

## Whose Standards of Excellence?

### Secularity and the Mission of the University

Alfred J. Freddoso  
Philosophy Department  
University of Notre Dame  
Notre Dame, Indiana, USA  
March, 1999

#### THESIS

I will begin by stating my thesis starkly and without qualification: The Catholic faith provides the best available general context for intellectual inquiry and, because of this, the ideal university is a genuinely Catholic university. More precisely, within our present cultural milieu it is the Catholic intellectual tradition that provides (a) the most adequate general account of the nature, ends, and methods of intellectual inquiry and (b) the best available solution to the serious conceptual problems that by general consensus afflict the contemporary university—viz., the fragmentation of the academic disciplines, the consequent disarray in the undergraduate curriculum, and the consumer-model of scholarly research and of education, both graduate and undergraduate. (This is in part what I take Pope John Paul II to have argued in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and *Fides et Ratio*.<sup>1</sup>)

This thesis has a corollary that I will state as a piece of advice for any future group of Catholics who might intend, with explicitly apostolic intentions, to found a university that aspires to be a truly excellent center of teaching and learning and to serve as a powerful positive influence on contemporary

---

<sup>1</sup>In speaking of philosophical inquiry in particular the Holy Father says this in *Fides et Ratio*, #84: “I believe that those philosophers who wish to respond today to the demands which the word of God makes on human thinking should develop their thought ..... in organic continuity with the great tradition which, beginning with the ancients, passes through the Fathers of the Church and the masters of Scholasticism and includes the fundamental achievements of modern and contemporary thought. If philosophers can take their place within this tradition and draw their inspiration from it, they will certainly not fail to respect philosophy’s demand for autonomy.

“In the present situation, therefore, it is most significant that some philosophers are promoting a recovery of the determining role of this tradition for a right approach to knowledge. The appeal to tradition is not a mere remembrance of the past; it involves rather the recognition of a cultural heritage which belongs to all of humanity. Indeed it may be said that it is we who belong to the tradition and that it is not ours to dispose of at will. Precisely by being rooted in the tradition will we be able today to develop for the future an original, new and constructive mode of thinking.”

culture, including academic culture. (I put it this way because I find it very unlikely that the largest current Catholic universities will ever again be in a position to conform to the model I will outline below.) The corollary is this: Such a university should (a) explicitly acknowledge its Catholic identity, (b) insist that this identity is fully consonant with any plausible account of intellectual excellence, and (c) strive to show by example that it has the conceptual resources to solve, or at least ameliorate, the problems just alluded to.

I will start from where I stand, as a faculty member with twenty years of experience at the University of Notre Dame. During that time, I have become increasingly proficient at perceiving and describing what I take to be the serious failures of my own institution to live up to its highly publicized pretension to be a great Catholic university. However, I have not to this point been very successful at articulating a positive ideal to contrast with the reality I see before me. The present paper represents the first halting steps in that direction, with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and *Fides et Ratio* serving as lamps unto my feet.

#### AN ALLEGED TENSION

The two most important general features that Catholic universities should strive to embody institutionally as centers of learning are intellectual fidelity to the Catholic Faith and excellence in intellectual inquiry, where the standards of excellence can in principle be formally defined apart from the Catholic Faith.<sup>2</sup> This last point is crucial. Unlike certain Reformed traditions, the Catholic tradition has historically affirmed the inherent goodness of nature and its relative autonomy with respect to grace—or, to put it a bit differently, the inherent goodness of the secular and its relative autonomy with respect to the sacred. To be sure, the secular sphere is fallen and pervaded by sin; still, the Catholic tradition has repeatedly affirmed that Christians are called to participate in the sanctification of that sphere by healing

---

<sup>2</sup>As I will argue below, these standards are defined in conflicting ways by different accounts of intellectual inquiry, and this is one reason why invocations of intellectual excellence are so controversial nowadays. In fact, the fruitless disagreements concerning intellectual excellence are subject to an analysis very similar to the one that Alasdair MacIntyre gives of contemporary moral disagreement in the Chapter 2 of *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

and transforming it through grace. And the Second Vatican Council singles out the laity, united to Christ through the sacraments, as the proper agents of this sanctification.

In what follows I will use the term ‘secularity’ to designate the set of intellectual and appetitive dispositions by which Christians assign a proper positive value to the secular, properly assess and respect its relative autonomy vis-à-vis the sacred, and resolve to conform themselves to relevant secular standards of excellence.<sup>3</sup> Given this usage, we can restate the two cognitive goals of the Catholic university as intellectual fidelity to the Catholic Faith (hereafter: *intellectual fidelity*) and intellectual excellence in accord with secularity (hereafter: *secular intellectual excellence*); and we can think of these as the goals, at least in the ideal case, of the university as such and of the vast majority of its individual administrators, faculty, staff, and, at least inchoately, students as well.

In the contentious contemporary discussion of the Catholic university, it is almost always taken for granted, though seldom explicitly avowed, that the two goals of intellectual fidelity and secular intellectual excellence are opposed to one another in such a way that to the extent that a Catholic university and the intellectual inquirers who inhabit it satisfy legitimate standards of secular intellectual excellence, they will tend to have less intellectual fidelity. Given this conception of the problematic, administrators of Catholic universities see themselves faced with the task of pinpointing the degree of intellectual fidelity appropriate for an institution that hopes to emulate in its teaching and research the secular intellectual excellence of the most prestigious non-Catholic institutions of higher learning. The concrete solution that has been most favored over the last thirty years by university administrators and faculty members—though not necessarily by bishops and heads of Vatican congregations—is to put the onus of maintaining intellectual fidelity on a combination of (a) nominal undergraduate course requirements in philosophy and theology, (b) specialized institutes located at the perimeters of the university’s intellectual life, and (c) certain aspects of student life that are at best externally related to the

---

<sup>3</sup>This characterization of secularity is not exhaustive, but it will suffice for my present purposes. The term ‘secularity’ probably does not signify a single virtue, but instead signifies a group of dispositions belonging to a number of virtues, especially (I hazard to guess) faith, charity, and justice.

university's intellectual mission.<sup>4</sup> In the same time period, the faculties at Catholic universities have been assembled according to the *prevailing* secular standards of intellectual excellence and because of this have tended to become more and more indifferent at best—and hostile at worst—to the distinctively Catholic aspirations of the universities they are employed by.

