

## CHAPTER ONE

# *The Catholic Intellectual Tradition in the Catholic University*

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We are in an age of increasing ecumenical activity in scholarship and in university circles. For example, Scripture scholarship has become almost totally inter-denominational. Traditions in sacred music have continuously borrowed from one another, as have conventional representations in the visual arts. Catholic programs in philosophy now have on their required reading lists books that were formerly listed in the Index of Forbidden Books and therefore inaccessible to Catholic students through normal channels. Recent trends in the study of literature have tended to abandon any claim to a canon of required classics. The study of history and of religion now addresses many cultures and languages.

In the midst of this, several questions arise. First of all, is depth of knowledge being sacrificed for the sake of breadth? In university studies, especially at the undergraduate level, this is no idle question. Secondly, are we abandoning efforts towards the integration of knowledge? Thirdly, are we in danger of losing our distinctive identity? Catholic universities and colleges, responsible more than any other body for the care and continuity of the Catholic intellectual tradition, are particularly challenged by these three questions.

The first of these questions, about the risk of losing depth, has exercised educators in the broader higher education field for some

time. The extension of post-secondary education to a much larger proportion of the population has meant in many cases lowered expectations and less personal intellectual exchange between professors and students. While this may be quite efficient in technical fields, it impoverishes study in the humanities. It may be reducing higher education simply to longer schooling. Because religiously motivated schools of all traditions are concerned with assimilation of culture and critical discernment about values, this trend to the less personal in favor of the more technically efficient is damaging to the essential fabric of religious higher education.

The question about sacrificing depth for breadth is closely related to the second question, namely, whether we are achieving any integration in higher education. It has been fashionable, even in Catholic circles, to say that integration of studies is no longer possible in a pluralistic society, that each student must find some sort of personal balance or integration, but that it cannot be found in the planning of programs and curricula. Clearly, this is not a problem if education is seen as a matter of acquiring certain specialized skills and the means of access to information. If education is seen as preparation for life and for societal responsibilities, the lack of integration is disastrous because there is no foundation for making serious decisions about lifestyle, social participation, career goals, and so forth. Religiously sponsored institutions cannot surrender the task of integration.

The third question is whether we are in danger of forgetting and losing our identity. This risk is built into the pattern of contemporary developments in communication technology. It is caused in part by rapid sequences of change in the economy, upsetting employment patterns, calling for quick retraining of large numbers of the newly unemployable. It is a function of the political restlessness and reshaping of the world's alliances and balance of power with consequent shifting of what needs to be known for practical purposes. It is part of the culture, with its unquestioning favoring of the new over the already tested and the consequent changing relationships between the generations. All these are but a few of the external factors that tend to erode both the integration of higher education and the identity of religiously sponsored institutions. Erosion of identity is not a matter of any

conscious decision to abandon the particular religious identity of an institution, but rather a combination of many new demands and the subtle influence of the secular expectations of the wider academy.

All these forces contribute to a situation in which a Catholic university or college cannot take its Catholic identity for granted in the way we might have done in the earlier decades of the twentieth century. It is not by anyone's failure or fault that U.S. Catholic colleges and universities had in many cases moved unnoticed towards secularization in the seventies and early eighties, to discover with a jolt in the late eighties that without taking thought and action they would not retain their distinctive identities. Such action had to address hiring policies, public statements of the institutions about their identity, leadership of the central administration, departments of theology and philosophy, the focus of university-sponsored research, structure and formation of boards, continuing bonds with the sponsoring religious community or diocese, student recruitment, campus ministry and much else. But most basic to the whole enterprise is the institution's respect and care for the Catholic intellectual heritage.

This paper discusses two topics: what defines the Catholic intellectual tradition; and how we can expect it to be present in the life of a university or college.

### **The Catholic Intellectual Tradition: Content**

Our tradition is alive and growing in the present while greatly enriched and supported by many texts, objects, architectural structures, customs and rituals, modes of thought, expression and action, and relationships and organizations from the past. Because it is alive, it cannot be reduced to a treasury of deposits from the past, though it certainly contains such a treasury. Perhaps the most fruitful way of thinking about the Catholic intellectual tradition is in terms of two aspects: the classic treasures to be cherished, studied, and handed on; and the way of doing things that is the outcome of centuries of experience, prayer, action, and critical reflection.

