GLADLY WOLDE HE LERNE AND GLADLY TECHE:
THE CATHOLIC SCHOLAR IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Lawrence S. Cunningham

The task to which I have been appointed is to talk about the future of the Catholic scholar or, more precisely, where those scholars are to come from and if they come, will they gravitate towards our Catholic schools. I use the word "gravitate" advisedly because my hope would be that our schools will have an attractive and pulling power and not because the alternative to teaching at a Catholic school would be working as night clerk at a convenience store.

I intend to honor the spirit of that task but my hope is that my remarks would be *mutatis mutandis* applicable to the Christian college more generally. Therefore I will more often than not simply use the adjective "Christian" but will speak out of the experience that I know best, the Roman Catholic one. Furthermore, at this stage of things we cannot reflect on the future without somehow having the number 2000 flash on and off in our heads. It is for that reason, and not for any apocalyptic purposes, that my title uses the word "millennium."

In fact, my suspicion is that long before we reach that new millennium—less than a decade from now—we will be sick to death of savants, pundits, and prognosticators looking into that time and telling us with varying degrees of certainty what is ahead. In my mind's ear I already hear the quiet beat of word processing keys as numberless authors and would-be authors already work on millennial tomes of every stripe.

I have a personal reason for looking to the future and it is, bluntly, that I will have less of it than many here precisely because I have so much of the past. This came to me forcefully four years ago when I left Florida State University to come to Notre Dame: The dreaded wheel of time had turned! A pert young lady came up to me after class with greetings from her mother whom I had taught when she was a senior and I had just begun teaching. Despite my interior rationalization (she was a senior and I had not even finished my Ph.D.; that she had married young and I had entered the classroom young) I was not happy. Such thoughts could not shield me from what, borrowing freely from a poet, I call intimations of mortality.

There is a further, more professional, reason to take stock now, not because of the near changing of the dial to 2000 but because in my own tradition (Roman Catholic) and in my own field (theology) some profound changes have taken place over the past generation. Those changes are so dramatic that even in the midst of them we feel the difference, although what those changes portend is still not clear.

Let me give you some instances of those changes since they are part of the background for this paper. Everything I will note here has happened within my own professional memory in those years immediately following upon the closure of the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

• In one generation, the study of theology in the Roman Catholic Church in this country shifted decisively from seminaries to universities. The pedagogical orientation, as a consequence, has equally shifted from the predominant mode of training priests for the ministry. In fact, many Roman Catholic seminaries today accept lay students and provide various training programs in the ministry. The major *loci* for the serious study of theology today has moved decisively to the university or, in a few instances, to *consortia* of theological faculties with loose attachments to universities.

To understand how recent this shift of theology to the university is, we might note the startling fact that there was no department of theology at Notre Dame until about 1960, and no graduate education in Catholic theology until the mid 1960s when the first real Ph.D. program was developed by Bernard Cooke at Marquette University.

• Increasingly, those teaching theology in Catholic

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universities are not priests, but are lay persons of both sexes. Furthermore, they frequently come with excellent educations from schools that are not Roman Catholic. The recent hirings at the assistant professor level at my own institution are instructive in this regard: Of seven recent appointments at the junior level, only one is a priest (trained at Berkeley's Jesuit School of Theology) while six are graduates of Chicago, Yale, Duke, and Harvard. Furthermore, these teachers do not mold themselves on the seminary model of priest-professors who lived with their charges and served both as instructors and spiritual guides and shapers of religious vocations—which was the case with seminary professors.

One consequence of the above is that the presumptive wholeness of Catholic theological education—with its insistence on a background in classics, followed by a major emphasis in scholastic philosophy, culminating in a full course of theology and its allied disciplines—has been fractured beyond repair. In fact, that education was often shabby and second-rate even though it had as its *beau ideal* a holistic vision which went under the somewhat romantic notion of "Christian humanism." Even those training for Holy Orders today do so without any presumption that they will have a degree in philosophy (much less any Latin) when they begin their course in theology. Indeed, some candidates for the ministerial degree (the M. Div.) require more than background in theology; they require some rudimentary catechesis since their educational backgrounds are so varied.

