

IDENTITY AND MISSION IN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES

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The question of the substantive identity and mission of Catholic colleges and universities is being widely asked again today. Much, but certainly not all, of the conversation has centered around Pope John Paul II's apostolic constitution, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, published on August 15, 1990, which set out a vision of the Catholic university, proposed general norms of application, and called for more specific norms to be drawn up by local and regional ecclesiastical authority. If many initial responses to this document, at least in this country, were marked by fears that it would threaten the institutional autonomy and academic freedom considered essential to a university, later reflection has also acknowledged the challenge it represents to Catholic universities to come to a clearer understanding of and commitment to a distinctive identity and mission.

That the papal document was thought to be necessary itself indicates a concern that Catholic universities were in danger of losing (or even had already lost) a sense of distinctive identity and mission. That they were relaxing their ties to the hierarchy and to their founding religious orders, were tolerating religious dissent, were muting references to the Church in their mission-statements were muting them in order to gain governmental aid or to make themselves more attractive to wider constituencies were the types of complaints which dominated the discussion in the 1960s and 1970s. They came most often from Catholic conservatives, who for that reason, such being the state of dialogue at the time, were suspected and therefore dismissed for favoring a certain nostalgic restorationism.

But in the last five or ten years, substantive concerns have been expressed also by people who certainly cannot be accused of that tendency: that the prominent role given to philosophy and theology has been greatly reduced; that theology itself is dissolving into religious studies; that the curriculum is becoming indistinguishable from that of secular universities; that little effort is being made to communicate the Catholic intellectual, artistic, cultural heritage; that the attempt at least to initiate some kind of integration of faith and reason has no institutional embodiment. George M. Marsden's detailed study of how once-Protestant universities had lost their religious connections and become even establishments of non-belief has often been cited as a warning to institutions still at least nominally Catholic.¹

The concerns, then, are widespread, expressed by representatives of the whole spectrum of Catholic opinion, and they go far beyond the question of institutional relationships.

The new concern is not without its critics, of course. Some people fear that the reaffirmation of Catholic identity will be made at the cost of a loss of institutional autonomy and academic

¹ See George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

freedom, represents a return to the pre-conciliar Catholic sub-culture, will alienate our institutions from the mainstream of the academic world, and will make non-Catholic faculty and students into second-class citizens. Instead of emphasizing distinct Catholic identity, we should stress instead a distinct mission, undertaken along with others, to our society and world.²

Many of the discussions occur at a rather abstract level marked by rather reified notions of either an ideal university or an ideal Church, almost as if they are speaking about two clearly known and normatively defined things. When both notions are reified, it is easy to be dogmatic either in support or in opposition to the notion of a Catholic university. Not uncommonly, however, one of the notions is given an ideal definition while the other is described in all its ambiguous concreteness. I will begin, then, with an argument against reifying the terms "university" and "Church."

Against Reification

A modern university is one of the many practical ways in which our society today chooses to articulate the social distribution of knowledge and to reproduce its cultural community. It does not derive its substance from some divine establishment nor have its internal features or relations with other social bodies been the same across all ages. It represents how people have come to institutionalize efforts to achieve certain desirable goals: the handing on of a cultural heritage, the training of students in critical thinking, the preparation of students for roles in society, the advancement of knowledge, and, perhaps, the progress of humanity. Any university is a human product, an objectivation of common understandings and commitments, consisting, then, not primarily in its buildings and endowments, but in the minds and hearts of its professors, students, and administrators cooperating in accepted institutional patterns for the sake of commonly desired goals. The history of universities is the history of such common understandings and commitments and their institutionalization, and the modern secular American university, one pole of our discussion, is the result of both the achievements and the ambiguities of modernity, not least of all with regard to religion.

To the highly reified notion of the university, defined often in purely formal institutional categories, is often counterposed a highly reified notion of the Church, defined often simply by its divine origin and particularly by its hierarchical institutions. This mistake is commonly made by both sides of the discussion, as, for example, when the relation between Church and university is reduced to the question of institutional autonomy, often asked in the form of whether or not ecclesiastical authority is "external" to the Catholic university (note the spatial metaphor).