The classic treasures are like crystallized deposits precipitated out of the living stream. If we reach far back into our history, they

include the Scriptures, some primitive formulations of Christian faith and prayer, the rudiments of the rituals of Eucharist and baptism, the most basic elements of church and Christian calendar, and so forth. But based on Scripture, and growing with the centuries, are commentaries on Scripture and elaboration of biblical themes in further expressions, both those that are explicitly religious and those that are more generally exercises of the Christian imagination in art and literature. Based on the primitive formulations of faith, we see through the centuries the elaboration of catechesis, theology, religious drama, fiction, and poetry, and vast systems of Christian philosophy. Based on the primitive formulations of Christian prayer, we can trace whole systems of spirituality with their texts and commentaries, their Rules for living, and their exhortations, their hagiography, devotions, pilgrimages, shrines, and much else. Based on the rudimentary forms of Eucharist and baptism, we see the elaboration through the centuries of a complex sacramental system, whole traditions of liturgy and of sacred music, of church and monastic architecture, of the symbolism of incense, gestures, processions, bells, and vestments.

In the course of time, certain formulations became classic, not to prevent later developments but to form a touchstone against which later developments were to be seen and judged. These certainly include the pronouncements and explanatory texts handed down to us from the great church councils of antiquity, and in a broader sense the whole body of patristic writings, followed by the medieval and modern councils and the writings of the medieval doctors and certain modern theologians. These become classic by being habitually affirmed in retrospect by the discerning Christian community.

Certain figures in history became classic elements of the Christian story and heritage: Helena and Constantine, Macrina and Basil, Monica and Augustine, Benedict and Scholastica, Francis and Clare, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Sienna and Teresa of Avila, to mention but a few whose personal stories are closely interwoven with the history of the Christian people. These are stories not to be forgotten or neglected. They come out of the memory and understanding of generations of believers who resonated with their lives, actions, or teachings.

Likewise, certain texts in literature became classics, throwing light on the Christian journey through history, on Christian faith and life and understanding of the big issues. Immediately coming to mind are: *Piers Plowman*, *The Divine Comedy*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and such modern classics as *Murder in the Cathedral*, *A Man for All Seasons*, and *Four Quartets*. Nor should we exclude from the treasury great Protestant and Orthodox classics like *Paradise Lost*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. The treasures of Christian lyric poetry and hymnody are too many to list.

Much can be said, and more is yet to be discovered, about the treasures of Christian art and architecture, both the explicitly religious and the wider expression in decorative and representative art, in the building of hospitals, pilgrim shelters, schools, and universities, in the structuring of cities, towns, and villages among believers, expressing their hierarchy of values and their vision of reality. There is much to be studied and treasured in music, both sacred and profane, that expresses the Christian consciousness, whether in orchestral, operatic, choral, or chamber music, whether medieval plainchant, Baroque polyphony or modern classical and folk styles. Of course much of this is studied in art history or musicology, but by contemporary academic conventions it tends to be stripped of its religious relevance and studied only from a technical perspective. When these things are appreciated as part of the Christian intellectual heritage, they are studied in a way that tends to integrate the disciplines by relating everything to the meaning of human life in its relationship to the transcendent.

Something similar can be said of the development of experimental science and of technology. We have a heritage in which the development of the printing press, for instance, and the earliest discoveries in genetics were seen in their relationship to the meaning of human life and its ultimate destiny. The very notoriety and conflict generated by Galileo's demonstration of the Copernican hypothesis or Darwin's demonstration of the tenability of the evolutionary thesis testify to the relevance that the natural sciences have had to the integration of human life and knowledge with a spiritual focus.

We have, then, a treasury of many components in the Catholic intellectual tradition that should not be left hidden or unexplored

because of the pressure of contemporary busy-ness. It should not be left unexplored. It is enriching, supportive, inspirational, and full of insight and wisdom for present and future generations of Catholic people. There is a further reason for keeping this treasury available and engaged with contemporary reality: it is wealth that the Catholic community holds in trust for the whole human community, whom it may profit in many ways.

