

PART III

Spirituality and Lay Leaders in Academe

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Religion is not something to be relegated to a quiet corner or a few festive hours . . . it must be the root and basis of all life; not merely for a few chosen ones but for every true Christian. — Saint Edith Stein

My topic is spirituality as it is linked to the academic life in general and leadership in academic life in particular. As someone who, fifteen years ago, left a state school to teach in a Catholic university for the precise reason that it was a Catholic school, this topic is of more than theoretical interest to me. Furthermore, I have a professional interest in the area of Catholic spirituality and have been involved both formally and informally in thinking about the Catholic character of universities. One of the most challenging tasks of my recent academic life came a little over a decade ago when I was asked to serve on a small committee to develop a mission statement for the University of Notre Dame—a task which took up a considerable chunk of my time in a total process that took just over a year. Thus, the invitation to come to Sacred Heart University to speak to this distinguished conference affords me the opportunity to reflect back, from a number of angles, on this most timely subject. For that opportunity I am deeply grateful and I congratulate Anthony Cernera and Sacred Heart University for convoking us into a consultation on this critical issue.

The Nature of Spirituality

The word “spirituality” is protean in character. For many today, it carries with it a sense of some deeper life than the mere

round of quotidian activities; its catchphrase is “I am spiritual but not religious,” which typically means that one desires some significance to one’s life that once was supplied by religion but today is not.¹ This is not the sense in which I will use the term spirituality.

By Christian spirituality, I mean a way of life shaped by the Spirit-filled following of Christ in community. Within the Catholic tradition, further, I understand that following to be shaped by the resources that have become part of the tradition itself—resources that flow, first from the receptive hearing of the Word of God and participation in the sacramental life of the church, enriched by the many practices that the tradition has remembered and proposed as among the many ways to help us follow the One Way who is Jesus Christ.²

It is clear that the Catholic tradition proposes many ways to be a follower of Christ. There are many ways to follow the One who is called The Way.³ Some of these ways have developed, over the centuries, into schools of spiritualities (e.g., monastic, Franciscan, Dominican, Salesian, and Jesuit) each with its own pedagogy of prayer, its preferred texts from scripture, its own peculiar charism, and so on. These schools have also flowered into more formal pedagogies that have been associated, in time, with forms of higher education. Many lay people today have aligned themselves in one fashion or another with some of the practices from these traditional schools: we have learned the practice of *lectio* from the monastic tradition; the power of contemplative prayer from the Carmelites; the link between prayer and care for the poor from the Franciscans; the centrality of conversion and discernment from the Ignatian tradition, and so on. One could say that in the decades since the Second Vatican Council people in the church have reaped vast benefits both from the work of *re-sourcement* carried on by so many in their attempt to recover the treasures of the various strands of Christian spirituality and by new experiments in Christian living that have sprung up after the Council.

It is further clear that spirituality cannot be narrowed only to mean cultivating one’s own spiritual garden of the soul. The whole thrust of Christian spirituality today is linked to the central concern of linking spirituality to social justice, engagement with

the world, and a preferential option for the poor. Any authentic Catholic spirituality must take into account the directions set forth in the Second Vatican Council's pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and the energies derived from the orientation of that pastoral constitution's declarations.

As we consider this embarrassment of riches offered to us, it would be well to keep in mind some wise words written in the early modern period by Saint Francis de Sales in the opening pages of his classic *Introduction to the Devout Life*:

Is the solitary life of a Carthusian suitable for a bishop? Should those who are married practice the poverty of a Capuchin? If workmen spent as much time in church as religious, if cloistered religious were exposed to the same pastoral calls as a bishop, such devotion would be ridiculous and cause intolerable disorder.⁴

He then goes on to conclude: "A devotion which conflicts with anyone's state of life is undoubtedly false." Francis de Sales was, in fact, one of the earliest spiritual writers who explicitly argued that the practice of Christian spirituality (what he called the "devout life"—and be aware that the word "devout" had a deep technical meaning in his writings) had to be consonant with one's place in life. That may be a truism today but it was not so in the early seventeenth century, when it was far more common to assume that every person would draw on forms of spiritual practice that derived mainly from the monastic tradition.