But a more concrete notion of the Church is available, which can move the issue from the realm of reified institutions to that of substantive identity. One of the earliest definitions of the Church recommends itself because it is both theologically and sociologically precise: The Church is the *congregatio fidelium*, the assembly of people who believe that God was in Christ reconciling

² The most intelligent statement of this criticism is David J. O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994).

the world to himself. It refers, then, to believers united by a common experience of human life which they have been given to interpret, to evaluate, and to orient in the light of Jesus Christ. The Church resides in, consists of, this communion of life, truth, and love. It is not to be "reified" as if it exists or acts somewhere other than in people, men and women, united in communities and patterns of relationships, and engaging in cooperative activities. There is no Church apart from communities of believers; the "ontology" of the Church is the transformed intersubjectivity of its members and the institutions and activities to which it gives rise.

For this reason judgments about what "the Church" is or does are not verified simply by reference to the statements or activities of its leaders, but can also be verified in what its other members say and do. Historically, the great majority of Catholic colleges and universities, certainly in this country, but perhaps throughout the world also, were not founded by popes or bishops but by individuals and groups, especially by religious orders, and these establishments may quite legitimately be considered to have been actions of the Church, expressions of its identity and realizations of its mission. The relation between Church and university, or the degree to which a university exists as an expression of the Church's identity and mission, is not reducible, then, to questions of relations with the Church's hierarchy, however important these may be.

That the Church in this concrete sense became one of the initiators of that institutional experiment called the university should not pass without observation. Tertullian was in some respects denying his own formation and forgetting his own considerable dialectical and rhetorical skills when he counterposed Jerusalem and Athens, the Church and the Academy. Other patristic figures, from Justin to John Damascene, were more self-consistent in their efforts to effect a reconciliation of their faith and their intellectual culture. The great result of this effort was the construction of a distinctively Christian worldview which at once recognized the catholic significance of the Christ-event, the enfleshment of the creative and redemptive *Logos* of God, and sought to render it and the world it illumines intelligible by a quite sophisticated dialectical engagement with the culture of the day; and that distinctive worldview in turn generated a Christian culture that in important respects transformed the world of antiquity. The Church, that is, the community of people brought together because of, in, and for the sake of Christ, became a history-shaping force, and one of the instruments of the effect it had was a creative engagement with the available intellectual culture.

When new cultural and scientific challenges challenged the Christian culture which the Fathers had created and which had been kept alive in the monastic and cathedral schools of the early Middle Ages, there were brave believing souls who institutionalized both the cultivation of the new learning and the conversation between it and the ancient faith in the medieval universities. If at this point the university was "in" the Church, one should note that the spatial metaphor means that the activities thought to constitute the former were respected and eagerly undertaken by people devoted to the commitments that constitute the latter.

How it happened that the one pattern of activities--the university--came to be widely considered to be incompatible with the other pattern of activities--the Church--is a big question. To answer it one would have to enter into the long and often painful history of the differentiation of

disciplines, the revolution in scientific method, the fearful obscurantism of too many churchmen and theologians, the sometimes voluntary emigration of philosophy and theology from the cultural arena, the effort to make universities instruments of the hegemony of the enlightened and omni-competent modern state, the often forced secularization of universities, the reluctance or inability of church leaders to encourage and of Catholic intellectuals to attempt again, in new circumstances, the effort of which St. Thomas Aquinas remains the greatest hero.

The result in the modern era was that while the increasingly secular enterprise was powerfully institutionalized in the State and the universities which serve its purposes, the Church was powerfully institutionalizing itself as an alienated and, on its view, equally "perfect," that is, sovereign society which would have universities to serve its purposes. Church and State were commonly taken to refer to two distinct institutional entities, and their alienation was reflected in spatial metaphors as when it was asked how to build bridges from one to the other. It is not surprising, then, that the relationship between the Church and the agnostically secular university, now the cultural norm, is also imagined in spatial terms, as when people ask whether the Church is "in" the university or the university "in" the Church.