Needless to say, this characterization of the present plight of mainstream Catholic universities is tendentious, since administrators of Catholic universities adamantly deny that they are sacrificing intellectual fidelity in their quest for secular intellectual excellence. However, given their refusal to concede that such fidelity requires even so much as guaranteeing that sound doctrine is taught in courses in Catholic theology, not to mention their reluctance, or perhaps inability, to formulate with precision the ways in which Catholic doctrine and practice are essentially connected with the intellectual mission of their universities, one can plausibly maintain that their protestations of intellectual fidelity, if not disingenuous, are at the very least not well thought out.

In what follows I will argue that the putative tension between intellectual fidelity and secular intellectual excellence is in fact a fiction.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, I will end by sketching what I take to be the best sort of university that could be founded as an apostolic initiative by a group of Catholics who set out to maximize both genuine intellectual fidelity and genuine secular intellectual excellence. To simplify my discussion, I will assume that this is a lay initiative, with no explicit juridical ties to any diocese or religious order.<sup>6</sup> I will also assume for present purposes that this venture is adequately funded and that

---

<sup>4</sup>So, for instance, when pressed to say just how 'Catholic' their universities are, administrators typically cite student participation in the sacramental life of the campus and in volunteer service programs. It is also worth noting that (a) the specialized institutes, whose contribution to Catholic intellectual life is sometimes substantial, have very little impact on undergraduate education, and that (b) undergraduate course requirements in philosophy and theology are often satisfied by courses which do little to integrate the Catholic Faith with other aspects of the students' intellectual lives.

<sup>5</sup>I do not deny the claim, made at least implicitly by administrators, that many potential donors *believe* that there is a tension between intellectual fidelity and secular intellectual excellence and would thus be unwilling to give money to a 'seriously' Catholic university. My claim is simply that their belief is mistaken, even if the fact that they hold this belief might put into question the practical possibility of the sort of university I will describe below.

<sup>6</sup>*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Part II, article 3 lists three broad categories of Catholic institutions of higher learning: (i) those established by the Holy See, by an episcopal conference, or by a diocesan bishop; (ii) those established by a "religious institute" with the consent of the diocesan bishop; and (iii) those established by "other ecclesiastical or lay persons," the implication being that this may be done without the consent of the diocesan bishop, although the institution may refer to itself as Catholic only with

there is an ample supply of faculty members of the sort I will describe below. To this extent, the picture I am presenting is an idealization. However, I do not take this limitation to be a serious impediment to the cogency of my argument. To the contrary, the present failures of mainline Catholic universities stem in some large measure from the fact their administrators and governing bodies have not reflected theoretically on the issues I will raise.

The bulk of my argument will consist in an explanation of why the notion of secular intellectual excellence, i.e., the application of secularity to intellectual excellence, is problematic in contemporary academic culture—especially, but not only, in the humanistic disciplines. This will involve (a) laying out in schematic form the two general accounts of intellectual inquiry that dominate the contemporary academic scene and (b) indicating how, despite their deep differences with one another, these accounts are not only inimical to the Catholic Faith but also logically connected with the three problems mentioned at the beginning of this paper, viz., the fragmentation of the disciplines, the resulting incoherence of the undergraduate curriculum, and the consumer-model of education and research. I will then outline an alternative account of intellectual inquiry that finds its roots in classical Greek philosophy and can be brought into full harmony with the Catholic Faith. Finally, I will give a brief description of certain key features that would characterize the intellectual life of a university modeled on this alternative account and indicate how these features at least hold out the promise of correcting the defects of present universities, both secular and Catholic.

#### **SECULARITY AND INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY**

I will not tarry over the many complications that would attend any attempt to give an exhaustive account of secularity or of the correlative notion of an honorable or sanctifiable secular undertaking. However, this much at least seems clear: Given that a secular undertaking is such that its own internal goals and methods, along with its internally defined standards of excellence, are consonant with Catholic

faith and morals, that undertaking can be elevated and sanctified if it is conscientiously carried out for the glory of God by practitioners who are motivated by the supernatural virtue of charity. That is, any honorable secular undertaking—complete with its own autonomous ends, methods, and standards of excellence—can be ordered from without, as it were, to a supernatural end and thereby become part of Christ's redemptive mission. And it is precisely by those dispositions which constitute secularity that we are led to recognize and appreciate the inherent goodness of such secular undertakings, the relative autonomy of their methods and standards of excellence, and hence their sanctifiability.

The application of secularity to many secular undertakings seems straightforward and unproblematic. I submit, however, that this is not the case with respect to many intellectual undertakings within the contemporary university, at least as they are conceived of by their practitioners. The main difficulty is that the two dominant accounts of intellectual inquiry that are embedded in the practice and attitudes of scholars in the arts and sciences are not consonant with the Catholic Faith. These accounts, which for ease of reference I will dub 'modernism' and 'postmodernism', will be spelled out in more detail below.

Before that, though, I want to issue three disclaimers. First, I am not asserting that these accounts of intellectual inquiry are clearly formulated in the minds of most academic scholars. To the contrary, my own experience suggests that not many college or university teacher-scholars have thought very long or very hard about the nature of intellectual inquiry. As a result, the vast majority seem to have no coherent general understanding of intellectual inquiry that goes beyond what they need to grasp in order to achieve success within their narrowly defined disciplines. In fact, when they do traverse these limits to make more general claims about inquiry, their views are often pieced together from mutually inconsistent fragments of one or another of the three accounts to be spelled out below. This is especially evident in public and private discussions of topics such as academic freedom and freedom of inquiry, the aims and methods of undergraduate teaching, the philosophical assumptions embedded in generally accepted methods of inquiry within particular academic disciplines, the role of moral considerations in

intellectual inquiry, and (especially among Catholics and other Christians) the relation between faith and reason. So I am not claiming that most scholars consciously subscribe to undiluted forms of any of the rival accounts of intellectual inquiry. Nevertheless, I do want to insist that these accounts, at least in the rudimentary form in which they are imbibed by those trained within current academic culture, are extremely influential in the thinking of many faculty members and administrators.

