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The Catholic University and the Promise Inherent in Its Identity

The problem of self-identity is not just a problem for the young. It is a problem all the time. Perhaps the problem. It should haunt old age, and when it no longer does it should tell you that you are dead.

—Norman Maclean
*Young Men and Fire*¹

THE QUESTION AND ITS URGENCY

On the noon of September 16, 1992, Boston College, led by its president, was at prayer. The Mass of the Holy Spirit, celebrated on the steps of the O'Neill Library, was not a time for the president to address the faculty nor for administrators to make welcome incoming students nor for instructors to inaugurate their classes in semester requirements and contents. This had all been done—at faculty convocation, over many meetings, and in initial classes. Now this complex of president and administrators and students and doctoral candidates and faculty—this university—turned formally and explicitly as a university to address God. The prayers and readings that floated on the air of that brilliant autumn afternoon spoke repeatedly of the influence that is the heart of academic inquiry and learning, the Spirit of Truth; and the Scriptures gave focus to the petitions threading their way through the liturgy: that the Spirit of Truth would descend upon this university over the coming year, that this Spirit would mark its teaching, guide its inquiry and research, and permeate its collective life as a *collegium*, that this university as a Catholic university would realize the promise of the gospel: the Spirit of Truth who will guide us to all truth (see John 16:13).

That the Mass of the Holy Spirit was being celebrated indicated a Catholic university, conscious of its past and faithful to its identity, possessed of a conviction that the religious and the academic belong in concert, that their union is to be celebrated in beauty and worship; that classes remained in session, that sundry students made their way indifferently through the congregation to reach the library, and that the university community attended only in the

middle hundreds, bespoke a detached disinterest and problems unresolved but pervasive in Catholic universities throughout the nation.

I found myself wondering during the liturgy: What is this upon which we invoke the unspeakable mystery of God? What are “we” who are at prayer? The question did not seem a distraction. It seemed pressing, a question upon which we might well have meditated as we worshiped as a university. For many voices state with increasing urgency that the Catholic university will disappear; that it is already disappearing as a specific reality in American higher education; that the Catholic university will repeat the secularizing history of so many of the very great universities in the United States; that this evanescence of its religious character is inevitable, disclosing gradually the unfaced irrelevance of the religious to the intellectual; that as the university becomes more authentic, more academically distinguished, its Catholic character will proportionately dissipate and disappear. Only last February in a widely remarked article, David R. Carlin wrote that the Catholic identity of Catholic colleges and universities has since the 1960s “grown increasingly tenuous . . . Catholic colleges seem to be traveling the same road many Protestant colleges journeyed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a road leading to complete secularization, to complete loss of religious identity.”²

Many of the greatest universities in the United States and Europe have already written such a history of religious atrophy. One can wander about their campuses and remark the chapels and statues, the maxims on the gates or the portraits on the walls, and confront symbols that speak of a former religious intensity now long since dead. There one can paraphrase something of the cultural diagnosis of Friedrich Nietzsche: What are these universities now if not the tombs of God—monuments to the death of God within academic culture?³ It would be unwarranted to imagine that we are not liable to the same influences, naive to believe that we cannot repeat their history. Catholic universities have already repeated much in the history of their secularized academic peers.

One may recall the address of Robert Maynard Hutchins, the then president of the University of Chicago, to Catholic educators in 1937: “I find it necessary to level against you a scandalous accusation . . . You have imitated the worst features of secular education . . . What I say is that Catholic education is not Catholic enough.” This despite the fact that

the Catholic Church has the longest intellectual tradition of any institution in the contemporary world, the only uninterrupted tradition and the only explicit tradition; that is, it is the only institution which is conscious of its tradition. What I say is that this tradition must not be merely an idea, but must be practiced.

Despite the countervailing of the church’s enormous rich tradition, Hutchins found the Catholic imitation of the worst in secular education in athleticism,

collegiatism, vocationalism, and antiintellectualism, in all of which, he said, "I believe Catholic education is as bad as, maybe worse than, secular education."⁴ Now some fifty-five years after that judgment, one can wonder whether this imitation will reach out further, whether it will or has gradually extended itself into the Catholic identity of these institutions as well.