The disadvantage of the spatial metaphor is its reifying tendencies. It tends to move the issue away from the subjectivity and intersubjectivity in which the whole "ontology" of both social bodies consists. The issue is really whether the subjectivity that leads to the institutionalization of intelligent, reasonable, and responsible cooperation we call a university is compatible with the subjectivity that constitutes the institutionalization of faith, hope and love we call the Church. And that question, of course, is answered differently by unbelievers, who are inclined to deny or at least to doubt that compatibility, and by believers, who are inclined to affirm it. Universities, from the Middle Ages to the fairly recent past, were inclined to accept it; universities in the last two centuries increasingly have denied it, if not always in principle, at least in the fashion in which they have concretely patterned themselves. Peter Steinfels put the present state of things nicely:

George Bernard Shaw quipped that a Catholic university was a contradiction in terms, while John Henry Newman argued at length why a secular university was a contradiction in terms because it excluded from its scope a central set of questions and area of knowledge.

We know which view is more popular, the sound bite or the argument.³

Tertullian, himself a master of the sound bite, appears to have won.

"Ultimate Questions" and "Basic Issues"

This brief history is mainly simple description. How it is to be judged and evaluated is another question, in answering which the basic question of the reasonableness of faith will hardly be of minor significance. Perhaps I may put the issue more concretely by referring to some remarks John Courtney Murray made when addressing the place of religion in the state-university. He described a general cultural problematic which, even then in 1958, he called "post-modern" and

³ Peter Steinfels, "Catholic Identity: Emerging Consensus," *Origins* 25 (August 24, 1995) 176.

which he defined by cultural pluralism: the multiplicity of answers to and even the refusal of certain "Ultimate Questions" and "Basic Issues," which he set out as follows:

What is the rank of man within the order of being, if there is an order of being? Is the nature of man simply continuous with the nature of the cosmic universe, to be understood in terms of its laws, whatever they may be? Or is there a discontinuity between man and the rest of nature, in consequence of the fact that the nature of man is spiritual in a unique sense? What is man's destiny, his *summum bonum*? Is it to be found and fulfilled within terrestrial history, or does it lie beyond time in "another world"? What is the "sense" of history, its direction and meaning and finality? Or is the category of "finality" meaningless? What can a man know? What do you mean when you say, "I know"? What manner of certitude or certainty attaches to human knowledge? Is knowledge a univocal term, or are there diverse modes and degrees of knowledge, discontinuous one from another? Can man's knowledge--and also his love--reach to realities that are transcendent to the world of matter, space, and time? Is there a God? What is God--a Person, a Power, or simply a projection of man's own consciousness? Does God have a care for man? Has God entered the world of human history there to accomplish a "redemption"? Is the theological concept of "salvation" only a reassuring ambiguity? Or has it a content that is at once mysterious and intelligible? What mental equivalents attach to all the words that have been the currency of civilized discourse--freedom, justice, order, law, authority, power, peace, virtue, morality, religion?⁴

In these questions are outlined, of course, the tasks involved in constructing a general worldview. Murray contrasted this to what Newman called "viewiness," superficial knowledge in several or even in all areas. Murray thought that even state-universities should offer an opportunity for students to engage such questions and should not be allowed to avoid them on the grounds of a supposed "non-committalism" (what today is sometimes called "value-neutrality") for the sake of a purely formal and rather Kantian "freedom." *A fortiori* he thought it incumbent upon Catholic educational institutions to pursue a goal which he idealized as "a universal knowledge, founded on a broad basis of fact, integrated by a philosophic view, this view itself being then vitally related to the organic body of Christian truth."⁵ If the Catholic viewpoint could be communicated on the great questions, students would have a critically grounded basis on which to resist scientism and relativism.

It is perhaps worth noting that Murray's questions are by no means "sectarian," that is, concerned only with the internal and distinctive integrity of a Church conceived of as existing in an alien world. They are in fact "catholic," that is, concerned with the whole, with the whole of reality and whether it includes the realm of the spirit and the Supreme Spirit who is God, with the whole

⁴ John Courtney Murray, "The Making of a Pluralistic Society--A Catholic View," in *Religion and the State University*, ed. Erich A. Walter (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1958) 14.

⁵ Murray, "The Christian Idea of Education," in *The Christian Idea of Education*, ed. Edmund Fuller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) 162.

of history and its direction and whether that includes the redemptive care of God and the redemptive service of the Church. The basic issue, as Newman argued, concerns the length and breadth, height and depth, of the *universitas rerum*, the totality of things, that the *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, the community of teachers and students, is committed to exploring. In Murray's mind the universe to be studied included the universe of human achievement, economics, politics, society, culture, historical decline and development, and the acts of God to reverse decline and promote development. His reflections on Catholic education always presumed that the Church had a necessary role to play in addressing what he called "the spiritual crisis in the temporal order," and he thought Catholic universities to be essential in preparing lay leaders to undertake that task. For him Catholic universities were one necessary way for the Church to undertake a redemptive role in the world. That distinct mission required the distinct and substantive identity that could be articulated in the responses of faith to the "Ultimate Questions."