Second, I do not mean to suggest that, as things stand, faithful Catholics and other Christians cannot sanctify their intellectual undertakings within the contemporary university, or that it is necessary for them to have a carefully worked out account of intellectual inquiry in order to do so. However, I am suggesting that such scholars need to reflect very thoroughly on the many implications that their faith has for the particular sort of work in which they are engaged. Obvious topics for reflection are the moral character of their work and its moral repercussions, but there are other more properly intellectual topics for reflection as well. I will discuss two of them briefly at the end of this paper.

Third, I do not want to exaggerate the extent of the problems I will point to, and so I should make it clear at the outset that certain *formal* properties of intellectual excellence are shared in common by the rival accounts of intellectual inquiry and hence are shared in common by (almost) all academic professionals. To use my own discipline as an example, philosophers generally value traits such as clarity of expression; subtlety in interpreting the work of others; insight in drawing distinctions, as well as in constructing and presenting arguments for their own positions; fairness in representing the positions of others or the objections of others to their own positions; straightforwardness and intellectual honesty in answering objections, even if this involves the admission that one cannot at present respond satisfactorily, etc. In fact, formal traits such as these play the important role of rendering at least possible the sort of *grudging* respect that philosophers can accord to one another even when their *material*, i.e., substantive, disagreements are very deep—so deep, in fact, that they might extend even to the very nature

of intellectual inquiry.<sup>7</sup>

And thus we return to the topic at hand. The important differences among the competing accounts of intellectual inquiry emerge only once we go beyond the formal criteria of excellence. To make this more evident, I will pose a series of questions that a complete account of intellectual inquiry needs to address. The different categories under which I have grouped the questions are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, but they will serve to suggest the range of relevant issues.

- *Questions about truth:* What is the nature of truth? More specifically, are the truths sought by intellectual inquiry true independently of whether they are thought to be true by human knowers, or is this sort of ‘absolute’ truth non-existent or at least unattainable? Is truth instead whatever wins the consensus of inquirers in general or of a certain privileged sub-set of inquirers?

- *Questions about goals:* Is truth itself the principal goal of intellectual inquiry? Or, assuming that truth differs from consensus, is consensus the principal goal of intellectual inquiry? Or is it perhaps neither of these but instead adherence to prescribed methods of inquiry, whether or not they yield truth or consensus? Again, does having truth as a goal imply that it is important to bring together all of the disparate disciplines in the arts and sciences into an integrated synthesis? Why or why not?

- *Questions about method:* Which sources of cognition are permissible in establishing the first principles of inquiry in general or of inquiry in particular domains? Is reason, or reason *cum* experience, the sole permissible source? Or can faith or trust in some intellectual authority be a fitting source of cognition as well? Is so-called ‘intuition’, appealed to by many philosophers, a separate source of cognition? If there are several sources of cognition, how are they ordered with respect to one another?

- *Questions about affective context:* What is the most fitting affective context for intellectual inquiry? Should inquirers strive as inquirers to divest themselves of all affective commitments or

---

<sup>7</sup>Such grudging respect is an important—indeed, virtually necessary—condition for the possibility of fruitful dialogue between intellectuals who have deep substantive disagreements. Because of this, it is imperative that intellectual inquirers who are motivated by supernatural love of neighbor should cultivate in themselves (a) the ability to recognize the formal properties of intellectual excellence in the work of those with whom they have such disagreements and (b) a special desire to engage those among their non-believing intellectual colleagues whose works exemplify these properties to the highest degrees.

inclinations and to approach their domains of inquiry as neutral observers? Or is intellectual inquiry an essentially communal project that presupposes affective commitments to particular historical communities or traditions of inquiry? Again, are there moral prerequisites for fruitful intellectual inquiry and, if so, what are they? What role should trust, on the one hand, and suspicion, on the other, play in intellectual inquiry?

- *Questions about standards of excellence:* In addition to the formal properties of excellence alluded to above, are there material (i.e., substantive) criteria of excellence? If so, how are these material standards related to the affective context of inquiry? Again, what would the completed result of inquiry in a given domain look like? How would it be structured? Finally, assuming that excellence is judged in part by the relative importance of research programs, how are such judgments of relative importance to be made?

These questions and others like them have been lying just below the surface ever since Plato proposed his portrait of the philosopher and of the philosophical life in dialogues such as the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Symposium*, the *Apology*, and the *Republic*. (Remember that in Plato's time the natural and social sciences had not yet branched off from philosophy, and so what Plato was in effect proposing was an account of intellectual inquiry in general and of the life of intellectual inquiry.) And, in fact, the modern academy has its own pictures of intellectual inquiry and of the intellectual life—pictures that look very different from Plato's. I will now examine them in a bit more detail.

#### **THE MODERNIST (OR ENLIGHTENMENT) ACCOUNT OF INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY**

According to the modernist account of intellectual inquiry, an ideal inquirer, *qua* inquirer, is an autonomous individual shorn of affective ties to political, cultural, or religious communities and hence to historical traditions of inquiry. Such ties are deemed impediments to seeing the truth clearly and objectively—where truth is conceived of in realist fashion as distinct from consensus, though accessible to all methodologically competent inquirers. It is precisely because ideal intellectual inquiry proceeds

from principles evident to ‘pure’ or ‘cool’ reason alone that it must be free from any explicit or implicit exercise of intellectual authority on the part of non-inquirers such as political, cultural, or religious leaders.

This aspect of modernism is, to be sure, not entirely ‘modern’. In *On the Usefulness of Faith* St. Augustine recounts that as a young man of exceptional intellectual ability he was first attracted to Manicheanism by its disdain for credulity and its promise that no ‘hearer’ would have to accept on faith what could not be proven by “pure and simple reason.”<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, after his conversion Augustine attributed this attraction to his own pride, which had blinded him not only to his own intellectual limitations and the limitations of human reason in general but also to the fact that faith and trust are essential to intellectual inquiry.