Spirituality and Academe

This brings us to the question I wish to consider in these brief reflections: What kind of spirituality is apposite for a person in this time and place who happens to find him- or herself in the world of academe? And, further, to enlarge the question a bit: What kind of spirituality is required to form those who are or will be called to assume leadership roles in higher education?

At a general level, I suppose one could answer briefly and let it go at that: Be a sacramentally involved Christian, which ramifies

out in love for the other; be an exemplar of social justice; pray; and watch for the coming kingdom. In other words, be and do as any serious Catholic would be and do. To put it into the vernacular: be a “good” Catholic. However, I want to focus with greater particularity on the Catholic life in the world of the academy. This tighter optic does not grant me permission to offer concrete strategies of spiritual practices, nor would I presume to do so. Instead, I would like to articulate some meta-principles that will find their particular exercise depending on place and circumstance.

Pope John Paul II reminded us forcefully in his 1998 encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*, that all learning has as its intended end that Truth which became incarnate in Jesus the Christ.⁵ Furthermore, the rise of the schools and of the universities were ministries of the Church that formed part of the Church’s strategy to keep possession of and advance the gospel, which is the repository of truth. It was further argued by the pope that the ideal marriage of human learning and divine revelation is best understood under the character of wisdom. A Catholic university, if it is to be Catholic in more than a denominational sense, should be a place where one is shaped by, and attendant upon, wisdom. I further stipulate, drawing on a wonderful line from Saint Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa*, that to be truly wise is to possess a kind of participation in divine wisdom which is God.⁶ In another place, Thomas distinguishes that wisdom which is given by God as a gift of the Holy Spirit and that acquired wisdom which comes from human study, which is an intellectual virtue.⁷ Wisdom, then, is both a gift and the fruit of honest intellectual labor.

The goal of such an intellectual tradition understood as sapiential within the Catholic university has been set forth in an economical way by the Second Vatican Council:

The hoped-for result is that the Christian mind may achieve, as it were, a public, persistent and universal presence in the whole enterprise of advancing higher culture, and that students of these institutions may become persons truly outstanding in learning, ready to shoulder society’s heavier burdens and to witness the faith to the world.⁸

It seems to me clear that the intention of the Council is to understand the Catholic university where the life of wisdom is to be pursued and also as a ministry from which well-formed persons are sent forth to incarnate gospel values in the larger culture. I take this all to mean that the pursuit of the intellectual life—in this case, in the setting of the college or university—is the pursuit of wisdom, which is, strangely but wonderfully, a gift of the Holy Spirit and a fruit of study. It is the somewhat mysterious dance (*perichoresis*) of openness to grace and the hard work of thought that constitutes the vocation of an academic. To model that dynamic into the arena of action is to be an academic leader.

My use of the word *vocation* is deliberate. Doubtlessly there are folks working at Catholic colleges and universities who are there because it is a job that keeps them indoors and the beneficiaries of a steady paycheck and health benefits. Some become academic leaders because they have the skills to administer. What has always impressed me, however, is the cadre of people that one meets on various campuses who reflect an institutional loyalty that can best be explained as manifesting a deep faith that what the institution is and what it purports to be and do are of profound significance. At my own institution, I see such fidelity among professors, student affairs workers, administrators, athletic personnel, and folks who provide, often self-effacingly, all of the services that makes an institution function. Those folks seem to have a vocation rather than a career. They form the living heart of the university community.

My contention would be that to the degree that people in the world of academe can bring to the fore an articulated consciousness that they all contribute to the ideal of the university—the pursuit of wisdom—to that degree they have a grace-filled role in the Body of Christ who is the Wisdom of God (see 1 Corinthians 1:24). That consciousness can easily be veiled over if there is not a general consensus that such is the case. To the degree that a university underscores a caste system, privileges the bottom line over justice to its cooperators, or exhibits a behavior far from its rhetoric (no matter how pious), the sense of community is diminished or curdled into sourness. The sense of vocation hardly thrives in such an atmosphere.

The first requirement, then, of providing a matrix for the working out of the Christian vocation is the persistent need not to allow community to turn into organization. The nurturing of community is a dialectical one. It supposes a leadership that believes in community, fosters it at both the macro and micro levels, and has some well articulated conviction that community (in this case, Christian community) is not only possible but essential. At the other level, there is then the need for those who are members of the community to share in it, support its bonding, and further its vision.

