



A Personal Reflection as the First Editor-in-Chief of the *Catholic Social Science Review*

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As the first Editor-in-Chief of the *Catholic Social Science Review* (1996–1999), among other things I was committed to establishing and institutionalizing the distinction between the non-negotiable and abstract principles of Catholic social thought, on the one hand, and, on the other, its many empirically-based and prudential applications as generated by a Catholic-inspired social science. Simply put, while intimately connected, social thought is not synonymous with social science, whether in its secular or Catholic versions.

Two tendencies, as such, had to be monitored closely. The first was to avoid an excessively “loose” understanding of the principles of Catholic social thought. Obviously, not all forms of social thought could be plausibly argued to be either derived from, or consistent with, the Catholic faith. Many versions of the “theology of liberation” or religiously-infused feminism provide examples of foreign worldviews masquerading as part of the legitimate Catholic scholarly heritage. They represent, if you will, an intellectual version of “a wolf in sheep’s clothing,” as it is actually the case that it is Marxism, or feminism, or some other non-Catholic perspective that is “wagging the tail” vis-à-vis the authentic Catholic way of seeing things.

The second tendency, conversely, is to guard against an exceedingly “narrow” interpretation of Catholic social thought in which an otherwise serious Catholic scholar over-identifies his/her own specific Catholic or Catholic-compatible analysis as the only legitimate one available for use to explain any specific issue or social problem. The Catholic principle of “subsidiarity,” for instance, can be applied in many ways short of unacceptably employing either a statist or a libertarian perspective.

Let me state, in conclusion, that it has been a great honor to have been a member of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists since its founding in 1992. May God continue to bestow blessings on the organization and its members.