### **Catholic Intellectual Tradition: Our Approach to Knowledge**

All of the foregoing, however, is only one aspect of the Catholic intellectual tradition. The other aspect is the way we have learned to deal with experience and knowledge in order to acquire true wisdom, live well, and build good societies, laws and customs. Central to this are values and assumptions that we share with all religious traditions. These include the conviction that human life has meaning and that the meaning can be known. Further, they include the understanding that the basic principles of moral right and wrong are given and not humanly invented. Beyond this we hold in common with all religious traditions the deliberately fostered yearning for communion with the ultimately transcendent, and the understanding that in some way this is connected with the way we relate to one another.

These are foundational principles that we usually treat as pre-suppositions and therefore do not even examine. They are seldom called into question by ordinary people. Yet the drift of modern philosophies, especially since the end of the Second World War, suggests that it is urgent that some of us in scholarly circles reflect seriously on these underlying principles and their consequences at the levels at which contemporary science and technology, contemporary analysis in the humanities, and contemporary philosophy and social sciences influence the shaping of our society.

Beyond the common base that we share with all religious traditions there is, of course, a Christian core that we share with our fellow Christians. At its simplest, this is the conviction that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth we have an utterly trustworthy interpretation of the meaning and destiny of human life, of human

relationship with God, and of what constitutes a good life. From this simple beginning, the Christian community over the centuries has elaborated ways of worship, structures of society, beliefs, and expectations, all of which go to make up a way of proceeding. Among Christian communities, however, some characteristic emphases and understandings are more particularly Catholic. In this essay, I would like to point to some that have direct implications for Catholic higher education and scholarship. These are: commitment to the continuity between faith and reason; respect for the cumulative wisdom of the past; an anti-elitist bent; attention to the community dimension of all human behavior; concern for integration of goals and objectives; and keen awareness of the sacramental principle.

The first of these, the continuity of faith and reason, leads Catholic universities and colleges to include philosophy and theology as essential components of the liberal arts core of undergraduate education, and to offer public lectures on current issues in public, professional and private life, to address these issues from a faith perspective. In contrast to some strands of Christian tradition, the Catholic tradition has strongly emphasized the need to think through the coherence of the faith and to face challenges to it from secular events and knowledge. We see this as a practice of faith, not a rejection of it. And this has led Catholic universities to develop philosophical traditions that train the mind to think clearly about the implications of the faith. The fact that the Scholastic tradition as it was passed on earlier in the twentieth century no longer serves this need adequately does not mean that we should abandon the project, but rather that we must find new philosophical vehicles to pursue it.

The second characteristic emphasis that I have singled out is that of respect for the cumulative wisdom of the past. In contrast to the position of some Christian communities which look for Christian wisdom only in Scripture or only in the legacy of the pre-Constantinian era, the Catholic community has set great store by knowledge of the cumulative wisdom of all the Christian centuries. Indeed, we have inherited and preserved the attitude of the second-century Greek apologists for Christianity in appreciating even the wisdom of pagan traditions as seen and adapted in the

light of the faith. Catholic universities, therefore, have typically had strong programs in the humanities and often outstanding programs in classics at a time when others have tended to abandon the classical languages and deal with classical literature and mythology only very lightly.

The third characteristic mentioned above is the anti-elitist bent. This is another way of expressing that mark of the church that we used to call universality. Salvation and all other human goods are intended by the creator for all. All human beings and all peoples and nations are precious to God, who is at all times self-revealing to them. There is, therefore, a certain intellectual humility required in Catholic scholars and Catholic institutions, as well as a certain sense of responsibility for the conduct and use of scholarship, time, and resources. Non-elitism means responsibility to the whole community for what we choose to research and write, for the resources we use up in doing it, and for the way we use time when the labor of others indirectly makes possible our leisure for study and scholarly work. But non-elitism also means writing in a style that is accessible to non-specialists and teaching in a way that is helpful to all students. It means making strenuous efforts to include the underprivileged or excluded from society. It also means treating respectfully cultures and customs alien from our own.