Religion at the Margins

Murray was not confident that secular universities could be persuaded to engage those large questions, and indeed other participants at the same symposium denied that they should.⁶ Their reluctance reflects the effect upon universities, their departments, and their curricula of the common intellectual and cultural marginalization of religion. The late-modern ideal of a university coincides with sets of developments that either presupposed or brought about the banishment of the religious from the realms of philosophy, science, economics, politics, and culture and its restriction to the realm of the private individual or the socially inconsequential Church. This is much of what the anti-modern Church opposed under the term "Liberalism," and it was not wrong to oppose it, however indiscriminating in its condemnation and heavy-handed in its actions it often was. The cultural effect of that banishment is visible in the typical attitudes our undergraduates bring with them. It often comes as a surprise to them to hear that their religion might have something to say about the public realm: it was summed up for me the day that I began a course on "The Church and Social Issues" with a reference to the efforts of the U.S. Bishops to compose a pastoral letter on the American economy and was greeted with an expostulation from a student: "What the hell do bishops know about economics?"--a question that I do not think was asking about a matter of fact.

Now if it is commonly assumed that religion has merely private and inner meaning, it will be natural for the institutions designed to reproduce the culture built on that assumption not to make room for religion in their curricula, except perhaps as a separate department, as marginal to the main conversation as the Church is thought to be to the mainstream culture. It will also be natural that the disciplines that mediate this cultural heritage will reflect a Whig interpretation of history, for which the triumph of the secular is the main story, and that the disciplines thought to be the bearers of the future--especially the physical and human sciences--will be thought of as adequate to the task

⁶ See Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 412-13.

without having to bother about the religious. The banishment of religion to the margins of the university is the faithful echo of the banishment of religion to the margins of social life.

A primary element in the anthropology that underlies this presumption is the naturalism that marks so much of modernity, a philosophy that, if Henri de Lubac and Louis Dupré are correct, was even ratified by certain early-modern theologies that considered the supernatural a more or less extrinsic and arbitrary addition to the human. Nature and history had their own integrity and finality, which could be adequately studied and effectively shaped by philosophers and scientists, while theologians could concentrate on the realm of the supernatural. So thorough was this surrender that when twentieth-century philosophers and theologians like Maurice Blondel and de Lubac attempted to restore a more integrated view they were accused of at once compromising the integrity of the natural and naturalizing the supernatural. An institutional consequence of this alienation of theology from responsibility for history was the tendency to reduce the Church-world relationship to the Church-State relationship and then to identify the latter with relationships among the supreme authorities of the two "perfect societies," one responsible for the "temporal" order, the other for the "spiritual." We are still living with the consequences of these developments, as when the university is thought to be a basically "secular" enterprise and the presence of the Church is thought adequately guaranteed by the presence of a theology department and a campus ministry.

Against Marginalization

But suppose that one does not accept the marginalized role assigned to religion, the Church, and theology. Return for a moment to the "Ultimate Questions" which Murray thought were so crucial to the life of a society (*not* just to the Church). Whether or not the human person is reducible to the dumb play of material forces, whether or not he has a destiny beyond the grave, whether or not he can attain truth, whether or not there is a God, whether or not this God has a redemptive care for us, surely have consequences for the way in which we conceive not only our private lives but our social lives as well, for the fashion in which we deal with one another, for the criteria by which we measure success and failure, for the means we consider whereby to render human life-- not just our own, not just our nation's, but the whole world's life-- less unworthy even of the human, never mind the divine. The Church's faith implies responses to all these questions, and these responses guide not only what it thinks its legitimate role in the world to be but also what it thinks it has a right to demand will be explored in institutions that claim to be built upon and to flow from that faith's responses to those questions.