• Just as the profile of the teaching personnel in Catholic schools changes and has changed, so also the recipients of that teaching have changed: Not only are there more lay persons (and increasing numbers of women), but many enter the study of theology without ministerial or pastoral goals in mind. Furthermore, in some of the leading institutions of theological education outside the Catholic tradition in this country, Catholics are increasingly a large part of the denominational spectrum, just as Catholic scholars are more represented in conspicuous teaching and research positions in those same institutions. If there has been one place where the ecumenical movement has borne fruit, it is in the cross-fertilization of theological education in those schools which still attempt—with varying degrees of success—to maintain a denominational identity and a fidelity to their own vision of the Christian tradition, while, at the same time, seeking to be representative of the Christian tradition in a manner not restricted to a particular denominational strain. (A fuller account of these changes is given in articles by Thomas O'Meara, Robert J. Wister and Gerald O'Collins in *America*, 3 February, 1990.)

• The core identity of many Catholic institutions of higher learning is historically rooted in the charisms of the religious communities which founded them. From these communities have come not only teachers and administrators, but rectors of residence halls, campus ministers, counselors, and so on. These communities not only provided personnel, but a particular angle of vision as to what an education might be; thus, to cite a conspicuous example, an education based on the Jesuit *ratio studiorum*. Furthermore, these religious communities reflected in their lives a model of spirituality—not only because of their insistence on religious values, but in the atmosphere they provided on the campus in everything from the liturgical life which they sustained to the art and architecture which advertised their presence and reflected their view of the Christian life.

Unless there is a dramatic demographic shift, that rootedness in the spirit of a given religious community will erode over a very short period of time, at least in terms of the presence of personnel. For colleges sponsored by religious women that erosion is in its final stages already, while for those schools sponsored by religious men the erosion is well underway; in both cases it seems monodirectional.

I note this erosion not with glee because only God knows the true heft of the contributions made by generations of self-sacrificing religious who lived exemplary lives of dedication and service to higher education. I note it, however, with some emphasis because to do otherwise is to indulge in a nostalgia for something that current trends do not allow us to recover, and further because this shift has forced clear-minded people to think creatively about how the particular charism of their founders must be reconceptualized for the future needs of both the institution and, more generally, for the larger constituencies of both church and society.

To this point, my remarks have tended to focus on theological education in the Catholic university and the religious character deriving from the founders of institutions. It is at this point that a caveat needs to be raised—one that has already been part of the extensive commentary on the problems of the religiously affiliated college/university. The warning is this: I do not wish to define the religious character of an institution solely in terms of the presence of a theology department and a core of religious who may have founded an institution. That is, as we will see, a "fall back" position which does not address the real issues.

This is not to deny that a robust liturgical life on campus is important. Nor is it to deny that a vigorous theology department is essential. Indeed, the temptation to turn theology into the more bland designation of "Religious Studies" is, in my estimation, a retreat for religiously sponsored schools. I would suggest that a theological faculty, dedicated to the Christian tradition in general and serious about its own denominational heritage in particular is an essential part of the self-identity of a denominational school. Religious Studies as an encompassing field may well be appropriate for a secular school, but theology is a discipline, and its absence from the curriculum of a religious school is, in my estimation, an abdication of responsibility.

If an institution is religiously identified only because

it so designates itself as such in its mission statement (no matter how earnest the prose) and because it offers bland religious instruction where Hinduism is no more privileged than Christianity as part of its core requirements and because it offers a menu of worship opportunities through an office of campus ministry, there *is no guarantee that it will remain a religious institution* except in the self understanding of its officers, theologians, and chaplains. It may provide a certain comfort to those committed to the religious vision (and, let us be honest, it may serve the development office well as it appeals to those potential donors and parents who remember an earlier time and an earlier *esprit*) but it could (I did not say "must") be what Sigmund Freud called religion *tout court:* an illusion.