For the Catholic university is not a stable fact, not simply a here-and-now-and-always reality, not complete in itself. The nature and possibilities of anything human can be disclosed only if its temporality is taken seriously. So the university must necessarily understand itself in its traditions and its promise, in all the variant realizations that historical circumstances will evoke, but it also must recognize the possibilities of its own death. "Human creations," wrote Sigmund Freud, "are easily destroyed."⁵ Both the liabilities of any human project and contemporary readings of the Catholic university, then, should make us peculiarly sensitive to the threat irretrievably native to such a life-form: the Catholic university can be destroyed; it can destroy itself in a dissolution that proceeds gradually and as imperceptibly as drops of water noiselessly permeate a sponge.⁶

If this is true, then, one can only read the mission statements of some Catholic universities with a sense of regret. The very vagueness of their language and the indeterminacy of their general commitments leave one with the sense that the decline in some institutions may be already advanced, that the conjunction between a vibrant Catholicism or a Catholic culture and these universities appears increasingly faint, that the vision may be fading. Presumably the mission statement is the document in which the university expresses its self-understanding, its character and its dreams—to be confirmed or attenuated through subsequent resource allocations and hiring. The apostolic constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae* is not alone in its expectation that there, or in some similar document, "every Catholic university is to make known its Catholic identity" (art. 2, sec. 3).

Let me confine myself to three mission statements that come out of Catholic colleges and universities, each of them Jesuit. They frame general statements about education within the Jesuit or Judeo-Christian or Catholic tradition and identify the university as Jesuit or Catholic. They allude to the "service of faith and the promotion of justice," the generic focus given to all Jesuit apostolic commitments by the order's Thirty-Second General Congregation.⁷ However, there is not much beyond this level of generality. When one has left deference and set phrases behind, they do not indicate how this Catholic tradition tells significantly and uniquely upon the educational core of these institutions. "Faith and justice" does not concretely play out as much more than a general ideal for all apostolic work; certainly it is not specified as an ideal precisely for higher education or for an academic integration of gospel and culture. The faith of Christianity—what constitutes the content and richness of the creed and inspired two thousand years of Catholic reflection

and life—seems reduced to a general social ethic or morality. It is not what is contained in these documents that suggests decline. On the contrary, they make many fine and important commitments. The problem is what is left out or reduced to bland generalities.

Contextualized by that tradition and wishing that the students develop their “full range of human qualities: intellectual, personal, social, moral, and spiritual,” University X will afford students “the opportunity to have meaningful contact with art, music, history, philosophy, literature, and the religions of the world.” This is the only mention of “religion” in a statement devoid of reference to the self-disclosure of God or to Christ or to the Catholic church and in which the term *church* appears only to indicate the history of “service to church and state” that has characterized Jesuit colleges since the founding of Georgetown. I submit that Occidental or Smith could and would be willing to say almost as much, i.e., to speak respectfully of their religious traditions, to espouse “spiritual” development and to include with their commitment to the liberal arts the study of “the religions of the world.”

The goals do not advance much beyond this faint picture. The only implication for the Jesuit tradition in education is that this institution “aims to emphasize the importance of moral and spiritual values; to offer religious studies on an academic, ecumenical, professional basis; and to provide opportunities for religious worship and activities.” Once again, it is hard to see any real difference between this and the goals set by any number of serious liberal arts colleges, once committed to a particular religious tradition.

In the prologue to its statement of identity, University Y also acknowledges the tradition out of which it comes, a religious heritage that comprises “compassionate service of persons in need, commitment to quality education, the service of faith and the promotion of justice.” When one comes to the mission statement itself and how these charisms tell upon the academic community, one finds stated that “the University takes its mission from its educational traditions which emphasize concern for the dignity of the person and for the common good of the world community. This education seeks to integrate intellectual, spiritual, moral and social development.” Later in the document, “religious” will be added to this list, and the university said “to provide a value-based holistic education of exceptional quality.”

Whatever its rich tradition, this mission statement has a vision so indefinite in anything specifically Christian that a good secular university could almost locate itself comfortably within its rubrics. Granted its impressive emphasis upon social leadership and responsibilities, the statement does not advance much beyond American civil religion and a committed social ethic. One looks in vain for anything that needs or demands—as inescapably appropriate—the name of God, of Christ, of church, and of theology or indeed for anything uniquely Christian or Catholic in the paragraphs that speak of the core curriculum. They do not appear. What I found here, I found in others. The Catholic,

Christian character was shaded off into a vacuity that offers neither specification nor direction to the education given by the institution.