Tellingly, however, Augustine’s worries about intellectual pride and, more generally, the noetic effects of sin are almost entirely absent from modernist accounts of inquiry. To be sure, these accounts warn of character flaws that might subvert the formal criteria for intellectual excellence; but they are silent about the deeper flaws that might distort the inquirer’s intuitive judgments about what is evident—especially, but not only, in moral inquiry. Indeed, the earlier and more optimistic modernists believed that all careful reasoners of normal intelligence would find the very same foundational truths evident.<sup>9</sup> Descartes, for instance, begins his *Discourse on Method* with the assertion that even though not everyone has the creative talent to forge new intellectual paths, all normal human beings have enough “good sense” (*le bon sens*) to perceive the evidentness of the main principles, arguments, and conclusions

---

<sup>8</sup>*On the Usefulness of Faith (De utilitate credendi)*, chap. 1, #2: “My purpose is to prove to you, if I can, that it is profane and rash for the Manicheans to inveigh against those who follow the authority of the Catholic Faith before they are able to intuit the Truth which is seen by a pure mind, and who, by having faith, are fortified and prepared for the God who will give them light. For you realize, Honoratus, that the only reason we fell in with such men was their claim that, apart from any intimidating authority, they would by pure and simple reason lead those who heard them to God and set them free from all error. For what else compelled me, for almost nine years, to spurn the religion instilled in me as a boy by my parents and to follow those men and listen to them diligently, except their claim that we had been made fearful by superstition and had been required to have faith before reason, whereas they would urge no one to believe unless the truth had first been discussed and made clear?” See also *Confessions* 6, chap. 5.

<sup>9</sup>Descartes made this claim at least about foundational beliefs in physics and metaphysics, while it was extended to foundational moral beliefs by various modern moral philosophers.

that will be yielded by his new method of ideas—and this, presumably, regardless of their moral and spiritual condition, and regardless of the moral and spiritual condition of the cultures within which they practice intellectual inquiry. All that is needed is intellectual insight and good method on the part of the teacher and good sense on the part of the student. Moral upbringing and character are simply beside the point. This modernist sentiment should not surprise us, since moral formation is best provided by communities that demand intellectual allegiance, and these are just the types of communities whose influence modernism seeks to banish from intellectual inquiry.

In the beginning the modernist promise was that by using the correct methods, reason by itself could discover all the philosophical and scientific truths needed for both individual and communal human flourishing, and that, without reliance on faith of any sort, the general consensus of mankind would converge on just those truths. To put it in more traditional terms, the promise was that reason by itself, if used correctly, can yield wisdom, i.e., a complete and integrated system of knowledge capable of answering with certitude the deepest and most persistent human questions about our world and ourselves. This was an exceedingly attractive prospect in the early seventeenth century, given the deep religious and political divisions that were plaguing Europe in the wake of the Reformation, and given the social and cultural accomplishments of the Renaissance. Nor did modernist bravado die easily. Despite the notable lack of consensus—or even progress toward consensus—on important metaphysical and moral issues among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers, and despite the pessimism about the powers of reason that had been trenchantly expressed by David Hume, one finds the same modernist optimism in John Stuart Mill's spirited nineteenth-century defense of intellectual autonomy and freedom of inquiry in the second and third chapters of *On Liberty*.

The twentieth century, however, has seen the promise of the enlightenment fall on hard times and hard realities, and contemporary modernism—or, better, its vestiges in the university—is chastened and much less optimistic than its forebears, especially with regard to inquiry in the humanistic disciplines. It is worth recalling that after Augustine became disillusioned with the Manichean guarantee of firmly

grounded knowledge, his first, and natural, reaction was to cling to his ‘faith’ in pure reason and to flirt with skepticism, despairing of ever reaching certitude about the ultimate meaning of human existence.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, even though most modernists in the academy today are not skeptics as individuals, there is a palpable sense in which skepticism, relativism, and misologism have been their cultural legacy.

Consider, for instance, my own discipline of philosophy as it is taught to undergraduates in the most prestigious universities, whose philosophy departments tend to be predominantly modernist in orientation. Typical introductory courses are problem-centered, and the normal procedure is to present and examine arguments for and against important metaphysical and moral theses. Appeals are constantly made to “our intuitions” or “our common beliefs,” but in the absence of any favored community providing moral and intellectual formation, such appeals, especially if they concern controversial moral and metaphysical beliefs, have no context or tradition to back them up. For, *pace* Descartes, “good sense” seems to vary with the student’s previous moral, spiritual, and intellectual formation. The result is that the courses in question typically conclude with the ‘teacher-entrepreneur’ leaving it up to the ‘student-consumers’ to choose by themselves just which of the conflicting arguments to ‘buy’—even though the students have been given no good reason to believe that they are well-positioned to make such choices. It is little wonder that these student-consumers often fulfill Socrates’s worst nightmare by falling either into skepticism, thus abandoning those certitudes that every human being needs in order to make lasting commitments, or into misologism, thus dismissing rational discourse as useless.<sup>11</sup> Nor, to tell the truth, can the teachers themselves reach a deep and abiding consensus about how to construct a systematic undergraduate curriculum in philosophy. Very often they simply offer courses that suit their own tastes, with little sense of, or conviction regarding, what the students really need. What’s more, this scenario is by no means peculiar to philosophy, but is mirrored in the other humanistic disciplines as

---

<sup>10</sup>See especially *Confessions* 5, chap. 14 and 6, chap. 11.

<sup>11</sup>See Plato’s *Phaedo*, esp. 84A-85B and 89C-91C. One might argue that misologism is by far the less harmful of the two, since students infected with it can at least fall back on any strongly held moral or religious beliefs. But misologists have placed themselves outside the bounds of rational discourse, and so if their strongly held beliefs are false and even tragically false, they are worse off than the skeptics, who at least remain open to rational persuasion.

well.

Gone, too, is the promise of a unified account of reality, a claim to wisdom that would integrate the disparate academic disciplines into a synthetic framework. As Pope John Paul II insists in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, such an integration of knowledge is essential to our attaining a complete “vision of the human person,” since each of the arts and sciences has human beings as an object under some aspect or other.<sup>12</sup> Hence, the abandonment of our search for a unified and integrated account of reality is in essence the abandonment of our search for rational self-understanding and, with it, the abandonment of what the Holy Father calls the “sapiential dimension” of intellectual inquiry.<sup>13</sup> In short, pervasive as its influence still is, modernism as an account of intellectual inquiry is a monumental failure, especially in its later, more pessimistic manifestations.

Moreover, the dismissal of faith as a legitimate source of cognition, and the refusal to allow longstanding intellectual traditions to function normatively in inquiry has had a profound effect on modernist judgments of intellectual excellence. First of all, such judgments tend to be based to an excessive degree on the merely formal properties of intellectual excellence. Second, when modernists do bring material or substantive criteria to bear on their judgments of excellence, their rejection of traditional religious belief leads them to favor research programs that conform to the philosophical naturalism that drives so much contemporary inquiry in the humanities and social sciences.<sup>14</sup> The consequences of such judgments are profound, since they influence hiring and promotion decisions, grant allocations, national rankings of graduate and undergraduate programs, and assignments of professional

---

<sup>12</sup>*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Part I, #16.