The reason why this could be the case is that, apart from the vision of the central administration (and the fact that the same administration is the keeper of the purse), it is really the faculty that sets the tone of the institution. The faculty is, in essence, the *universitas* which has (or, in many, cases does not have) the vision of what an institution is and how to be a part of it. The obverse is also true. If, for example, all hirings are systematically made on the basis of the desire for academic luminaries and no consideration is given about how such people fit into the larger community, what happens very quickly is that the larger institution becomes merely an administrative umbrella for the atomized labors of individuals or those entrenched duchies known as departments and programs.

And the fallout is equally obvious: The autonomous units not only do not share, but ignore or patronize the mission statement as boilerplate; campus ministry becomes just one more office in the extra-intellectual life of the school less important than, say, food services. Meanwhile the obligatory courses in religion/theology can be benignly dismissed as doing "no harm."

If this negative scenario, outlined above, is a plausible one, then it seems obvious that were we to wrestle seriously with the question of from where future teacher/scholars for religious schools will come, we could not do so in terms of the nurture of this or that person as a discrete individual. The issue must be conjoined to the larger issue of how nurturing institutions presently understand themselves as seedbeds for their successors. We must, in short, think of the university as a community of learning with a common vision of what (Christian) education is.

Some schools will have an easy time of it in this regard. If an institution is so explicitly identified with a religious worldview that commitment to that worldview is a *sine qua non* of employment or attendance, there is no problem—as long as there is a constituency upon which to draw both students and faculty. Within this category I would have in mind schools like Yeshiva University, Brigham Young, Calvin College, Wheaton, and others which are strong bearers of a given tradition. Their problems are not those of religious identity as much as problems of institutional inbreeding and that temptation to sectarianism.

Other institutions have strong denominational traditions and actual presence but have become, for a number of reasons, more pluralistic in response to a number of factors. Let me use my own school as a case in point, since we should be obedient to the dictum of speaking about that which we know best.

Notre Dame advertises itself in its literature and mission statement as a "National Catholic research university." That it has a national constituency is a fact. That it is a research institution is a devout wish which is inching toward fact. That it is Catholic is more than a fact, at least in the popular mind; the mythos of Notre Dame haunts American Catholic popular culture, and the artifacts on its campus are suffused with a kind of Catholicism which is traditional while—at least according to some of its more vocal critics—is either patriarchally oppressive (say some of its younger, lay, female, faculty) or dangerously modernist (say some of its older faculty and alumni).

Let us assume that for the foreseeable future the student body will be mostly Catholic (today nearly 90 percent of the undergraduates are; the percentages diminish a bit at the graduate level, reaching 50 percent in a few of the professional schools, like law), as are a representative percentage of the faculty. Here is the problem: When one wishes to recruit, say, graduate professors in science and technology, what does one do when the available pool not only does not include a large number of Catholics but comprises persons who, given the givens today, are more likely to be Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists than Christians or Jews?

And further: What happens as the number of religious persons who join the faculty in the various schools dries up along with the drying up of the same religious who traditionally served at every level of the institutional life from the central administration to resident directors in the dormitories?

Who knows the answers to these questions?

What does seem to be clear is that the "Catholic character" of an institution like Notre Dame is in a state of flux—a flux which is recognized by the university as a moment in which new and different ways of thinking are imperative, lest the university feed on a mythos which is rapidly becoming part of history rather than being a regnant dynamic giving shape to what we are and what we want to be.

The kinds of problems I have sketched out above are not meant to be of the hand-wringing variety, but to be a sober overview of what seems to be the current situation. To say that the study of theology has undergone a paradigmatic shift, or that the personnel structure of certain institutions is changing, or that pluralism is becoming a reality in the faculty is not to say that Catholic education is in a state of decline. It is only to say that it is changing.