It is, in fact, the case that in the very near future the Catholic community incarnated as a university will be increasingly in the hands of lay people. One need only look at the rosters of the many Jesuit, Holy Cross, Benedictine, Franciscan, and Vincentian colleges and universities in this country (to name only a representative sample) to realize that the presence of members of the founding orders is in a state of steady erosion. The fact that Georgetown University in the recent past named its first lay president is a harbinger of things to come. This demographic shift should not be seen as some kind of disaster but as part of the larger reality in the church today as we move from the modern Catholic world characterized by baroque spirituality into the more pluralist postmodern world of post-Vatican II reality.

This shift does bring with it an urgent question: Will the future (and present) lay leadership bring with it a spiritual formation analogous to that enjoyed by those who were so formed within the religious community to which they had belonged? The question is not about finding “good” Catholics for leadership roles but of finding dedicated persons who have the formation necessary to articulate and model the Catholic idea of education as an education in wisdom where faith and reason breathe as two lungs of a single body. What characteristics should such persons have?

Spirituality and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition

In the first place, they should be engaged with and committed to the Catholic intellectual tradition. The precise shape of that tradition is a matter of intense discussion in our own day made all

the more intense by reactions to *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Indeed, whatever one may think of that document—and it does have its critics, both friendly and hostile—it is clear that its most important result was to have people think deeply about Catholic higher education's self-identity. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the Catholic intellectual tradition, but at the very least one must say that it is (to borrow Alasdair McIntyre's phrase) a tradition of inquiry that, in its shorthand version, may be described as the ongoing attempt to triangulate human inquiry, human formation, and the ongoing handing down of divine revelation in creation and history. That tradition has deep roots in the monastic *schola*, the medieval *universitas*, the founding of the great learning centers of Europe, and its present instantiation as inheritors of those traditions in the contemporary world.⁹ Obviously, this tradition is not merely an antiquarian memory closet but a living tradition that shapes and is shaped by the actual exigencies of the world in which we live. There arises, then, the twin obligations of preservation and renewal.

In order to get beyond mere lip service to the mission statement of a given school, one would expect leaders in Catholic education to go beyond assent to its propositions to some actual engagement with its presuppositions and its intentions. Or, to put it in John Henry Newman's categories: to embrace the Catholic intellectual tradition in the sense that is desirable is to affirm it both in a notional and a real fashion. This real engagement with the Catholic intellectual tradition is easier to stipulate than to accomplish. More and more of our faculty come with their graduate studies having been done in secular or non-Catholic settings. It is not to be assumed a priori that they have much more than a passing acquaintance with the Catholic tradition in any fashion similar to those who had been shaped by the old Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* or something similar. This is not only true of professors generally but even those who have finished work in theology or philosophy outside of Catholic influence.

One consequence of this sea change is the need for Catholic schools to provide formation for willing scholars to develop their scholarly work in ways that put it in dialogue with the Catholic sapiential tradition. Such experiments in formation,

understood as intellectual dialogue, are, in fact, under way at places like Boston College (the Jesuit Institute) and my own institution (summer seminars for faculty on the Catholic intellectual tradition). There may well be other experiments going on in this or in similar veins; if there are, such experiments deserve careful study.

In addition to formation in the Catholic intellectual tradition there is also the *desideratum* that there be some vehicles for deepening the spiritual life of those who are in academe. In this area there is no single suggestion that would cover the resources of an individual school. If, however, a school is serious about its Catholic character, then there should be some connection between Catholic faith and the curriculum. By highlighting such a connection, I do not mean that there ought to be some attention paid to philosophy and theology—that goes without saying—but something more: a link between the curriculum and the Catholic world view, which would mean, in the concrete, a demonstrated concern for social justice and a commitment to the option for the poor.

One way to frame this issue is by asking some pertinent questions: Are colleges only training for the job market? Are our particular courses any different from those on a secular campus when, in fact, they can be different? Do any significant number of our graduates go into the serving professions either under the aegis of the church or in some compatible arenas? Is there any link between the general shape of our curriculum and service to the needs of the world? Have we given more than lip service to the crying need for formation in ethics beyond the platitudes often dished up in the name of business or nursing or professional ethics? Is there any conscious resistance to the noxious fumes of some areas of postmodern thought where values are thought to be mere constructions from culture and truth claims exercises in ideological obscurantism? These and similar questions are asked not for the sake of being accusatory but as a bench mark to inquire if all the energy we put into the maintenance of Catholic schools actually derives from commitments to the sapiential tradition of Catholicism. Do they make a difference?