The fourth characteristic is closely related to this. Attention to the community dimension of all human actions means that there cannot be a pursuit of any and all kinds of research or teaching simply out of the intrinsic interest of the subject, as though it were all a game without consequences. Critical discernment must be exercised as to the impact of releasing certain kinds of information into the society, as with increasingly powerful weaponry, or the effect of using resources for one kind of research that are badly needed for another kind that addresses urgent human need. Similarly, to say that there is a community dimension to all human actions also implies that teaching can never be without reference to the impact on the students and, through them, on their society. This applies, for instance, to the kinds of questions that are unfolded in relation to the maturity of the students to deal with such questions. And it applies to the

kind of literature that is read in relation to the ability of the students to be discerning about the values expressed or implied, and about the behavior described. Moreover, the community dimension means that everything that is taught is placed in the context of what the students will do with their knowledge and the impact on their community.

This relates in turn to a fifth characteristic, namely, the concern to integrate knowledge as a basis for true wisdom in the living of one's life. Perhaps one of the most troubling aspects of rapid change and technical development in our times is that people of all ages have to learn so much so fast. They have to master so much instrumental knowledge and skill at such speed of assimilation that the more significant questions of meaning and purpose are often crowded out. The integration of learning in a coherent worldview or philosophy of life is a necessary basis for living a good, productive, well-directed life. It is necessary, though not sufficient, for setting proper priorities, for attaining a proper hierarchy of values, and even for attaining an appropriate intellectual humility in work and career, and in relations with other people.

A sixth characteristic, the final one mentioned here, is the experience and understanding that modern Catholics have come to name the sacramental principle. This refers not only to the seven sacraments that are central to Catholic worship, but to a broader experience that has to do with the way human beings use their memory and imagination. Our perception of reality is never in terms of raw experience, but is always arranged, interpreted, focused by the active mind of the perceiver. How we do this depends in large part on what we have experienced in the past, how those about us interpreted the experiences in which we shared, the representational art about us, the stories we heard, the way space and society had already been organized for us, and so forth. Two faculties play a role in this: memory which records what has been, and imagination which arranges the elements of experience in a meaningful pattern. An insight that Catholics particularly inherited from their Jewish or Hebrew past is that this is the way a people shapes its culture, and likewise the way the culture shapes the people. It can happen almost by default, a

real risk in a pluralistic rapidly changing society like ours, or it can be the outcome of focused contemplation and critical reflection.

It has been a continuing practice of the Catholic community to build on religious memories by story and image, in literature and art, in music and architecture, in the liturgy and in extra-liturgical devotions, and in the elaboration of symbols of all kinds. The purpose of this is to shape the memories and the imagination of succeeding generations of believers so that they will interpret all their experiences in terms of the pervasive presence of the sacred and in terms of a history of salvation. The value that this gives to the education of the imagination is a precious heritage with implications for all education and in a special way for higher education. It demands a foundation in the liberal arts, a style of education that fosters contemplation, and a respect for works of scholarship that take a long time. This is all rather counter-cultural in our times.

### The Role of the Catholic University

Some of the most significant contributions to Catholic culture, and to culture in any tradition, have been made by individuals working in relative isolation. Some important Catholic scholarship of our times comes from professors in large secular institutions and from independent scholars not employed by universities. But the Catholic universities are the normal trustees of Catholic learning, and the whole intellectual heritage would be greatly impoverished in their absence. In light of all that has been said above, some desirable components and aspects of a Catholic university emerge.

As we all know, at the minimum a Catholic university should be a true university in the accepted sense, and it should maintain a lively familiarity with the treasures of the tradition and the way of proceeding in the tradition. But this still leaves many questions: who, where, when and how? It may be well to begin in the library. It is not only a question of library holdings, but also of the welcoming atmosphere, style of architecture and interior decoration, works of art displayed, and most of all the placing of the collection. The significance of this last point is that what is

most central to the character and purpose of the university should be most accessible, most attractively arranged, and offer the best possibilities for browsing and for sitting comfortably to read.

What has been said about the library could be said about the entire campus. Once a campus exists, its basic architectural pattern is established. However, at any opportunity to reshape the campus, the principle might be kept in mind that the very layout of the buildings ought to express the priorities and the relationship among the various activities of the campus, and that utility or efficiency need not mean ugliness. That may seem to some a trivial consideration in relation to the construction of curricula, the choice of programs, and so forth, but in the context of the sacramental principle, the visual-kinesthetic impact of the campus sets an important tone even before any activity is engaged. Of particular interest, of course, is the placing and design of the university's main chapel, whether it is the focus to which the eye and the steps are naturally drawn as to the center, or whether it is hidden away to be discovered only by devotees. Again in terms of the sacramental principle, the quality, character, and placement of statuary and other art about the campus is significant.