Or suppose one shares Bernard Lonergan's view that the dynamics of progress, sin, and grace describe not only the life-projects of individuals but also the collective self-project of humanity, that a Christian theology of history can and ought to be brought into dialectical encounter with other theories of individual and collective development, that God's redemptive care for us in the word of Christ and the grace of the Spirit is not a doctrine merely accessory to a basically philosophical analysis but one that is central to a critical analysis of the structures and dynamics of concrete human history.

Or suppose one shares Johann Baptist Metz's rare courage and asks a question that many theologians prefer to avoid: the relation between the vast program of human self-emancipation undertaken by the Enlightenment and the Christian doctrine of redemption by God in Jesus Christ. Suppose one were to agree with the later Metz that "the memory of Jesus Christ" is found "dangerous" to modern bourgeois society because God's redemptive work took the form of the Cross, an option for a method discredited by the Enlightenment on behalf of those most often left behind and forgotten in the movement of enlightened progress.

Or suppose finally one were to agree with a recent author that both Church and university should define their identity and mission in the light of a central fact of our historical moment:

From now on, it is only through conscious choice and through a deliberate policy that humanity can survive.... The task is enormous, some will call it a utopian one.... The building of a more just humanity or of a more united international community is not just a dream or a vain ideal. It is a moral imperative, a sacred duty [requiring] a fresh mobilization of everybody's talents and energies....

Suppose one thought of a Catholic university, in consequence of such a sense of crisis and challenge, to be called on, to use the same author's words,

to become an ever more effective instrument of cultural progress for individuals as well as for society. Included among its research activities, therefore, will be a study of serious contemporary problems in areas such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political stability, a more just sharing in the world's resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level.

The author of these last two quotations is Pope John Paul II.⁷

Now, whatever else one might want to say about the various visions briefly outlined by these four men, it cannot be said that they yield a "sectarian" or "restorationist" vision of a possible identity and mission for a Catholic university. The theology that underlies them is not a domesticated theology for internal consumption alone; it is in fact a theology of concrete history. Nor is the redemptive service of society, culture, and history they envisage something that can be left for departments of religion or theology to investigate while other departments go their own way, simply mirroring the structures and obeying the disciplinary criteria in common use in the society and culture. All of the men quoted accept the need for integrated and critical human studies, a conversation between theologians and other scholars in all disciplines in which both have much to learn and much to teach. All of them expect that a Catholic university will be the place where such conversation and collaboration would be privileged.

⁷ The first is from a speech at Hiroshima, cited in O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church*, 189; the second is from *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, #32.

An Ideal Hypothesis

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to take a moment away from the mind-narrowing and spirit-crushing demands of financial insecurity, of governmental dependencies, of intrusive accrediting agencies, of "mainstream" cultural presuppositions and to consider an ideal hypothesis. Suppose there were a group of believers with sufficient means and sufficient enthusiasm and energy to wish to found a Catholic college or university. Why might they entertain such a project? Might it not be because they see things that need to be taught that are not being taught elsewhere, questions to be asked that are not being asked elsewhere? Might it not be because they see people not being taught who ought to be taught? Might it not be because they have a vision of what the world might be like, ought to be like, and wish to prepare their students to undertake the task of realizing that vision? And behind or below all such interests and purposes, might there not lie the vision of the whole that derives from faith in God and in Jesus Christ?

If so, what might one expect such a Catholic institution of higher learning to be like? Surely there must be some respects in which it would differ from institutions that systematically ignore or deny the vision of faith. It might be expected that it will have as one of its chief goals the communication of the religious, intellectual, and cultural heritage of the Catholic past. It might be expected to provoke some questions that many other institutions do not ask--obscurantism not being a monopoly of the religiously committed--and that the initiating vision and finalizing purposes will identify and promote research in areas that might otherwise be neglected. It might be expected that the asking of such questions and the promotion of such research will be articulated in the construction of curricula within disciplines and across disciplines.⁸ It might be expected that the once-honored but now much-neglected ideal of integration would be recovered and expanded at least to initiate--I do not expect it to be achieved this side of the Beatific Vision--the effort to relate all branches of knowledge to the faith. It might be expected that such an institution would wish to judge itself and to be judged by the criterion of what difference its students, twenty or thirty years after their graduation, are making in the world God created and Christ redeemed. And it might be expected that commitment to, or at least respect for, the pursuit of such purposes will enter into the criteria for the hiring of faculty.