<sup>13</sup>*Fides et Ratio*, #81ff.

<sup>14</sup>An interesting example of this occurred a few years ago in a major article on the state of contemporary moral theory that appeared in the centennial issue of the *Philosophical Review*. In this article the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, arguably one of the three or four most important ethicists in the second half of the twentieth century, was given short shrift because it did not fit the more desiccated framework that the authors were working within. This was in part due to MacIntyre’s attempt to resurrect Thomistic moral theory on the contemporary philosophical scene. As a colleague well-versed in recent analytic ethics put it to me: “In Britain and America they’re doing ethics now on the assumption that there is no God.” This is a paradigmatic example of an unsanctifiable intellectual endeavor.

prestige. As should be obvious, when such judgments are made from a modernist perspective, a rather unfriendly climate is created for those institutions and individuals whose inquiry and research programs are informed in one way or another by their religious faith. For such reasons as these, modernism turns out to be not only inadequate in its own right, but destructive of intellectual fidelity as well.

#### THE POSTMODERNIST ACCOUNT OF INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY

“Supposing truth to be a woman—what?” Thus begins Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*, and thus begins as well his relentless critique of the affectless modernist inquirer. In some ways, the beginnings of postmodernism are found in Hume’s darker moments, when his assertion of the ascendancy of non-rational sentiment over reason is particularly strong and his concomitant pessimism about reason’s ability to find genuine wisdom is particularly intense.<sup>15</sup> But Hume still retains a modernist-like confidence that the most basic sentiments relevant to moral and scientific practice are universal, ineradicable, and predominantly benign, and so he retains—at least most of the time—his cheerfully ironic provincialism. Thus it fell to the more serious, cynical, and persistent Nietzsche to launch a devastating critique of modernism and the bourgeois culture fostered by it. Catholics—so I believe—can learn much from this critique and even endorse many aspects of it. But from a Catholic perspective Nietzsche makes the serious mistake of undervaluing reason and rational discourse, in just the way that his modernist predecessors had overvalued them.

As Nietzsche sees it, the classical search for wisdom is a movement of pure will or instinct, with reason serving only to rationalize what one already accepts or prefers without reasonable grounds. To be sure, he chides the ‘neutral’ or ‘value-free’ modernist scholar for not being able so much as to appreciate the sentiments that have given rise to philosophy and religion across all human cultures.<sup>16</sup> Yet from

---

<sup>15</sup>The character of Philo in Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* is especially interesting in this regard, since he alternates—or so it seems to me—between a gleeful superficial disparagement of the search for wisdom on the one hand and a somber deep despair about the human condition on the other.

<sup>16</sup>A particularly entertaining example of this occurs at *Beyond Good and Evil* 58, where Nietzsche pokes fun at the condescension of the “German scholar” toward religious people.

Nietzsche's perspective all philosophical inquirers, classical as well as modernist, are operating in bad faith, since they refuse to bring to the surface the various ways in which appeals to expert knowledge and to the so-called 'authority of reason' have been and continue to be used as instruments of oppression.

Now one might find much truth in this attribution of bad faith even while insisting that intellectual inquirers equipped with affective rectitude have the ability to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate and oppressive appeals to the authority of reason. (Indeed, Catholics might understand the interventions of the Magisterium in philosophical matters to be aimed precisely at helping us make this distinction.<sup>17</sup>) But Nietzsche will hear of no such qualifications. On his view, all appeals to the authority of reason, whatever their provenance, should be viewed with suspicion. And, indeed, it is just such suspicion—in the beginning with respect to those who fall outside of one's own community of victims and in the end with respect to everyone, including one's own past selves—that marks postmodernist inquiry.

In *Fides et Ratio* Pope John Paul II asserts that this attitude of universal suspicion—even if not wholly unjustified—leads straight to nihilism. This might not at first be obvious, since there are highly-publicized communitarian versions of postmodernist inquiry that promote a sort of 'secular fideism', complete with (a) 'faith-communities' built upon the members' shared perceptions of being victimized by sinister and powerful outsiders and (b) an account of truth according to which truth as an ideal consists simply in the consensus of those who share the 'faith' of the community. The radical intellectual perspectives generated by such fideism have produced some very interesting—along with some very outlandish—critiques of classical and modernist intellectual inquiry. I have in mind, for instance, feminist studies of scientific historiography and methodology, and Foucault's work on the history of insanity and the history of sexuality.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>See chapters 5 and 6 of *Fides et Ratio*, where the Holy Father defends magisterial interventions and also argues that the Catholic Church, because of the universality of its message, has been more successful than any other historical institution in interweaving the universalist claims of the Gospel with indigenous human cultures. This is not to deny that mistakes have been made along the way, and the present Pontiff has been the first to acknowledge them. But the intent has been to enhance indigenous cultures and bring them to perfection through the Gospel, and not to repress or replace them in the manner of, say, the Roman and British Empires or, more recently, multinational free-market consumerism.

<sup>18</sup>This, by the way, is a game that Catholics can play as well, since we are urged to see the world "through the eyes of faith."

Despite this veneer of communitarianism, however, the Holy Father is right on the mark in his assessment of the nihilistic tendencies of postmodern perspectivalism. For the fact remains that the Nietzschean analysis of bad faith can be turned back upon any such communitarian postmodernism itself, and this ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ undermines the very communities that were initially held together by shared perceptions of victimization. It is no accident that the most salient characteristic of Nietzsche’s ‘free spirit’ is that he undergoes continual ‘dis-integration’ as he uncovers and is disgusted by his own past self-deceptions. In the end the free spirit repudiates all attachments to people as individuals, to communities, to country, to pity, to science and philosophy, to his own virtues, and even to his own detachment.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the free spirit’s detachment is in some ways remarkably akin to the detachment of the Christian saint, whom Nietzsche both despises and grudgingly admires. But the detachment of the Christian saint is for the sake of friendship with God, and all the objects of detachment are in the end recovered insofar as they can be ordered toward that friendship. The free spirit’s detachment, in contrast, serves only to exclude him from genuine friendship with others and ultimately leaves him with only his suspicion, including his self-suspicion. No claim to objective or absolute truth will long survive inquiry of this sort. In short, given the foundational first principles of postmodern inquiry, there is ultimately no perspective—established either by faith or by reason—that can serve both as an intellectual norm and as a source of lasting friendship and harmony that binds together the community of inquirers. The result is just the sort of nihilism that Pope John Paul II laments in *Fides et Ratio*:

“The currents of thought which claim to be postmodern merit appropriate attention. According to some of them, the time of certainties is irrevocably past, and the human being must now learn to live in a horizon of total absence of meaning, where everything is provisional and ephemeral. In their destructive critique of every certitude, several authors have failed to make crucial distinctions and have called into question the certitudes of faith. This nihilism has been justified in a sense by the terrible experience of evil which has marked our age. Such a dramatic experience has ensured the collapse of rationalist optimism, which viewed history as the triumphant progress of reason, the source of all happiness and freedom; and now, at the end of this century, one of our greatest threats is the temptation to despair” (*Fides et Ratio*, #91).

---

<sup>19</sup>*Beyond Good and Evil*, 31 and 41.

Earlier on, the Holy Father had aptly summed up the results of the dialectic between modernism and postmodernism in which contemporary Western culture finds itself mired. And in the following passage he hints as well at the deeply pernicious effect that postmodern suspicion has on the young students who come under its sway:

“As a result of the crisis of rationalism, what has appeared finally is nihilism. As a philosophy of nothingness, it has a certain attraction for people of our time. Its adherents claim that the search is an end in itself, without any hope or possibility of ever attaining the goal of truth ..... Nihilism is at the root of the widespread mentality which claims that a definitive commitment should no longer be made, because everything is fleeting and provisional” (*Fides et Ratio*, #46).

#### **THE HOPE-FILLED ALTERNATIVE**

At this point, I hope that it is clear that neither modernism nor postmodernism can supply the theoretical foundations for a university founded with apostolic intentions. But beyond that, neither can they supply the theoretical foundations for *any* university that hopes that the powers of reason will lead us toward an inspiring integrative vision of human existence and knowledge. If the intellectual history of the last four hundred years has taught us anything, it is that the separation of reason from faith and of faith from reason can lead in the end only to a deep despair—a despair that may be masked but cannot be eradicated by technological advancement. For now that serious philosophical reflection on the nature of inquiry has for all practical purposes been abandoned by the leaders of the contemporary university, the protracted and progressive inquiry that continues in the various fields of science and technology is being blithely conducted in a ‘sapiential vacuum’ characterized by indifference to metaphysics and morality, with all the evil consequences that this portends for the future. And if anything is certain, it is that we do not need more universities of the sort that perpetuate this sapiential vacuum; we have enough of them already. Cardinal Francis George has recently argued for this thesis very forcefully. Alluding to an important speech he had previously given at Georgetown University, he recently told a gathering of Catholic educators:

“[At] Georgetown I said something that has perhaps been misunderstood when I said that a university without a vision is a high-class trade school. What was forgotten is that a

high-class trade school is a very important institution. Harvard and Yale are important carriers of disciplines. But if they have lost, and to the extent they have lost, any kind of truly integrating vision, then in fact they are there to serve an *individual* sense of mission, an *individual* purpose, and the demands of *individual* disciplines which are left unintegrated except in the desire of the students themselves and in the academic vocation of those who feel accountable to their discipline and strive to carry it into the next generation. All of that is very good, but it doesn't create a university in the classical sense. And it certainly doesn't create a Catholic university in the sense of a community that is integrated by the vision of faith given us in the Catholic Church."<sup>20</sup>

But where can we look for an alternative to modernism and postmodernism? I suggest that we begin with the classical ideal of a philosophical way of life lived out with hope by affectively well-ordered inquirers within a just community and aimed at the attainment of wisdom, where the ideal of wisdom is conceived of as an integrated, comprehensive, and systematic elaboration of the first principles of being that provides definitive answers to fundamental questions about the origins, nature, and destiny of the universe and about the good for human beings and the ways to attain it. Given the fact, noted above, that the natural and human sciences have through the centuries branched off from philosophy properly speaking, this goal will include the integration of these sciences within the framework of wisdom.

As should be clear, this classical conception of intellectual inquiry presupposes a realist account of truth. But in the present context its most crucial and distinctive feature concerns the affective context of inquiry. In *Fides et Ratio* Pope John Paul II puts it this way:

“It must not be forgotten that reason too needs to be sustained in all its searching by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship. A climate of suspicion and distrust, which can beset speculative research, ignores the teaching of the ancient philosophers who proposed friendship as one of the most appropriate contexts for sound philosophical inquiry.”<sup>21</sup>

This assertion that inquiry takes place within a community of friendship founded on a rich conception of the common good is, as we have seen, foreign to both modernism and postmodernism, though for different reasons. Modernism disavows the idea that inquiry essentially depends on a

---

<sup>20</sup>“Universities that are Truly Catholic and Truly Academic,” address of September 22, 1998 to the inaugural convocation of presidents and faculty members of Chicago-area Catholic colleges and universities.

<sup>21</sup>*Fides et Ratio*, #33.

community that includes but is distinct from the sub-community of inquirers and exercises intellectual authority over them, whereas postmodernism begins in a “climate of suspicion and distrust” that in the end undermines friendship altogether. In contrast, according to the classical conception of intellectual inquiry, the pursuit of wisdom will prosper only insofar as rigorous intellectual training and practice are embedded within a well-ordered program of moral and spiritual development consonant with the attainment of complete wisdom. That is, successful intellectual inquiry presupposes a way of life that fosters rectitude of affection, where such rectitude is deemed essential for one’s having a clear cognitive grasp of all the relevant first principles. And as Plato repeatedly insists in the *Republic*, such rectitude of affection in intellectual inquirers requires a morally upright community to inculcate and preserve it. What’s more, even though intellectual inquiry is seen as perfecting the individual inquirers themselves, its most important function is to serve and perfect the broader community that sustains inquiry. The inquirer is obligated to return to Plato’s cave from the sunlight—or, as St. Thomas puts it, “just as it is greater to illuminate than merely to shine, so too it is greater to give to others what one has contemplated than merely to contemplate.”<sup>22</sup> And as a servant of the broader community, intellectual inquiry is responsible to the first principles on which that community is founded. In particular, one of its functions is to clarify those first principles and to deepen the community’s understanding of the warrant for them and of their superiority to possible competitors.<sup>23</sup>

What’s more, this conception of the nature of intellectual inquiry places no *a priori* restrictions on possible sources of cognition, but ostensibly invites us as inquirers to draw upon all the cognitive resources available to us in constructing a complete and coherent set of answers to the deepest human questions. Thus, unlike modernism and postmodernism, the classical conception of inquiry is not by its

---

<sup>22</sup>*Summa Theologiae* 2-2, ques. 188, art. 6.