The plain fact of the matter is that, despite change and the need for self-identification, every indication is that there is an enormous clientele in this country for schools

which provide a coherent education rooted in ethical and religious values. We should ponder the fact that in our major cities, parents—especially minority parents of limited means—make enormous sacrifices to send their children to religious schools, not only because they are seen as "better" (in some material sense, they are not often better) but because they believe that their children will receive a holistic education that gives them hope for a better future as well as a disciplined atmosphere in which to receive that education. There is no reason why this attractiveness should not carry over to post-secondary education if we are alert enough to maintain that heritage in the face of counter pressures from the Zeitgeist. Which leaves me then with two large questions to address: First, what is the "Catholic character" of a college/university broadly understood? and second, how does a Catholic school nurture its future teacher/scholars?

The Catholic Character of Higher Education

On August 15, 1990 Pope John Paul II issued an apostolic constitution on Catholic Universities under the title *Ex Corde Ecclesiae.* It was a document whose arrival was not anticipated with eagerness because of the many rumors that it would be a retrograde instruction, demanding greater ecclesial control over Catholic institutions of higher learning. The earlier actions of the Holy See against theologians in various universities lent credence to the rumors. It was with an immense sigh of relief that most of us read the actual text, since the rumors of intolerance and control proved, in fact, to be just those—rumors. Evidently, the interventions of Catholic educators (especially from countries with a strong tradition of academic autonomy) had borne fruit.

Ex Corde Ecclesiae is divided into two parts: the first a schematic reflection on the nature and mission of Catholic universities, the second dealing with certain general norms relative to the relationship of Catholic universities to the Holy See and to the local bishop.

According to the apostolic constitution a school worthy of the name Catholic should exhibit four general characteristics—characteristics which I would say are unimpeachable and fundamental:

1) A Christian inspiration not only of individuals, but of the university community as such.

2) A continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute its own research.

3) Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the church.

4) An institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life. (I.A.15 in the translation published in *Origins* on October 4, 1991)

The papal insistence that the university community be Christian in inspiration does not mean that non-Christians are unwelcome on the faculty or among the students; this would hardly be appropriate for a church which sponsors colleges and universities in lands where Christians are a decided minority (e.g. Sophia University in Tokyo). What it does mean, as the document spells out in other places, is that members of the community should at least be supportive of the general self identification of the institution and that a majority of the faculty be *de facto* committed to the Catholic faith.

Wisely, the norms do not spell out what the term "majority" means, since cultural and national differences will only define the term. It would be easier to mean majority as numerical majority in a country like Ireland or Poland, whereas elsewhere majority might mean something like a "critical mass" or a "core community." The document is quite explicit, however, that the mission statement and Catholic character be spelled out for everyone, so that those who would find it an impossibility to live within those parameters might not be beguiled into thinking that the educational philosophy of the institution is unimportant.

The most significant and promising of the four principles enunciated in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* is the fourth one: that there be an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and to the entire human family "in their pilgrimage to their transcendent goal which gives meaning to life."

What that characteristic endorses, in fact, is a renewed commitment of the church to the kind of incarnational theology energized by the Second Vatican Council (especially in its reflections on the church in the modern world—*Gaudium Et Spes*) and, following on that, a commitment to the union of Christian belief to the needs of this world. There is, in short, an endorsement to the strategy of defining Christian life not solely in terms of orthodoxy, but as that orthodoxy finds expression in orthopraxy. It is, to put it in a negative formulation, a warning against seeing the Christian message as totally counter-cultural (although it is surely that in part), sectarian, and world-denying.

A full reading of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* would give no comfort to those who would like to see the Catholic university or college as a bulwark against the world. It is not to be something that is only counter-cultural. On the contrary, it insists that not only should the university be in dialogue with modern culture and contemporary research, but it should add to its store and, also, learn from it. In a section affirming that the university is part of the larger attempt at evangelization (the term in contemporary Catholic usage, despite what we hear with American ears, is not a synonym for proselytization), it is instructive to see how the pope describes the specific gift that the university makes towards that end; let me quote his words:

> "...research carried out in light of the Christian message which puts new human discoveries at the service of individuals and society; education offered in a faith context that forms men and women capable of rational and critical judgment and con-

scious of the transcendent dignity of the human person; professional training that incorporates ethical values and a sense of service to individuals and society; the dialogue with culture that makes the faith better understood and the theological research that translates the faith into contemporary language..." (I. B. 46).