⁸ The famous Land O'Lakes Statement of 1967, "The Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University," is most famous for its insistence that "the Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself." Far less frequently cited and far less effectively implemented is the same document's expectation that "...in a Catholic university there will be a special interest in interdisciplinary problems and relationships" and that there will be "present in many or most of the non-theological areas Christian scholars who are not only interested in and competent in their own fields, but also have a personal interest in the cross-disciplinary confrontation;" see *American Catholic Higher Education: Essential Documents, 1967-1990*, ed. Alice Gallin (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992) 8-9.

Without some such commitments, it is difficult to see why anyone might wish to found a Catholic university. Without some such institutional realizations of those commitments, it is difficult to see how the assertion of a Catholic identity and mission could be anything other than empty rhetoric.

Two anecdotes to point the issue. The first occurred in a revealing moment at the 1993 Georgetown University Symposium on *Ex corde Ecclesiae*. At one point David Hollenbach held up an advertisement from *The New York Times* which featured the bold headline: DARWIN WAS RIGHT! The text beneath invited those who were interested in learning the skills that would make them among the fittest who alone survive in the Wall Street jungle to come study economics--at the Fordham Business School! Everyone laughed. It is worth reflecting on why we laughed: presumably it was because of the incongruity that Social Darwinism was the economic theory appealed to in order to attract students to a Catholic institution. But why should that be considered incongruous except because of a felt sense that Catholic faith has some implications for the economic realm and that these ought to be reflected in the way a Catholic university undertakes a study of that realm?

Last summer I was conversing with a professor in the law school of a Catholic university. I asked her whether her school's curriculum differed in any respects from that at a secular school of law. She could not think of any. A course on professionalism was the closest thing to a course on ethics, and she knew of no place in which the relationship between natural law and positive law was explored. I was left with a conviction that some comparative curriculum studies might be useful, more useful than studies of mission-statements, as a way of trying to determine whether Catholic universities in fact have a distinct identity and mission.

Perhaps some cautions are in order. My hypothesis concerns the founding of a *university*, not a seminary, not a grammar school, not a prayer-group. A university is envisaged in order to be able to study a universe of nature and of history, but a universe from which God and Christ are not absent nor ineffective. It would not be founded, indeed it would not be necessary, if the Catholic worldview and the responses it implies to Murray's "Ultimate Questions" already, that is, without genuine and difficult inquiry, yield answers to all the little questions into which the Basic Issues quickly resolve themselves. The hypothesis does not pretend that theology is "the full science of man" or that it can by itself be the instrument of a desired integration.⁹ It does not "suppose that a second-rate Catholic university is any more acceptable to God in the new law than was in the old law the sacrifice of maimed or diseased beasts."¹⁰ It knows that the Church itself cannot accomplish its redemptive task without the effort at conversation and collaboration of all the disciplines that ideally should take place at a university. It knows that the effort to discover such answers and to articulate them intelligently, critically, and persuasively requires hard work, which has its own demands, both methodological and institutional, and which the Church neglects at the peril not only of the

⁹ Lonergan, *Method*, 364.

¹⁰ Bernard Lonergan, "The Role of the Catholic University in the Modern World," *Collection* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) 118.

intellectual integrity of the enterprise, not only of the legitimate freedom its scholars require, but also of the Church's own ability to be an effective co-agent in guaranteeing and orienting the future of humanity. In Bernard Lonergan's terms, if intellectual conversion apart from moral and religious conversion may tend toward the pathological, it has its own exigencies, which are not reducible to the ethical and the religious.

Some other difficulties in the way of conceiving the Catholic university in these terms should perhaps also be mentioned. For one thing, I have been struck by the number of young Catholic scholars who appear no longer to believe that there is a distinct Catholic viewpoint that can yield a set of responses to Murray's basic issues. For some of them Catholicism has no doctrinal identity but refers to some vague common culture they happen to have drunk in with their mother's milk, which they are more or less happy to live in, but which they do not expect to be able to contribute much of intellectual value to their disciplines which they are content to pursue in terms and by criteria determined elsewhere. Their own education has necessarily focused on specialized areas, in which they have often made great progress, while their education in religion may have been limited, at best, to one or two college-level courses in theology or in religious studies, perhaps on "Meso-American Creation-Myths" or "Post-modern Critiques of Religion."