I say that the questions I raise are not accusatory, and they are not. In fact, any person in Catholic education who raises them and

then attempts to provide a satisfactory answer to them has already combined a deep sense of Catholic spirituality with a deep respect for the Catholic intellectual tradition. God bless the business professor who helps students develop strategies to empower the poor to rise up from poverty and begin little businesses for the neighborhood. God bless the biologist who helps students study ways of eradicating malarial mosquitoes in sub-Saharan Africa. God bless the social scientists who steer students into NGOs for a life of service here and abroad. God bless those faculty members in the humanities who not only model the life of the mind but who inspire students to follow in their footsteps in becoming future professors of literature, philosophy, language, and the other humane disciplines. God bless those professors who insist that teaching the young is a noble way to spend a life.

Every one of those blessings I direct at professors whom I know and respect at my own university. I could name others but this talk must not become a litany of blessing. What must be said, however, is that every professor who shapes and sends forth a student with a vision of serving shaped by the Catholic intellectual tradition of learning and service grounded in the presence of the Spirit is a leader in the deepest sense of the term. Obviously, from out of those ranks will come energetic persons who may be called to the increasingly onerous life of academic administration.¹⁰

A Final Note

If there is one fundamental point that requires some clear stress, it is this: there must be no artificial separation between one's spirituality (or "spiritual life") and one's larger life and calling. The spiritual ideal cannot be separated from the intellectual ideal in the life of the college or university; they are of a piece. To teach, write about, and do research in one's chosen field is to be on the path of truth that ultimately leads us to God. The whole cloth of the intellectual and spiritual life is a given in the Catholic tradition; it is best summed up by the title of a classic work in the Catholic intellectual tradition: Dom Jean LeClercq's *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*.¹¹ That holistic vision of cultivating the life of the Spirit and the life of the mind has

been iterated and modeled in figures as diverse as John Henry Newman and Saint Edith Stein, both of whom are held up as models in *Fides et Ratio*.

This fundamental datum of the Catholic tradition that grace builds on nature and, as Saint Thomas Aquinas says in a stunning affirmation, that every true thing uttered by anyone comes from the Holy Spirit—"Omne verum a quocumque dicatur a Spiritu Sancto est"—is the bedrock not only of the intellectual life but the Spirit-filled life of every believer.¹² If we live with those kinds of convictions, not only are we living an authentic spirituality but we provide models for those others who have been entrusted to our care. So then let us make our own the prayer that Saint Augustine once uttered as he finished his great complex work on the Holy Trinity: "I have sought Thee—I desire to see in my understanding what I have held by faith."¹³ It is in that desiring, oriented to understanding what is already held by faith, that every true pilgrim discovers the deepest meaning of spirituality.

Notes

1. I have explored this disjunction in "Stairway to Heaven," *Notre Dame Magazine* 31, no. 3 (2002): 25-29.

2. I have elaborated the notion of spirituality as a way of life in Lawrence Cunningham and Keith Egan, *Christian Spirituality: Themes from the Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 5-28.

3. The concept of the Christian life as a way of life has been brilliantly developed by Gustavo Gutierrez. See *We Drink From Our Own Wells* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983).

4. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* (London: Burnes and Oates, 1956), 14.

5. See the essays in *The Two Wings of Catholic Thought: Essays on Fides et ratio*, ed. David Foster and Joseph Koterski (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

6. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II q.23 2 ad 1.

7. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I q.1 6 ad 3.

8. From the *Declaration on Education [Gravissimum Educationis]* #10. Note the balance between serving the world and witnessing the faith.

9. From the vast literature on this subject, I have been helped especially by John Langan, ed., *Catholic Universities in Church and Society*

(Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1993); Theodore Hesburgh, ed., *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); James Heft, ed., *Faith and the Intellectual Life: Marianist Award Lectures* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996); Patrick Carey and Earl Muller, ed., *Theological Education in the Catholic Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 1997); and Anthony Cernera and Oliver J. Morgan, ed., *Examining the Catholic Intellectual Tradition* (Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press, 2000).

10. The alleged disconnect between academics and administrators has been vigorously challenged by Stanley Fish in his essay "The Intellectual Role of Administrators," *The Chronicle Review* (April 4, 2003), B-20.