What can be said about space can also be said about time. In these days of external and financial pressures for maximum efficiency and maximal use of buildings, there are great temptations for weekend programs to spill into Sunday, even Sunday morning, for spring break to replace Holy Week and Easter, and for weekday feasts and holy days to disappear. Much is conveyed by the cessation of routine activities on special occasions that would never be communicated in the reading of books about it. The regular tolling of a bell for a daily celebration of Eucharist becomes part of consciousness even for those who do not darken the chapel door. The solemn celebrations of Eucharist at the beginning of the academic year, at graduation, on the occasion of faculty or student deaths, and at other special occasions, similarly help to constitute the character of the school even for those who do not participate. In aid of efficiency and conformity to more general academic expectations, there is pressure to eliminate all the particular-Catholic markers in space and time that constitute the particularity of the environment. It is

important that we resist this pressure in order to maintain our own particular identity.

The role of campus ministry, which has developed in the universities and colleges of the United States as the presence of the sponsoring communities has dwindled in numbers, could be defined as something more than individual care of souls. Given appropriate appointments, it could be the focal point of scholarly interdisciplinary conversations in which the encounter of faith and culture could take place in some depth and with some continuity. With an investment in occasional significant outside speakers, the participation of top administrators, and perhaps an occasional formal reception, this could become the intellectual focus of the school.

The seriousness and focus of the curriculum, especially for undergraduates, begin with the manner and style of recruitment of students. A university or college that states its identity and character clearly in its literature, and takes care that admission personnel understand and support this statement, will certainly attract both faculty and students who are attuned to the institution's expectations. That being so, it will be easier to maintain in the structure of the curriculum the components of the Catholic intellectual tradition. It may be important to note in passing that the Catholic colleges and universities of the United States are almost alone among the Catholic universities of the world in offering all students a liberal arts foundation including an introduction to philosophy and theology. Elsewhere, students entering the university begin immediately to concentrate in their specialized field, though they may have had a more extensive and intensive secondary education before they come.

The foundation in the liberal arts is important in developing both a more effective use of the imagination in creative approaches to personal, technical, professional, and societal challenges, and better honed skills in critical thinking and evaluation. In our society, it is rapidly becoming counter-cultural to spend time in the undergraduate years on laying this foundation rather than going directly into professional preparation. Moreover, even where liberal arts programs remain, they are often so dissipated into unrelated elective offerings, each focusing rather narrowly in its

own field, that the benefits of a truly liberal education are lost. Those benefits ought to include the integration of learning, the realization of the community dimension, increasing experience of the continuity of faith and reason, a deepening respect for and appreciation of the cumulative wisdom of the past, progressive transcending of facile and unexamined prejudices and, of course, the integration of life and learning.

Both philosophy and theology play a central role in such a liberal education. It is a role that is little appreciated in our culture. It is thrown in question by the prevailing interpretation of the constitutional separation of church and state, an interpretation followed even by some of the large private foundations on whose financial assistance private higher education has become steadily more dependent for its very survival. For Catholics this role of philosophy and theology is central to our intellectual tradition. It follows from the need to integrate one's life and activities with a focus on ultimate ends. This clearly requires the development of analytical and critical skills, and is immensely helped by acquaintance with the great thinkers of the past, the questions they raised, the ways in which they worked towards answers, the kinds of answers they found satisfactory or unsatisfactory. That is the function of philosophy, and it involves the foundational questions for the natural and social sciences, for the appreciation of art, music, and literature, for an approach to history, a grasp of languages and mathematical reasoning, and much else.