One could take University Z as a final example, an institution whose

primary objectives are to develop the creative intellectual potential of its students and to foster in them ethical and religious values and a sense of social responsibility. Jesuit Education, which began in 1547, is committed today to the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. [University Z] is Catholic in both tradition and spirit. It celebrates the God-given dignity of every human person.

This university is satisfied to give the generic orientation of the Society of Jesus and to offer as the only academic specification of the Catholic tradition and spirit the celebration "of the God-given dignity of every human person" and the welcome given to diversity. Beyond this, nothing is offered in the paragraphs that follow about the vision that Catholicism carries and about any unique character that such a Catholic, Jesuit commitment effects within the institution. Nothing specifically religious or theological figures in the descriptions of the liberal arts and professional schools, nothing about the interchange between culture and gospel or about how the genius of Catholicism tells upon the kind of student that the university hopes to produce. It would be hard to imagine any cultivated pagan who could not embrace the actual educational ideals that are concretely enumerated.

If I were to guess the reason for the blandness in these documents, my suspicion is that it emerges as the liability of a general advance. Over these years, the Catholic university has progressively added more and more faculty from traditions other than its own. This seems to me significant progress. It is essential to the very nature of a university to have represented the variant forms of human culture within the university. But then when one attempts to write a common statement of mission or purpose for the institution and to pass this through the faculty, the diversity within the faculty inhibits anything much beyond religious banalities. No faculty member should be excluded or made to feel second class; none should be imposed upon. Further, Catholics can remember the narrowness of parochial rubrics that denominated the Catholic character of preconciliar higher education. What emerges is the lowest common denominator, offending no one and subsuming the Catholic commitments of the university under general phrases about tradition and slogans that have become almost politically correct.

This may also result from the need to garner funds from state and federal agencies or from foundations or benefactors suspicious of religion. But here the history of the nineteenth century may be repeating itself:

Philanthropic foundations also figured in the secularization of higher education. The Carnegie Foundation before World War I specifically

excluded church-related schools from receiving grants, holding that such institutions by definition put limits on intellectual freedom and could not meet the test of a true college or university. In 1905, it offered to fund pensions for faculty, but restricted eligibility to nonsectarian higher education. Anxious for financial support, Bowdoin, Wesleyan, Rochester, Drake, Coe, Hanover, Occidental, and other schools cut their already tenuous denominational ties. In the century following the Civil War, several hundred colleges, once strongly Protestant, became officially non-sectarian.⁸

Other examples could be selected from the identity statements of Catholic universities, but let these three suffice. I say this not to embarrass academic institutions that have served the church well and continue to do so today. I do not disparage these universities in any way. But it is precisely when such institutions have allowed the Catholic character of their education to be subsumed by contextual references to a religious heritage, by general phrases that bespeak this tradition but remain unspecified for American higher education, and by moralisms that any enlightened figure would applaud, then one who admires them and hopes for great things from them cannot but suspect some decline at least in collective vision. This seems to me an enormously serious situation.

SOME RESPONSES

In response to the threat or anticipation of such a decline, outstanding Catholic educators have attempted to articulate for our own time the meaning of such a distinct academic institution as the American Catholic university. Some have described the Catholic university as one in which there is a strong Catholic presence, and others have defined it through the activities of campus ministry and the presence of religious and Catholic lay faculty and a requirement in religious studies or in theology.

Let me take only one example. In his annual report for the academic year 1980-1981, the late Timothy Healy, an important, much loved and admired Jesuit educator, framed the issue in this manner: "How does the Church live within a university? How do the two institutions interact on common ground? Indeed how do they share in the minds and hearts of faculty and students? In more local terms, what is it that makes and keeps Georgetown Catholic?"

In response, Father Healy suggested a vision in which the church and the university are cast as two distinct, interacting institutions: "The Church also lives here [in a Catholic university] in two distinct ways: first, it leads *its own life* on our grounds; secondly, the Church *joins in, shares and influences the life and the work of the university itself.*"⁹ In explaining the latter, Father Healy

maintained that at Georgetown “education remains principally a secular business, and the university is a secular entity with a clear secular job to do. The Church can deeply influence how that secular job is done.”¹⁰ Presumably the Catholic university is a secular reality modified by the presence and the influence of the sacred—without ceasing to be its secular self.