Permit me to juxtapose one other, briefer, description of the work of a Catholic university which also has the ring of the generality to it:

"There are two aspects of a university. The first and most evident is that it has to do with culture, with knowledge, with use of the intellect. The second, not so evident, is that it must be concerned with social reality—precisely because a university is a social force: It must transform and enlighten the society in which it lives." (Sobrino, 149)

Those sentiments, so seemingly banal on the page, were written by Ignacio Ellacuria, the rector of the Catholic University of Central America in El Salvador, seven years before he, five other Jesuit professors, and two Salvadoran women, were murdered on the campus of that school by the Salvadoran military who found the notion of a university as a "social force" an abhorrent one.

I cite Ellacuria not to dramatize but to illustrate how the conjunction of Christian inspiration and a sense of the university as a social reality takes on vividness in certain situations. It is not a question of the "Social Gospel"; it is a question of how the Gospel becomes incarnate in a specific setting (the university/college) and within a particular context: that of learning, teaching, and research across the curriculum.

Seen from that perspective, we might also have an entry into the issue of the nurturance of future teachers for the Christian school without automatically thinking that this can be done by educating only theologians/chaplains/church professionals or persons who are formed in the Christian tradition so that we can call them "good practicing Christians" who also happen to be economists or chemists.

Nurturing the Christian Teacher/Scholar

This is not a new issue in Roman Catholic higher education. In the late 1920s, three Jesuit institutions (Creighton, Marquette, and St. Louis) had a plan to subsidize the doctoral studies of selected young men with a view that they would come back to their sponsoring institutions in order to teach for a designated number of years. As recently as two years ago, an article appeared in *America* (March 17, 1990) proposing an umbrella organization that would undertake such enterprises as summer institutes to gather top graduate students for colloquia as a precise instrument of recruiting faculty. Doubtlessly, other strategies may have been advanced in other quarters.

My intention is not to suggest such tools, but to deal more broadly with the context in which such strategems might work.

On this issue I have one broad generalization to make and some specific examples and reflections to flesh out the generalization. The generalization is this: We will produce teacher/scholars for Christian schools only to the degree that our present form of education allows students to see that their own faith commitment can be translated into a way of living that is consonant with, and integral to, their desire to be professionals in their chosen field of study, and, further, that Christian schools will be supportive of their desire to grow in that fashion both when they are students among us and, later, when they join us as peers in the academic world.

There will always be a few persons who, having finished their graduate education, will gravitate to church-related institutions simply because they feel comfortable there and sense that their personal religious life will be nurtured in such an environment. That is a worthy desire and schools who find such people, assuming their competency, are blessed with their presence. Schools can count on such persons, but they make an unreliable available pool from which to build and sustain a faculty.

The real challenge is to do something a good deal more creative. Let me give you an example not as an imitable model but as a way of thinking creatively.

A few years ago, with seed monies given by the Jesuit community, Boston College inaugurated on its campus the Jesuit Institute. (I am grateful to Robert Daly, S.J. for his generous help in describing the work of the Institute which he now heads.) The purpose of the Institute is to attack a range of problems, both intellectual and social, from the vantage point of the Christian tradition exemplified by the Jesuit charism. The work of the Institute is various:

- Small grants are given to scholars to work on a specific topic. One such grant allowed a faculty person at a small liberal arts college to work on a values-centered curriculum for undergraduates. Another allowed an Indian scholar to study the problems of integrating "Scheduled Caste" persons into the sociopolitical life of a region in India.
- Cross-disciplinary seminars are held with BC professors from various departments focussed on a specific topic (e.g. philosophers, theologians, and physicists are working on the theology of creation in the post-Einsteinian period).
- Visiting scholars are brought to the campus for a semester to work upon an agreed topic with the expectation that they will contribute to the ongoing life of the Institute.