<sup>23</sup>I am underplaying here the self-critical function of inquiry in order to emphasize that even this function is perspectival and not free-floating. Such self-criticism is made from a point of view and must hence take the form of criticizing theories and practices by appeal to prior principles which those theories and practices are seen to violate. To reject the prior principles themselves is in effect to ‘excommunicate’ oneself from the community within which one began inquiry. Even though this might under certain specifiable conditions be a reasonable course of action, it itself involves an implicit appeal to a new set of first principles and hence presupposes the possibility of a community built around the new principles. The idea that inquiry can be entirely ‘free’, i.e., free of any commitment at all to prior principles, is a fiction of the modernist imagination.

nature inimical to the Catholic Faith. Indeed, I take this conclusion to have been established by St. Thomas, who argued that non-believing classical philosophical inquirers who are intellectually and morally virtuous can be led, by standards of successful intellectual inquiry they themselves accept, toward recognizing Catholic theology as a viable candidate for the absolute wisdom they are seeking. As St. Thomas saw it, the classical philosophers had already taken significant steps in this direction and could have gone even further had they done better by their own standards of excellence. (This is the main thrust of the first three books of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.) Then, too, he showed by example that Catholic philosophical inquirers can in favorable circumstances adopt substantive theoretical claims proposed by non-believing philosophers or at least make extensive use of conceptual resources developed by them. Moreover, he held that even though the dim light of natural reason pales by comparison with the radiant light of faith, and even though the certitude attainable by reason is markedly inferior, absolutely speaking, to the certitude of faith, nonetheless, the demanding intellectual activity by which a wide range of philosophical and scientific principles and conclusions are rendered progressively more evident to natural reason is perfective of the inquirers themselves and, more importantly, promotes the common good of both the Church and the wider political community.<sup>24</sup>

In the first two chapters of *Fides et Ratio* the Holy Father argues in effect that the Catholic faith provides the best context for intellectual inquiry in the contemporary world, and that the Church is the community within which such inquiry can best take place. For, first of all, the Church aspires to nurture budding intellectual inquirers by a program of moral, spiritual, and doctrinal formation that tends to thwart both the intellectual pride endemic to modernism and the radical mistrust undergirding postmodernism. Second, the inherent hopefulness of the Catholic Faith—its ‘irrational optimism’, to use Chesterton’s phrase—serves as an effective deterrent to the pessimism that has historically resulted both

---

<sup>24</sup>For a defense of some of the claims made in this paragraph, see my “Faith and Reason,” in Paul V. Spade, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

from modernism's overvaluation of reason and from postmodernism's undervaluation of reason.<sup>25</sup> Third, intellectual inquiry within this framework aims to fulfill the ancient philosophical injunction "Know thyself" and thus is committed to the task of fashioning an integrated vision of all the humanistic and scientific disciplines that contribute to human self-understanding. Fourth, intellectual inquiry that promotes the common good of the Church and the wider culture includes constant deliberation about its own moral presuppositions, implications, and consequences and in this way self-consciously safeguards both its own integrity and the human dignity of those whom it serves. Fifth, higher education, which is intellectual inquiry's most important function within the community, is aimed at the 'whole person', conceived as one who is called to share in the beatitude of the Holy Trinity, and because of this students are encouraged to think of themselves neither as modernist detached intellects nor as postmodernist victims of oppression, but rather as friends of God who should strive to deepen their understanding of the realms of nature and grace and to lead lives of service to God and neighbor. Sixth, this type of education fosters the intellectual formation of students within the context of the moral and spiritual formation provided by the ecclesial community, and this context influences the formulation of curricula for both graduate and undergraduate education, including education in the professions.<sup>26</sup>

I have just skimmed the surface here, but I hope that even these few points will allow the reader to glimpse how a university founded upon a classical conception of intellectual inquiry might remedy some of the most serious problems of the contemporary university. I will now fill this picture out just a bit more by talking briefly about the faculty and administrators of such a university. There is much to be said here, but I will limit my remarks to those aspects of the roles of faculty and administrators that are directly related to the theoretical points I have made above.

Before I begin, I want to make clear that what I am talking about here is a full-fledged university,

---

<sup>25</sup>See G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1908, 1995), especially Chapter V, "The Flag of the World."

<sup>26</sup>I do not mean to suggest that just one type of curriculum will be appropriate or that it will be an easy matter to lay out a suitable curriculum. As a matter of fact, the framework I am setting out here leaves plenty of room for fruitful disagreements about what the curricular requirements should be in the various phases of education.

complete with professional schools and graduate programs.<sup>27</sup> Even though the presence of professional schools within the university brings with it certain pressures to conform to professional paradigms that might in various respects be inimical either to the Catholic Faith or to the integrative intellectual mission of the university, there is nothing in either the classical conception of intellectual inquiry itself or in the Catholic Faith that warrants disdain for professional training as one of the aims of the university, even if not its principal aim. Mention of the pressure to conform to prevailing professional paradigms in turn invites the question of how a university of the sort I have in mind might be expected to interact with, and be perceived by, its secular counterparts. This is too large an issue to discuss here. I will say only that any Catholic university aspiring to serve the wider culture (a) must engage its secular counterparts systematically and with complete confidence in its ability to make a distinctive contribution to ongoing research and current discussions, and (b) must strive for the formal excellence required to get at least grudging respect from its secular counterparts.

I turn now to the ideal faculty members of the sort of university I have sketched. In general, they will need formation that goes beyond what is normally expected for an individual to function as a teacher-scholar in a particular discipline within the contemporary university.<sup>28</sup>

First, faculty members will have enough philosophical formation to appreciate at least in general the importance of the epistemological questions I have raised in this paper and of the metaphysical problems that are attendant upon the difficult task of integrating the academic disciplines.