EXTRINSICISM

For whatever truth each of these possesses, such understandings seem to me seriously inadequate. At best, they present a vision of the Catholic university in which the religious and the academic, however interrelating and intersecting, are fundamentally extrinsic to one another: in no way does either bring the other to its own intrinsic or inherent completion nor do they form a cultural unity. Such an understanding of the Catholic university reads like theologically dated theories of “pure nature” and “the supernatural.” Father Healy’s “two distinct ways” in which the church is to share in an institution could describe the presence of the church within any major secular society, as the church “joins in, shares, and influences the life and work” of the city of San Francisco, the deliberations of the federal government, and the University of Massachusetts, the essentially secular somewhat directed and shaped by the religious.

To understand the genius and the unique academic promise of the Catholic university, however, one cannot make the relationship between knowledge and faith, nature and supernature, the “secular” and the “sacred” extrinsic to each other, two distinct entities related to each other additionally or influentially. The failure of so many *apologiae* for the Catholic university may well issue from a heritage of the neo-scholastic misunderstanding and miscasting of the relationship between nature and grace.

For one must not think that this extrinsicism is a modern compromise, a contemporary concession to secular respectability. From 1894-1952, the annual catalog of Boston College carried a four-page statement of the educational system of this Catholic institution, informing its readers that

education is understood by the Fathers of the Society in its completest sense, as the full and harmonious development of all those faculties that are distinctive of man . . . Learning is an instrument of education, not its end. The end is culture, and mental and moral development.

There follows a detailed exposition of the academic training of the student, defended in terms of the training of faculties.

Religion, let alone theology, is not mentioned until the last paragraphs:

Lastly, the system does not share the illusion of those who seem to imagine that education, understood as an enriching and stimulating of

the intellectual faculties, has a morally elevating influence in human life. While conceding the effects of education in energizing and refining imagination, taste, understanding and powers of observation, it has always held that knowledge and intellectual development of themselves have no moral efficacy. *Religion* only can purify the heart, and guide and strengthen the will.

The Jesuit system of education, then, aims at developing, side by side, the moral and intellectual faculties of the student and sending forth to the world men of sound judgment, of acute and rounded intellect, of upright and manly conscience. And since men are not made better citizens by the mere accumulation of knowledge, without a guiding and controlling force, the principal faculties to be developed are the moral faculties.¹¹

The catalog is quite clear. The secular subjects develop the intellect in habits and knowledge; the teaching of religion develops the student morally. By the most amazing of paradoxes, this is not too distant from the secularist's distinction: science deals with facts; religion deals with values. What is even more remarkable is that this statement "was embodied in whole or in part in the catalogs of a number of other Jesuit colleges from coast to coast."¹² The reduction of religion to morality has a long history.

Is that simply because the prose of the catalog failed to do justice to the Catholic character of the college? Yes and no. The Catholic colleges of those years—many, a combination of what is now the four-year high school and three years of college—were custodial institutions: Catholic because their components were Catholic—students, faculty, administrators—with courses that excluded alien influences and libraries and textbooks ecclesiastically censored. These institutions were to safeguard the faith and morals of their students and to defend Catholic truth against contemporary error. Much of the "Catholic character" of these institutions came out of this custodial focus and penetrated the discipline, the round of studies, the conversations, and the expectations of the campus. The Catholic culture of these institutions sustained much of their Catholic character, e.g., the daily Mass, First Friday devotions, and monthly confession.

But that being said, the catalog was more a mirror than a distortion. Theology was not taught; religion was; and philosophy was taken as the culmination of the curriculum. These courses in religion were catechetical and apologetic and not infrequently taught by the more inept members of the faculty. What is important to notice even during these years is the separation of serious studies and professional education from an inherent relationship with theological reflection. Religion was for propositional orthodoxy and Christian morality. In no way did it organically come out of the other disciplines, bringing the dynamism of the mind to its native completion in the self-revelation of

God. One can legitimately explore not so much how Catholic such an institution was, but how much of a Catholic *university*.¹³