Since the opposite ignorance often characterizes philosophers and theologians who rarely can claim a specialist's knowledge of other disciplines, the difficulty in undertaking and in institutionalizing genuine and effective cross-disciplinary conversation should not be underestimated. My own brief experience of this was at a symposium on religion and science. On the one hand, I had great difficulty in understanding much of the quite sophisticated science; on the other, I was appalled at the naive character of many of the efforts to relate God and creation, some of which did not go beyond thinking of him as an older, bigger, and stronger secondary cause. It is very clear that, unless the religious dimension is going to be reduced to the question of applied ethics, both sides have a great deal of learning to do.

A final question is whether my comments will not remove Catholic institutions and their departments from the "mainstream" of American academic and cultural life? Did we not spend a good deal of the last thirty years emerging from our Catholic intellectual ghetto into the "mainstream"? Are we now to return to the ghetto? I have several remarks to make. First, there has no doubt been gain in the effort to reintegrate Catholic thought into the central intellectual conversations of the day. The age of a "separated philosophy" and "separated theology," especially when they claim to operate with regal certainty and authority, can pass without regret. We should never have emigrated in the first place.

But, second, it is surely legitimate also to ask about the quality and direction of what is called the "mainstream." It is now thirty years since student-protests challenged much of what was then taken for granted as "mainstream" higher education in the United States. To reread today some of the things then being criticized--the dependence on government, the military, and big business, the dominance of accrediting agencies, the myth of "value-neutrality," and the resultant reduction of universities to being "a training camp for the professions," "a social service station," "an assembly

line for establishment man,"¹¹--is to recognize how many of them, after a few years of largely token resistance, have become even worse. Some of those earlier critiques might be worth reviving.

Third, one may also ask precisely whether there still is such a thing as the "mainstream," how it is to be defined, and who has a right to identify it. Those protests of the 1960s already signalled the "post-modernism" that is now so much in vogue. It is perhaps worth noting that the institution then under criticism was the university as conceived and structured under the influence of "modernity." As Murray already acutely noted in 1958, the distinctive mark of the post-modern is a chaotic pluralism, now calling into question the pieties, certainties, and products of the "mainstream" culture. One may notice this in the serious methodological crises now being undergone by nearly every intellectual discipline: from the physical sciences themselves to such human sciences as psychology and sociology, to historical method and literary criticism, to philosophy and theology. Voices long forgotten or ignored are now being heard; participants long declined a place at the seminar table are now being welcomed; issues long neglected are being addressed. Is it too much to ask that the pluralism within disciplines and among institutions of higher learning find room also for the perspectives, ideas, values, questions, and methods that derive from the religion that modernity thought it could do quite well without? Ought there not be a variant in higher education, one among several, we may be sure, which pursues its task in the light of convictions about the redemptive power of the word and grace of Christ? To make such a suggestion might now be more intelligible than in the hey-day of latter-day modernity's monopoly.

Fourth, I have already said that the Catholic college or scholar should not begin with the notion that it or he is already in possession of the answers or, for that matter, that there is only one "Catholic" answer into which students must simply be indoctrinated. It is a long way from the Gospel to specific solutions to the types of problems, mentioned by the Pope, facing humanity today, which range from the personal and familial to the economic, the political, the cultural, the ecological. That list gives a set of problems not of answers, the pursuit of which precisely defines one of the great contributions of a university. If, on the one hand, we cannot pretend that faith can provide answers without intelligent inquiry and critical judgement, there ought, on the other hand, to be institutions to see to it that the solutions to great problems are not sought by a systematic or methodological neglect of the realities of sin and grace.

Fifth, my underlying claim is that to enter the Church is not to leave the world, but to be in the world differently, so that the world itself is different because there are individuals and communities living their lives because of, in, and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Similarly, to bring a Christian perspective to the scholarly analysis and critique of the individual and collective human self-project is neither to fly off into the ether nor to retreat to a ghetto, but to speak about this concrete world we inhabit, this world we constitute, this world whose future is in our hands, the world which that perspective claims to illumine in its depths and in its heights. It is to insist that the

¹¹ I borrow this list from Robert Paul Wolff, *The Ideal of the University* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

truth about this concrete world is not found in its fullness apart from Christ. I should think that this is ground enough for a distinctive identity and mission for Catholic universities.