The merit of such a program is that it demands collaboration across disciplines, thereby encouraging people from diverse fields to focus on a given issue within the broad contours of the Institute's philosophy. It further provides an image of how collaborative work can be done, and allows that work to be done in an amiable setting.

The Jesuit Institute (one can think, likewise, of the Notre Dame Peace Institute or other similar ventures) requires money, personnel, and support. It is not something every college or university is able to do and there is no suggestion here that it should be done in this manner or on such a scale. Where it can be done, however, it bears striking witness to a commitment to an incarnational theological vision of higher education. Such experiments exhibit a faith in the notion that people can work across disciplines on real human problems with an impetus derived from faith commitment.

What one can deduce more generally from efforts described above, however, is useful and more widely applicable. If a Christian school takes the adjective seriously, then the ways that school selects areas of study and research should reflect that appellation. It would not be out of the question, for instance, to insist that the business faculty emphasize the value of small ventures in entrepreneurship as a vehicle for social reconstruction rather than simply stamping out business clones to serve in corporate America. It would not be unthinkable to look for people in education, architecture, or planning who would be interested in the social well-being of society at large rather than simply training people for the job market. Christian schools need not necessarily lust after every academic fashion in the liberal arts, but might think of ways to give students some sense of the Christian critique of culture as well as the cultural critique of Christianity.

I would not see such strategies as forms of crypto proselytization, but as coherent and defensible moves to insure that the values of our inherited tradition impinge on the education of our young across a wide spectrum of studies.

There is another point. Many of our students do not fully appreciate how privileged they are to enjoy the fruits of higher education. In many cases they have no concept of the sacrifices their parents and sponsoring institutions make in order to allow them a place in a college. One way in which they can get both some sense of this generosity and a way of paying it back is through a period of volunteer service. One of the things I find most attractive about Notre Dame is its emphasis on encouraging volunteer service while its students are on campus and its commitment to fostering the idea of extended volunteer service for its recent graduates. Volunteerism, grounded critically in the Gospel, is a most apt form of *diakonia* for institutes of higher education.

I do not hesitate to use the hackneyed word "edifying" when I think about the young men and women whom I have taught over the past few years who have gone on to work with handicapped persons in the L'Arche communities, or those who are workers with the Hospice movement, or those who have become volunteers with the Catholic Workers, or those who make longer commitments to work in the *poblaciones* of Latin America. While some may be motivated by adventure or even a hidden superiority deriving from *noblesse oblige,* most, I think, volunteer because the explicit philosophy of Notre Dame sets out a vision of incarnational Christianity to which students can respond. The university also uses strategies to correlate this volunteer work with the students' academic work so that those who do volunteer work while on campus can then reflect critically on that service through selected courses offered under the aegis of the theology department.

Notre Dame is hardly unique in the cultivation of volunteerism. It is probably encouraged on most U.S. campuses, and even more intensively at those schools which have a religious character. Such efforts are not only valuable as capstones to an undergraduate education but are seedbeds for the nurturance of future teacher-scholars for our schools.

On what basis would I make that claim? Fundamentally, what some amount of service offers is a complex of learning experiences which are interconnected and unavailable in the classroom. First, there is the perspective one gains from seeing the world from the angle of those who suffer or are deprived or in some kind of need. Second, there is the chastening lesson that one is only beginning, rather than completing, one's education—the thirst for more learning (I am thinking of graduate education here) is an often underappreciated by-product of service. Third, there is the primordial gratitude (I can think of no other word) towards an institution that does something more than merely serve as an intellectual filling station, pumping in data, theories, and bibliographies. These ends are most often obtained when there is some concerted effort to provide classroom experience along with the volunteer service.

It is that last point, I think, which deserves some emphasis. When an institution commands not only the loyalty of its alumni, but an admiration for what that institution does intellectually and culturally and what it stands for in terms of its religious commitment, there is every reason to hope that graduates will feel inclined to come back to their alma mater or a similar school in order to be part of its ongoing work.