It is, then, critically important to note—perhaps especially in our present inquiry into the identity of the Catholic university—that the contemporary problematic does not present a single vector, that of inevitable or threatened decline. Like most historical phenomena, the situation emerges far more pluriform and complicated than such an oversimplification would express. For example, the Catholic character of the universities has been strengthened significantly by the attention given to theology. Catholic theology, either as a graduate or undergraduate discipline, has become a much more serious, academic presence on the campus. As a result of this change in curriculum, there can be found in the United States something unprecedented in the history of the church: thousands of young women and men studying theology in their early adult years with the intellectual care that higher education offers. In addition, theology itself is becoming no longer a clerical preserve, but a lay discipline as well. This bespeaks a radical change in the nature of these institutions and an enormous contribution to the contemporary church. Another such positive vector is the growing commitment to social justice and the number of students who give some time after graduation to religious volunteer groups.¹⁴

Such positive indicators do not settle the question about the possible decline in religious identity, and academic courses do not supply for the intellectual formation that only a vital Catholic culture can give, but they may well contribute to the hope that the issue can be addressed effectively. One must admit that, in the lack of a structured relationship among the disciplines within the curriculum, these disciplines and theology still embody an extrinsicism. Theology is one more course among others.

THE INHERENT INTEGRITY OF THE ACADEMIC AND THE RELIGIOUS

The fundamental proposition of the Catholic university is that the religious and the academic are intrinsically related. Any movement toward meaning and truth is inchoately religious. This obviously does not suggest that quantum mechanics or geography is religion or theology; it does mean that the dynamism inherent in all inquiry and knowledge—if not inhibited—is toward ultimacy, toward a completion in which an issue or its resolution finds place in a universe that makes final sense, i.e., in the self-disclosure of God—the truth of the finite. At the same time, the tendencies of faith are inescapably toward the academic. This obviously does not suggest that all serious religion is scholarship; it does mean that the dynamism inherent in faith—if not inhibited—is toward its own understanding, toward its own self-possession in knowledge. In their

full development, the religious intrinsically involves the academic, and the academic intrinsically involves the religious—granted that this development is *de facto* always imperfectly realized at best or even seriously frustrated.

To grasp the character or promise of the Catholic university, one must understand this unique institution as an organic fulfillment of the two drives for knowledge out of which it issues: the drive of inquiry toward an ultimacy or that comprehensive meaning that is the object of religion; the drive of Christian faith, i.e., of living within the self-giving of God in Christ and in the Spirit, toward the appropriation of this comprehensive experience in understanding. The inherent integrity of faith-experience moving toward intelligence and of finite intelligence moving toward completion, this mutual entailment is what a Catholic university must affirm and embody, however halting and imperfect its attempts.

It is no accident that historically the university issued out of the church—not the hierarchy alone, but the people of God, the community that is the sacrament of human salvation. The present pope has stated that “such an ecclesial origin of the university cannot have been fortuitous. Rather it expresses something more profound. But why does the church need the university? . . . The reason for this need should be sought in the very mission of the church. In fact, the faith that the church announces is to be a *fides quaerens intellectum*, a faith that demands to penetrate human intelligence, to be thought out by the intellect of the human person.”¹⁵ The Catholic university is that academic community of higher education that issues out of the church and in which the church—in the words of the Second Vatican Council—“strives to relate all human culture to the announcement of salvation.”¹⁶

The Catholic university is to obtain this intrinsic relationship of culture and gospel in the ways in which it is a university: in research and instruction and the conversations that give a peculiar mark to its spirit; in service and symbols and collective life and the richness of an ecumenical Catholic culture; in the intellectual growth of its students and faculty and in the sharing of the diverse traditions out of which they come; in the passion for a just society that must characterize its graduates and that will in turn measure the religious and humane quality of their education. For the promised Spirit of Truth is to guide us into all truth—not only to know the truth, but to do the truth in lives driven by compassion and the desire to serve.

The university is Catholic in its deliberate determination to render the church and the broader world this unique service: to be an intellectual community where in utter academic freedom the variant lines of Catholic tradition and thought can intersect with the most complex challenges, contradictions, and reinforcements of contemporary thought or “secular culture” and move toward a reflective unity—whether in the habits of the students or in the direction of the research or in the community life of the academic community—between world culture and the self-revelation of God.¹⁷ It is not that these

simply intersect, but that one is seen as bringing the other to its own completion: the self-disclosure of God effected through revelation is completed in knowledge; the human dynamic to understand is completed in the self-disclosure of God. The Catholic university exists to further the development of both serious faith and all the forms of knowledge. No other institution within human culture can render this unique and critically important contribution to the church and to the contemporary world.

