

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Dr. Stephen Hoeller

Interviewee: Dr. Stephen Hoeller

Interviewer: Speaker 1

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Abstract: Dr. Stephan Hoeller of Ecclesianstica discusses how COVID-19 affected his faith and the definition of faith. He also discusses how participation in his religious community was affected as a result of COVID-19.

Speaker 1 0:00

I am interviewing Dr. Stephan Hoeller of Ecclesianstica. So first question: how has COVID-19 affected your faith or beliefs?

Stephan Hoeller 0:14

Let me think, my state?

Speaker 1 0:16

Your, your faith.

Stephan Hoeller 0:23

My faith, oh okay, okay. Well, you know the term faith is a very, very vague one. And I think people generally evolved on their belief system. In this case, their religious beliefs. On the other hand, the faith could also mean the individuals own belief, the individual's own relationship to maybe in the case of religion to transcend them, so reality. So, it depends on what we say, in terms of the Gnostic philosophy of gnostic Christianity which I espouse, and which I teach, it is quite understandable, and historically accurate, that there have been many, epidemics, many pestilences, as they're even called in the bible throughout history, and that now, and then in our lifetimes, we will encounter one or two of these, and sometimes really major one, which appears to be the case. In in this instance, there seems to be an issue in this instance. So I will say my general, theology and philosophy are not particularly affected one way

or the other, because I realized that these sorts of things happen in history, and that they are part of life. They are part of the kinds of difficulties that affect the human race, for that matter anymore school because they have their pestilences as well. And it's one of those circumstances or key life that we are living with, that we cannot really change. And that we therefore have to manage when we all find ourselves in the midst of it, which is what most of us at this point are trying to do. So it's not a religious problem. It's not a problem that would damage at least my faith. And my philosophy of life, it is something that we have to take in stride, although no doubt, we are affected by it and become we become unhappy and sometimes we become frightened of one thing or the other, this is all part of [----] life, if that is an adequate answer to the question.

Speaker 1 3:28

Absolutely. The second question: is your religious community still gathering and how has COVID-19 affected your participation in the religious community?

Stephan Hoeller 3:42

Well yes, I'm afraid that the answer to that is a somewhat negative one, in the sense that I am in Los Angeles, California, which is the second largest epicenter of the epidemic after you New York. And so, we have fairly stringent regulations in the state, the city, and in the counties about the assembling of people. Initially, it was said that 10 people might be all right, then it came down to less than that. So, the fact of the matter is that assembling for the purposes of religious worship have become very, very difficult. So that we cannot really do it. For this reason just a very small number of a small number of the church is, a small number of laity, so from time to time, about two or three, or at the maximum four of us get gather for religious rituals and prayers. And we are our officially personal wishes, which we had really quite a few before, we had [_____]. And there's quite a bit for a little church, but we have to discontinue them until the regulations will change so as to permit this type of gathering. But of course, individual members do their prayers and so forth, and the [_____], very small number sometimes find ourselves in sanctuary and gather there for three or four short rituals there. We don't want to stay together beyond a certain length of time. Whether there's not really part of the question, whether we really agree with this procedure and to what extent that's another question and the opinions vary very greatly. It may well be that these kinds of regulations are really very helpful. It may also be that at least to a certain point, they become excessive or detrimental.