That "coming home" of graduates is what I had in mind when I adorned the title of this paper with the famous line of praise that Geoffrey Chaucer utters in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* where he describes the poor scholar who spends all of his money for books and who, in gratitude, prays and works in honor of the benefactors who gave him an education. That scholar had been nurtured on learning and formed to think of the academic life as being hospitable for both the learner and the teacher—who, ideally, are often one and the same person. That scholar saw the academic life as a way of living rather than merely a way to make a living; a way of "lerning" and a way of "teching."

If, in the future, we are to have a regular pool of well-trained academics who will commit themselves to the Christian college, it will only be because we have provided them,

in their formative years, with a sense of vocation and a model of how a Christian intellectual might profitably spend his or her productive academic years. That will demand that we value economists, psychologists, chemists, and others not as an apologetic proof that Christians can also excel (a sure sign of intellectual inferiority), but because our institutions are able to say that here at this school there is a place for one to do one's best work precisely as a mature Christian intellectual. We need to foster intellectual vocations, not merely intellectual careers.

Those who wish a religious refuge will always be ready to "come home" to the parent institution; if one wishes a faculty that fully and adventurously reflects the mission of the school, the conditions must be such that those who could go anywhere would still wish to "come home" because they see a chance for a holistic development as a scholar and believer and, equally, they will feel that they can contribute to something more than mere careerism.

Alasdair MacIntyre, at the end of his provocative work *After Virtue* wrote:

> What matters at this stage [of our history] is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. And if the tradition of virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting, not for Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict. (264)

I am not sure I fully share MacIntyre's pessimistic diagnosis of our culture and I am surely not suggesting that colleges/universities take on a monastic cast. I do quite agree, however, that culture is served by hospitable communities that cultivate intellect and virtue. I would further suggest that Christian colleges/universities have within their historic tradition the philosophical and theological resources to ideate and sustain a sense of common intellectual and spiritual purpose. I would also argue that they have the "location" to foster an intelligent kind of spirituality that nourishes both the spirit and the mind.

The great challenge, of course, is to utilize those resources in such a way that genuine community of purpose becomes actual. To the degree that is done we can hope for the future of our institutions and, more to the point of our conference, their attractive power in drawing young scholars to join in and further redefine the work of those institutions If, on the other hand, we fail to articulate and implement any coherent vision of Christian education, we will be just another educational enterprise competing in the marketplace for money, students, and personnel who are looking for the best deal open to them. That, I submit, is not a happy prospect to contemplate.❑

RELATED WORKS

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Professor Tom Buford, Furman University, responds...

In his rich and provocative essay Professor Cunningham discusses two problems facing many Christian colleges, their Christian identity and the uncertain supply of Christian teachers. An important theme running throughout his discussion is the significance of a pluralistic faculty for Christian colleges.

What is bothersome about this trend toward a pluralistic faculty? It is not only the internal strain such a pluralism places on the identity of a college. We may best understand it as the problem it presents for students, who, preparing themselves as intellectual professionals with a coherent, holistic view of life find themselves in a colllege which says it stands for a Christian world view and yet surrounds them with teachers who profess and live lives that have no relation to Christianity and who may actively repudiate it.

In the face of the trend toward pluralism Cunningham asks two important questions: where will Christian faculty members come from, and will they gravitate to Christian colleges? However, he believes these questions can be adequately dealt with only by examining two prior questions: what is the Catholic (or generally Christian) character of a college or university, and how does that institution nurture its future teacher/scholars?

Cunningham answers these questions by appealing to a framework within which a college can legitimately call itself Catholic and on the basis of which it can attract Christian scholars. Such colleges can attract and hold Christian scholars only if they translate the faith into a way of living consonant with the students' desire for both professional development and religious growth throughout their lives.

But can we follow Cunningham's lead? If we sharpen

the issue we will see that this framework, though attractive, may not help us very much. Let me explain. Let's assume that a college identifies itself as Christian and that it has already moved along the path to a pluralistic faculty. It cannot retrace its steps; many of the non-Christian faculty are on tenure, and many of their interests are firmly set in the curriculum. Its only option is find some satisfactory way to live with a pluralistic faculty. But if it chooses to do so it must allow the interests of that pluralistic faculty to find their way into the education of the student. But can it do so and the college remain Christian? Consider pluralism and its impact on a Christian college, particularly its faculty and education of its students.