This unique finality gives or should give a particular cast to the internal academic structure of the university, both in the priority of questions its research will entertain and in its evaluation of the knowledge that is most worth having as well as in the common life that it fosters as its own culture. Such an order of questions for inquiry and of knowledge for instruction gives each institution of higher learning its formal identity and integrating spirit. In a Catholic university, this organic integrity of the several disciplines and sciences should be embodied in a theological wisdom in which all of the sciences and arts, professions, and forms of human achievement are integrated both in the structure of the curriculum and in the habits of mind that such an education should elicit.

It is not that the university is an institution in which the church—almost as a foreign body—is present and has an influence. It is rather that the university is a single community, one constituted by the drive toward the unity of the gospel with all human culture, one formed by its consecration to “the Spirit of Truth.” In the fine expression of the apostolic constitution: “A Catholic university pursues its objectives through its formation of an authentic human community animated by the spirit of Christ” (n. 21). That is why this community must include within itself all that passes for knowledge, all human traditions and cultures as well as the academic freedom that makes open discussion possible. Without the active presence of all of these various traditions, it would be impossible to promote this relationship of the gospel “to all human culture.”¹⁸ The fullness of the academic is essential if Christianity is to achieve its reflective depth and union with all that is human; and the seriously religious is essential if the pursuit of knowledge is to attend to its own reach toward ultimacy and final meaning.

IDENTITY

When one talks about identity, one does it often in “substantial” terms, granting that a university is not a substance or a person, but defining it as if it were—as if there were a substantial reality that continues to grow or decline. So, for example, canon law can speak of public and private juridical persons. But however useful such fictions are in law, it is not the case that the university is a substance and in actual fact it can be misleading to speak of it as if it

were a substance. It is a network of relationships, built upon the activities that these relationships entail and that are in turn supported by them. In Aristotelian metaphysics, the university is a relation built upon the giving and receiving, the actions and the undergoings of human experience. This means that the university has the character that its activities give it, and these themselves must be recognized as historical, as temporal, as variant in different cultures and as dynamically ordered to a future.

This bears upon the discussions of identity: what a Catholic university is. Sometimes that definition is made descriptively: one finds out what is called a Catholic university and then describes its operations. Sometimes that definition is made prescriptively: one searches the documents and then deduces from them what is a "real" Catholic university. Both of these have their values, but each has its limitations. The descriptive model can excise vision and challenge; the prescriptive model can describe a university that never was and never will be. A further possibility lies with taking the dynamic, developing components of such a university as a point of departure and seeing in the term of their inherent development and organic relationship the nature of the Catholic university. One can understand what anything dynamic is through its completion, i.e., through its native promise—even though so much of this remains to be realized. Let me take this last method to summarize much of the argument of this paper.

The components of the Catholic university can be subsumed under faith and human culture, however multiple the realization of either. But faith, I have argued, tends organically and inherently toward the academic and the academic in the same intrinsic manner tends toward an ultimacy through which knowledge reaches its completion, i.e., the self-disclosure of God. This inherent unity bespeaks the promise of the Catholic university: to allow the dynamism native to each to reach its completion in the other. Rather than truncate the dynamism of knowing through interdicting the religious dimension of life or isolating the religious from the academic, the Catholic university has the resources and the charge to integrate them by allowing each its full development.

Something of this occurs in the Catholic universities of the United States. I would suggest that they realize their own unique identity to the degree that this integration is their achievement. No other institution in the church can promote the full development and embody the inherent dynamic unity between the academic and the religious. This may constitute the major challenge for the contemporary Catholic universities: to become gradually what they are, to realize their identity, to allow what is prescriptive discourse to become valid description. In this identity is their promise; in this promise is their identity.

