *intellectus quaerens intellectum* even before the trek into *fides quaerens intellectum*.

The presenter explained his experience of having conducted 14 different workshops in a number of schools with faculty. The process begins with the question, “What is the good you are trying to do here at x?” This is then answered by one on one conversations. These in turn are narrated to the group by the hearer which usually numbers around 12. From these narratives a sense of the similarity of dynamisms of the intentionalities of their colleagues develops as well as a sense of “the good that is under construction” among us. Usually a palpable sense of commonality forms from there. Then there is a readiness to look at what is presumed and needed for “the good of order” to develop. Since a good of order is not always the experience of the faculty in a given school the reasons for fragmentation and silos are examined with a view to rectifying the social and educational consequences of a lack of this level of the good. The third step in the process begins to articulate the values being realized in the school both through the efforts of individual faculty and by the intellectual tradition espoused by Catholicism. With some groups an academic “creed” of values has been articulated.

The presenter suggested that we can’t helicopter in the Catholic intellectual tradition and expect it to be received by the faculty. There has to be a process whereby “the incipient catholicity of the good” can be heard from the good those who are already there are contributing. Mission from below and formal mission articulations need to meet for the Catholic intellectual tradition to be a factor in the intellectual life of the school. Haughey considered this inductive process to be more in keeping with the openness of Jesus of Nazareth as the Gospels depict him. He allowed himself to be continually “interrupted” in his public life by the particularities of those who engaged him with their needs or ideas. If “you go to war with the army you got” so also you go the Catholic identity question with the faculty “you got” in a given institution rather than hoping it can be articulated by some remote ideal body of scholars or from a golden past. Emergent catholicity, the inductive

approach advocated here, can accentuate the inclusivity of this tradition better than more static demonstrations of Catholic identity. The experience of Catholic colleges and universities in engaging its personnel in terms of the structure of the good already operating in their midst can help develop the doctrine of the Church moving it from a mark, Catholic, to the eschatological challenge it is called to respond to. Absent that development it will never be the host of the world's pluralisms it is meant to be.

The first respondent spoke on "The parallel between the emergent catholicity project and the horizontal dialogue which led to the *Law of the Sea*". Both processes involve a scholarly quest, based on a common heritage, to determine in an inductive manner new possibilities for future collaboration. The Catholic Church has a distinctive voice in the dialogue among academics, given that it has sponsored universities for centuries, and has for the most part welcomed debate among the disciplines.

The second respondent entitled his remarks, "Emergent catholicity as doing "dialectics" in the terms of Bernard Lonergan". This dialectic is aimed at deepening the sense of Catholic identity, which does not consist in the last statement of the local bishop or in an unreflective acceptance of authoritative norms. Emergent catholicity seeks to promote an honest dialogue among scholars about the actual and the potential meaningfulness of being Catholic.

The ensuing discussion touched on how this "emergent catholicity" would affect the growing secularization of Catholic campuses in the United States; how the concept could counter the suspicion that it is simply a means to reenforce the tenets of traditional Catholicism by means of a progressive vocabulary; and whether the current hiring policies at Catholic universities are complementary or contradictory.

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