Second, they will have enough theological formation to know the central doctrines of the Catholic Faith, and they will naturally feel the need to consult theological and philosophical experts about

---

<sup>27</sup>There is certainly room in the world of higher education for liberal arts colleges as well as ‘vocational’ colleges; indeed, I believe that what has been said about the nature of intellectual inquiry can also shed light on how one would operate colleges of this sort that are founded with apostolic intentions. My purpose here, however, is to describe a university.

<sup>28</sup>It would be highly desirable for faculty members to have the sort of philosophical and theological formation I will mention in the next two paragraphs before they are hired by the university. But this is probably not a realistic expectation in our culture. For this reason, the administrators of the university will be charged with the responsibility of furnishing this formation to new faculty members who lack it in various respects. It goes without saying that in their hiring decisions the administrators would ensure that prospective faculty members enthusiastically embrace the mission of the university as described above and hence would welcome the relevant formation.

intellectually complex faith-related issues that arise in their teaching and research. The demand that all faculty members have theological formation is an extremely important one, since some orthodox Catholics seem to think that the best sort of Catholic university would in effect combine a basically secular university with a theology faculty that is both orthodox and distinguished. I hope that I have said enough to make it clear that this is not sufficient for an intellectually excellent university—and a close reading of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* will reveal that it is not what the Magisterium of the Church has in mind, either. In fact, some prestigious secular universities already come close to meeting this description if we allow enough breadth in the notion of orthodoxy to include various forms of theologically conservative Protestantism. But in all such cases the theology faculties (i.e., divinity schools) exist only at the far margins of the university's intellectual life. To settle for such an arrangement is to abandon the integrative project that lies at the heart of the intellectual mission of the best sort of university.

Third, faculty members in all disciplines will desire to engage in serious and ongoing interdisciplinary discussions with colleagues throughout the university. Interdisciplinary discussions are often difficult and frustrating because of differences of expertise and methodology, but such problems should be mitigated in large measure by the philosophical and theological formation mentioned above, along with the general shared sense of the importance of the university's apostolic aspirations. The central importance of these interdisciplinary discussions is, I trust, clear. Every faculty member in the university should be contributing in some way both to articulating the Catholic claim to wisdom and to engaging the alternatives available in the wider culture, and contributions to this twofold task, whether in teaching or research, require at least some familiarity with the whole range of the university's intellectual activities.

Fourth, faculty members in all disciplines—and here I mean to include faculty members in the professional schools of law, medicine, business, engineering, architecture, etc.—will be encouraged to reflect deeply on the ways in which their teaching and research are and should be influenced by the metaphysical and moral principles that inform the Catholic vision of reality. It is vitally important,

intellectually as well as spiritually, that practitioners of the various disciplines themselves engage in this sort of reflection. Philosophers and theologians can be of some assistance, but they generally lack expertise in disciplines outside their own, and only those with the requisite expertise can plumb the depths here. Such reflection will be of great personal benefit to faculty members in their own intellectual lives and also to their colleagues,<sup>29</sup> but, more importantly, it will enable them to present themselves to their students as role models of Catholic intellectuals within their particular disciplines, something that is so sorely lacking in our Catholic universities today.

I turn briefly to the administrators of the ideal university. They must, to put it bluntly, be like Plato's philosopher-kings, capable of articulating the university's intellectual mission with clarity and conviction, of rallying their faculty and staff under the flag of a common project, and of creating an environment in which the university's intellectual mission can be carried out with maximal facility. This will take creativity and imagination of a kind that is unusual in present-day university administrators, the vast majority of whom have long ago given up the task of articulating a rich conception of the intellectual common good and have settled instead for being arbiters of conflicts among departments and programs that are motivated almost entirely by narrow self-interest. In particular, the administrators of the university must keep the ideal of "a truly integrating vision" fixed firmly in mind and do all in their power to ensure that their faculty does likewise.

Finally, in their hiring decisions administrators will not dismiss the moral and spiritual condition of their candidates as irrelevant to the intellectual life. What's more, they will strive to ensure balance within their faculty across at least two different parameters. First of all, they will keep in mind that their academic departments and programs need both excellent teachers and excellent research scholars, but they will not expect every faculty member to be distinguished in both roles. In particular, they will keep in mind that their educative mission is paramount and hence will not, in making their hiring and

---

<sup>29</sup>Over the last several years, I have had the opportunity to hear the fruits of such reflection on the part of an art historian, an historian of American post-World War II foreign policy, an architect, an electrical engineer, and a literary critic. Without exception, their remarks were fascinating and I found myself wishing to hear from scholars in other disciplines.

promotion decisions, give excessive weight to good scholarship over good teaching. Second—and this point is not wholly unrelated to the first—they will try to ensure that the university is a place where intellectual inquirers are encouraged and constantly challenged, in the words of Pope John Paul II, to exercise both “rigorous fidelity” in articulating the full range of Christian wisdom and “courageous creativity” in engaging their secular counterparts in the wider culture.<sup>30</sup> Both roles, articulation and engagement, are absolutely essential to the best sort of university, and both are needed in order to avoid the twin pitfalls of secularization on the one hand and self-satisfied insularity on the other.

## CONCLUSION

No one is more painfully aware than I am of the sheer incommensurability of what *needs* to be said about the topics I have discussed with what I have actually said. Moreover, the magnitude of the task of constructing from scratch a university of the sort I have sketched is overwhelmingly daunting—or at least it would be if we looked at the matter from a purely natural perspective. At any rate, anything approaching a realization of the ideal university will take a very long time, enormous amounts of money and other resources, and a large dose of special providential assistance. What’s more, as the spate of recent work on the secularization of religious colleges and universities in the United States demonstrates, there will be many temptations and pitfalls along the way.<sup>31</sup>

Still, our culture, whether it realizes it or not, stands in dire need of a new paradigm of the university, one infused with an adequate understanding of intellectual inquiry and capable of bringing the Light of the World into what has sadly become one of the environments most inhospitable to Him. I hope that my reflections have helped to make clear, at least to some small degree, why there is such a need and how we as Catholics might go about meeting it.

---

<sup>30</sup>See *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Part I, #8.

<sup>31</sup>I have in mind especially George Marsden’s *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and James Tunstead Burtchaell’s *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998).