EX CORDE ECCLESIAE

Now I turn to *Ex corde Ecclesiae* on this issue of identity. I find such a call in the apostolic constitution. Its emphatic identification of the issue of identity

as that of the organic integration of faith and knowledge is not found so much in the document itself and its norms as with the papal introduction.¹⁹ These first eleven paragraphs take up precisely the point I think crucial, the inherent and dynamic integration of the academic and the religious. The pope phrases the unity as that of a “universal humanism,” which conjoins reflectively all “aspects of the truth in their essential connection with the supreme Truth, who is God” (n. 4). The components that are brought to their natural unity are variously described as “faith and reason” (n. 5) or “the richness of revelation and of nature” (n. 5) or “the Gospel” and “the fields of knowledge” (n. 6) or the church with science and world cultures (n. 10). The pope envisages in the university “the united endeavor of intelligence and faith that will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity, created in the image and likeness of God, renewed even more marvelously after sin, in Christ, and called to shine forth in the light of the Spirit” (n. 5).

Such a united endeavor issues out of an “encounter . . . between the unfathomable richness of the salvific message of the Gospel and the variety and immensity of the fields of knowledge” (n. 6). The “encounter” with a clear determination of its components brings the discussion of the specificity of the Catholic university into a focus that seems absent from a number of mission statements of the American Catholic universities. The papal introduction does not speak explicitly of the native dynamism of the intellect for the ultimacies of the religious or of the religious for its self-possession in knowledge, but it suggests this organic unity of desire with its understanding of the Catholic university as “distinguished by its free search for the whole truth about nature, man, and God” (n. 4). And it strengthens this mutual orientation with its appeal to Augustine and Anselm: “*Intellege ut credas; crede ut intellegas*” (n. 5).

The initial section of the apostolic constitution takes up the Catholic university as described by the final document of the Second International Congress of Delegates of Catholic Universities, and here the theory seems to me less satisfactory. The list of four characteristics is neither clear nor is its adequacy self-evident (n. 13); and the university is distinguished into the community of scholars conceptually distinct from “an academic institution in which Catholicism is vitally present and operative” (n. 14). But in this section also the unitive functions of the university are given an important emphasis: the integration of the disciplines with the aid of philosophy and theology; the dialogic integration between faith and reason, both bearing witness to the unity of truth; the unity of the ethical and scientific; and the intergrative function of theology (nn. 16-19).

What is critical to note is that these forms of the unity between the academic and the religious are placed within the elaboration of the identity of the Catholic university. What the norms will later legislate must be seen as instrumental to this finality, as subservient to it, and they are to be judged accordingly. The apostolic constitution allows such judgments, permitting flex-

ibility in their incorporation into the statutes of Catholic universities through the phrase “as much as possible” (art. 1, sec. 3).

What are the implications, then, of the apostolic constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, for the American Catholic universities? It is calling for a much stronger, much more concrete affirmation or articulation of the Catholic character of these universities and calling for it as an organic unity between the gospel and culture. In this, it seems to me, *Ex corde Ecclesiae* performs a valuable, needed service. The apostolic constitution can be read as an opportune summons of the church for these universities to possess a deeper, more articulate sense of what they are before the Catholic, Christian character evanesces into directionless vagueness and finally disappears. Such calls at such a time seem needed. William P. Leahy concludes his recent study of Catholic higher education with this judgment: “Catholic postsecondary schools suffer from a lack of vision; and as Proverbs 29:18 proclaims, ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish.’”²⁰

The American Catholic universities will not likely receive a more authoritative summons to renew their vision, to become what they are, however appropriate or inappropriate one finds particular statements or norms by which this identity is to be fostered. (These latter this paper will not consider so that the importance of this general summons is not crowded out by a series of tactical considerations.)

But will such a voice and such a summons be heard? The dangerously growing alienation from the Holy See within the United States may well make this more difficult than it should be. Many in the Catholic academy have been alienated by what they see as an excessive centralization in the church and—more particularly in the fields of education—by the impositions of mandates, professions of faith, and oaths of fidelity and by repeated reports of the unwarranted use of the present powers of the Holy See to inhibit academic appointments or promotions or public recognition through honorary degrees.

This is admittedly a very serious situation, but to cite it as grounds for denying the central summons of *Ex corde Ecclesiae* a sympathetic hearing would be tragic. This voice and this summons to a more definitive understanding of the Catholic university deserve to be heard.

NOTES

1. This statement was found in Maclean’s files after his death along with other notes that he had written for a preface. See “Publisher’s Note,” *Young Men and Fire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. vii.