It has been the custom in Catholic higher education in the past to teach an introduction to the branches of philosophy according to later presentations of Thomistic thought. In our time, when so much has changed and is constantly changing, it may be more consistent with the Catholic intellectual tradition to teach an introduction to philosophy through a tracing of the history of philosophy. Our tradition cherishes the cumulative wisdom of the past. In philosophy this retracing of the past is a particularly apt introduction to the main lines of thought of the great thinkers, each developing further what had been handed on through the centuries of Western thought. If there were unlimited time, one might look at the traditions of India and China. Given the time constraints of the undergraduate years, it seems more relevant to

the project of Catholic higher education to furnish our students with a common memory of the development of the great questions in their own tradition. On the whole, that is what is sadly lacking for most educated people of our culture and society. In providing a certain breadth, their education has often failed to give them either solid cultural roots of their own or a common memory shared with others in their milieu. This last is so important for meaningful conversation because it offers a common vocabulary understood in a common sense, as well as providing reference points, assumptions, accepted modes of argumentation, and such like.

As mentioned above, the teaching of theology to all students in Catholic higher education is a very important contribution to the passing on of the Catholic intellectual tradition. This much is clear. What is less clear, even now more than four decades after the Second Vatican Council, is just what should be the content of theology for an educated laity. It is clear that to go back to a popularization of traditional seminary formation misses the mark. It is equally clear that the trend of recent decades does not fulfill the need. The recent tendency has been to offer some introduction to critical Scripture scholarship, some discussion of foundational questions concerning the nature of faith and religious language, concerning traditional efforts to demonstrate the existence of God, what is meant by claims of revelation, and other questions common to all traditions. Sometimes even these are not required, and each student can make a personal selection of courses from a slate of electives. This seems to fall far short of the role that theology should play in the education of students in Catholic undergraduate programs.

If theology is really to play an integrating and focusing role, our programs probably need to declare themselves boldly and devote more time to the theological sequence. To achieve the essential purpose, we need minimally to offer students an introduction both to the understanding of Scripture in their own culture and intellectual environment, and to a coherent, well-informed, and intelligent grasp of their own faith tradition with its creedal content. Moreover, we need to engage faculty and graduate students in the difficult questions about their own tradition.

At the same time, it is evident that the whole burden of a Catholic focus and integration of the curriculum cannot simply be carried by the theology and philosophy departments. That burden must be shared by all departments in ways appropriate to their disciplines, but in a special way by literature, history, fine arts, and some components of psychology, sociology, and political theory. It is a question of relating everything to the greater whole, to human destiny, responsibility for society and culture, stewardship of the resources of creation, and so forth. It is also a question of knowing, taking seriously, and engaging the wisdom of our tradition in the questions that arise. And it is a question of treating the material learned in the student's major field not only as a matter of technical competence but as a matter of wisdom for life.

The character and identity of a Catholic university need to be evident not only in undergraduate education but also in the graduate and professional programs and in the original scholarly work and research of the faculty. This is even more difficult to achieve in the present climate of higher education and scholarship worldwide. The university world is still firmly rooted in the Enlightenment with its secularizing tendencies and its disregard for the particular in favor of the universal and whatever can be broadly standardized. The claim that a particular tradition such as the Catholic has something of value to contribute to research in politics, economics, psychology, and so forth is still suspect in most circles. The idea that a religiously based ethics should be part of the curriculum of professional schools seems quite absurd to many of our colleagues. But a counter-cultural stance on these issues belongs to the very core of the Catholic university's task in the world. It is there that the wisdom of our tradition meets those who make the decisions for society, and it is there that the engagement of the Catholic intellectual tradition with the culture can effectively happen.

The requirements for realizing this are exacting. We need competent scientists, social scientists, and scholars in all fields who are sufficiently formed in the Catholic intellectual tradition themselves to bring their graduate students and already qualified practitioners to an understanding, appreciation, and critique of the issues that arise. Almost all of the professors in various fields in

our universities and colleges have themselves been educated at the doctoral level in the large state university graduate schools under the post-Enlightenment secularizing and specializing influences. If they have had a formation in the Catholic intellectual tradition, this will at best have been at the undergraduate level, but for many will have ended at the secondary level or with parish instruction for the sacrament of confirmation. That is a very fragile foundation on which to provide their graduate students with serious faith-based analysis of issues in their fields. It is clear that in order to realize the potential of a Catholic university in some fullness, continuing education or self-education of the faculty is an indispensable prerequisite. This can be done with reading circles guided by competent people, with public lectures, faculty-run seminars and colloquia, summer institutes attended by invitation, and other such initiatives. It can engage good theology and philosophy faculties with their colleagues as well as with their students.