How can we construe pluralism? Ernst Cassirer pointed out fifty years ago that an important characteristic of the twentieth century is that there is no generally agreed upon ultimate principle, body of knowledge, or power (such as the power of reason) to which all of us ought appeal in settling disputes among competing goods to determine which is correct. His point is clearly illustrated by the contest between goods and justice. Many goods are available to people in our society (Christianity is only one among many), and there is no way to disallow opposing goods except on grounds of justice. Each proposed good has a right to be heard and acted upon just so long as it does not violate assumed principles of justice. And when it does, our only recourse, according to a scholar like Stuart Hampshire, is to appeal to procedural justice to decide whether our view of substantive justice is too narrow or the proposed good is unjust. The flourishing of competing goods refereed by procedural justice is an instance of an open, pluralistic society.

We can now consider the impact of pluralism on a Christian college. First, the faculty. As a Christian college—following the lead of a pluralistic society—becomes more and more open to opposing viewpoints, the faculty will reflect that openness. And as the faculty becomes more pluralistic and professionalized it is likely to be composed of fewer Christians than non-Christians. Cunningham is well aware of this. But let's look at it more closely.

The college, in preparing students for careers, acts as a credentialing agency for them. In turn it submits to the credentialing agencies for its own faculty: graduate schools, professional organizations, and publishers of professional books and journals. The college hires that person who best measures up to the criteria required by her professional discipline. And those criteria have little or nothing to do with other goods such as one's religious persuasion. The researcher who has one eye cocked on the standards of the profession, the other on his research project, may be blind to teaching students. A case in point is Cunningham's example of hiring the best chemist who is also a Hindu. The significance of this for the college is that as goes the faculty, so goes the college. As the faculty becomes more professional and religious persuasion is secondary, it is likely the faculty will become predominantly non-Christian. With a more professionalized faculty and with less emphasis on one's religious persuasion, a strain will be felt between the identity of the college and the faculty which does not accept that identity. When that strain arises, the college is susceptible to shifts in its moral-religious self-understanding. That strain must be addressed if a college is to be Christian in Cunningham's sense.

Next, the student. A Christian college organized on a pluralistic model must guide the student to her/his career. The students we teach live in a pluralistic world, and they need to find their way in it. We can see how pluralism manifests itself in the growth and development of careers. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century, careers have become increasingly important for Americans, who see them as the principal way to make a good living and to gain security for one's family. And as Christian colleges prepare the young for careers, they attempt to do so within the framework of a Christian world view. But that is not easy. Credentialing societies and professional organizations set standards by which a person's career entrance is screened and performance is evaluated. The professions become endless paths of routinized, rationalized behavior that have no view of any larger moral context beyond their own ends. In addition, careers change; some fall by the wayside and others come into existence. Both carriage-making and computer design show us this truth. As the institutions of our society change, so do the routes our people follow to earn a living and take care of their families. It is clear how a professional in computer science can help a student become a professional in computer science. But if that professional is not Christian, it is not clear how she can help the student translate the Christian faith into a way of life consonant with the student's desire to be professional.

What, then, are we to make of Cunningham's vision? Though we have only noticed the impact of pluralism on the development of professionalism among faculty and students, we have seen enough to recognize that Christian colleges which take the path of pluralism must carefully think through their vision. Cunningham articulates four characteristics to which a Christian college must subscribe if it is to call itself Christian. What is not clear is how those principles will help colleges which have taken the pluralist, professionalized path to remain Christian. How will adopting those principles help the college to reconcile the splinteredness of faculty professionalism and student careerism? How will those principles guide a modern student to the holism and coherence for their career-driven lives that Cunningham rightly believes they need and want? Those questions must be addressed by colleges if the education of modern young people is to be informed by the Christian faith. Cunningham has provoked us to think about what we are doing. And I hope he will tell us more.❑