2. David R. Carlin, Jr., “From Ghetto to Hilltop: Our Colleges, Our Selves,” *Commonweal* 120 (February 12, 1993): 7.

3. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, iii.125.

4. Robert M. Hutchins, “The Integrating Principle of Catholic Higher Education,” Address delivered at the Midwest Regional Unit of the College and University Depart-

ment of the National Catholic Educational Association, 7 April 1937, *College Newsletter, Midwest Regional Unity, NCEA* (May 1937), pp. 1, 4. In describing collegiatism, Hutchins speaks of “the production of well-tubbed young Americans. They don’t have much in the heads, but are acceptable as decoration of at least one political party and make good additions to a house-party.”

5. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), p. 6.

6. Ignatius of Loyola used this metaphor—“como gota de agua que entra en una esponja”—to denote the gradual, almost unnoticeable progress of either disintegration or of development. See “Rules for Discernment of Spirits,” II.7, in *The Spiritual Exercises*, trans. and ed. Joseph Rickaby (London: Burns, Oates, Ltd., 1915), p. 117.

7. See “Jesuits Today,” decree 2 of the Thirty-Second General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, nn. 1-3; “Our Mission Today,” decree 4 of the Thirty-Second General Congregation, pass., etc., as in *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations of the Society of Jesus, An English Translation*, prepared by the Jesuit Conference, ed. John W. Padberg, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977).

8. William P. Leahy, S.J., *Adapting to America: Catholics, Jesuits, and Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991), p. 16.

9. Timothy Healy, S.J., “Belief and Teaching,” *Georgetown Magazine* (January-February 1982), p. 3; italics added.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5. One of the five ways the church can shape the university is through the presence of theology, but the value of theology seems mostly therapeutic: Academic theology challenges absolute science, absolute art, absolute athletics, etc., and denies the completeness of any other kinds and subsets of learning. See pp. 6-7.

11. Charles F. Donovan, S.J., “Father Timothy Brosnahan, National Spokesman for Jesuit Liberal Education, Boston College President, 1894-1898” (unpublished manuscript), pp. 5-7. For the appearance and duration of this statement, see p. 1.

12. Charles F. Donovan, S.J., David R. Dunigan, S.J., Paul A. FitzGerald, S.J., *History of Boston College from the Beginnings to 1990* (Chestnut Hill, Mass.: University Press of Boston College, 1990), p. 99.

13. See Michael J. Buckley, S.J., “The Catholic University as Pluralistic Forum,” *Thought* 46 (June 1971): 202-205.

14. For the need to include within the liberal or humanistic education of the student a “disciplined sensitivity to human life in its very ordinary or even wretched forms,” as a foundational stage toward a sense of human solidarity, see Michael J. Buckley, S.J., “The University and the Concern for Social Justice: The Search for a New Humanism,” *Thought* 57 (June 1982): 229-33.

15. John Paul II, “The Church Needs the University,” 8 March 1982, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition (May 3, 1982), p. 6.

16. *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 8. The actual Latin of this text that gives the finality of all Catholic education reads: “universam culturam humanam ad nuntium salutis prostremo ordinare.” Joseph Alberigo et al., ed., *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, editio 3 (Bologna: Instituto per le scienze religiose, 1973), p. 964.

17. This is a slightly reworked statement from Buckley, “The Catholic University as Pluralistic Forum,” p. 208. This statement is also contained in “Jesuit, Catholic

Higher Education: Some Tentative Theses," *Review for Religious* 42 (May-June 1983), p. 343 as well as in a report on the nature of a Catholic university, given to the members of the Academic and Faculty Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees of Notre Dame University on 2 May 1991. For the conjunction of this with some of the areas in which this purpose is obtained, see the first draft of the Mission Statement of the University of Notre Dame as printed in *The Observer* (Monday, September 7, 1992), pp. 6-7.

18. See Buckley, "Jesuit, Catholic Higher Education," pp. 343-44.

19. This paper will not touch upon the canonical declarations and norms of *Ex corde Ecclesiae*. For a fine analysis of these, see James H. Provost, "The Canonical Aspects of Catholic Identity in the Light of *Ex corde Ecclesiae*," *Studia Canonica* 25 (1991): 155-91.

20. Leahy, *Adapting to America*, p. 156.