The other side of this is the selection, focus, and conduct of research. It has become customary on the university campuses for research of some kind to be required for promotion and tenure, but for the nature of that research to be entirely at the discretion of each individual professor. The endeavor of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, on the other hand, is to build connections among Catholic universities so that joint major research projects can be undertaken which relate to such problems as world hunger, development of Third World cities and economies, the international illegal drug trade and the agricultural economies integrated into it, development of legal systems in emergent nations, conflict resolution over major land claims, armaments control mechanisms, world literacy, and other peace, justice, and development issues. Clearly, the ideal Catholic university would have a focus in research and scholarship that would further the Catholic intellectual tradition in bringing both the classic treasures and the way of proceeding into play in relation to contemporary culture and society. This requires rather a bold stand on the part of the institution to assert its research priorities and to hire and give grants by the criteria of those priorities.

There is, of course, nothing in the inner logic of our intellectual tradition that would require that we hire only Catholic professors or admit only Catholic students. The requirement is rather the contrary, namely, that it is important for a Catholic university to have both faculty and student participants of other traditions. Being open to the cumulative wisdom not only of our own but of other traditions happens more readily when we meet them in their living representatives. Moreover, an authentic dialogue of faith and culture is more likely to happen where other perspectives are represented. And again, while it is good that students get a firm grounding in their own tradition, being segregated from others in their intellectually formative years does not prepare them to live in a pluralistic society and in an ecumenical age. Complementarity and ecumenical exchanges are an important aspect of scholarship for the faculty and of education for the students.

At the same time, it is becoming increasingly clear that a critical mass of faculty, administrators, and staff really committed to the Catholic mission of the institution is essential if the character of the institution is to survive. It is a matter requiring careful attention in our time. Much could be taken for granted in the past when the sponsoring religious congregations were a strong presence on each campus and guaranteed continuity in the spirit of the foundation. These were men and women with a solid formation in Catholic experience, worship, and thought, as it was mediated through a particular congregational spirituality and apostolate. Moreover, it was accepted without dispute that the founding congregation's vision and philosophy was the criterion by which all things were judged in the conduct of the institution. Such is no longer the case on most campuses, where the faculty at large is the arbiter in many matters. If that faculty does not share the ideals of the founders, those ideals will not remain the philosophy and spirit of the institution.

There is, of course, a further consideration: the character of the board of directors. Boards have largely assumed the guiding function of the sponsoring congregations. They select the president and make major decisions concerning property, financing, and priorities. It is critical that trustees be selected not only for

their contacts and skills but also for their commitment to the Catholic identity, character, and ideals of the institution. In the long run, it is the board that sets the direction in which the institution will grow. Board members are likely to be in the same position as the faculty in relation to the Catholic intellectual tradition. They are likely to have had their last education in the tradition in the undergraduate years at most, but perhaps only at the secondary level, or only in parish preparation for confirmation. If the Catholic universities are to realize their potential as participants in the shaping and the handing on of the intellectual tradition, there also need to be ongoing programs of board formation in order to support the spirit and focus of the institution.

### Conclusion

We are the heirs and trustees of a great intellectual and cultural tradition founded on Christian faith and enhanced by grace and by many centuries of testing for fidelity and authenticity. It is a trust not only for the benefit of the Church but also for the benefit of the world. The Catholic universities play a key role in bearing this trust with its treasury of classic deposits and its long-developed approach to life and learning. The conditions for fidelity to our trust have changed a good deal in the twentieth century. If we are still moving experimentally and are not always clear and successful in what we are doing, that is not from ill will or unconcern, but due to the uncharted nature of our situation. On the other hand, we cannot afford to let the future of our universities take their course without careful attention, reflection, and planning. In this planning the characteristic contribution that the Catholic universities can make must be not one criterion among others but the guiding principle of the whole project. And in this the Catholic universities and colleges of the United States have a particular role to play because of the unique character of their undergraduate programs, because of their sheer numbers among the Catholic universities of the world, and because of their excellent academic standing among the universities of the continent.