11. Jean LeClercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961).

12. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-IIae 109 1 ad 1.

13. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV.28.51.

Response to Lawrence S. Cunningham

ZENI FOX

In reflecting on Dr. Cunningham's valuable paper, there were two points that particularly resonated with aspects of my own experience. The first is that leadership at Catholic colleges and universities will be increasingly in the hands of lay people. Of course, here at Sacred Heart that has been true for its forty-year history. The second is that a sense of vocation is of great import. I will expand on each of these.

First, some perspective on the increasing role of laity, and decreasing number of priests and sisters, in order to place the experience in higher education in a larger church context. In June of 2000, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops discussed the issue of the impact of fewer priests on pastoral ministry. The study document provided for them gives very telling statistics. Between 1950 and 2000, the Catholic population in the United States more than doubled, increasing by 107%. During the same period, the number of priests increased by only 6%. Furthermore, the average age of diocesan priests was 57, of vowed religious priests, 63. There were 433 priests over the age of 90, and 298 under the age of 30.¹ In some dioceses bishops are withdrawing priests from virtually all roles other than parish ministry.

As we all know, the number of sisters has declined greatly, from a peak of 181,421 in 1965, to 122,653 in 1980, to 81,161 in 2000.² Furthermore, in 1966, two-thirds of sisters were involved in educational ministries, by 1982 the percentage was 29%, and in 2000 only 11%.³

By contrast to these statistics, the number of lay leaders is increasing rapidly. As you know, there are lay presidents at the

majority of Catholic colleges and universities. This statistic can be set in the larger context of lay leadership in ministry in the church today. The most recent study of lay ecclesial ministers (the title the bishops are using for professionally prepared lay persons in leadership roles in parishes) indicates that in 1997 there were 30,000 working in parishes, an increase of 30% in five years. In 1997, 27,015 priests served in parish ministry, a decrease of 12% in the same five-year period, and a number smaller than that of lay ecclesial ministers.⁴ Since 1997, the number of lay ecclesial ministers has continued to grow. In addition, great numbers of lay people head diocesan offices, work on diocesan staffs, serve as campus, hospital, and prison ministers, and lead various Catholic institutional ministries. Based on statistics regarding those entering vowed religious communities and seminaries in recent years, there can be no question but that this trend will continue in the foreseeable future.

The second point made by Dr. Cunningham that I wish to reflect upon is the importance of a sense of vocation. I agree with his use of this concept relative to the work that people do, rather than only one's state of life (married, single, priest, or religious). I interpret this "sense of vocation" to mean that an individual has a belief that what he or she is doing is what God desires of them, that their gifts of nature and training and grace, call them to this particular work. I would add that, because those at a Catholic institution of higher education are serving in a Catholic institutional ministry, it is desirable that they see their work, their vocation, as part of the mission and ministry of the Church.

In my experience, my colleagues at Seton Hall University do not generally use the category of vocation relative to their work. A number of years ago, I had a conversation with a dean who spoke with passion and conviction about the needs in his field, which he was striving to meet with creative initiatives. I observed, "That is your vocation." He demurred, seemed a little embarrassed, and the conversation moved on. On another occasion, I had been asked to lead a retreat for faculty, and chose the topic, "The Vocation of the Teacher." These events do not draw many people; this one did not. Tellingly, a number of those who came said they had not thought of themselves as having a vocation. My work in

a master's level program for Catholic school principals has given me the opportunity to explore this question of vocation, the vocation of the teacher, the vocation of the educational leader. With this group, too, most do not attest to a prior belief in their having a vocation. However, in the process of dialogue with these educators, I have found that they recognize, and claim, the vocation to which they have been responding. They *have* answered the call with the choices they made, with their service to others, with their commitment to truth, as educators. But they had not named this as a response to a vocation, as a calling. I see in this process of recognition something that Karl Rahner once described: they come to a conscious awareness of that which is already present by grace.

I have contrasted these experiences with my work with lay persons involved in various other aspects of the church's ministry, for example, hospital chaplains, pastoral associates, and directors of religious education. They speak a language of vocation. They say things like, "I think this is what God wants me to do" and "I do not know where pursuing this degree in pastoral ministry will lead me, but I think that this is what I am supposed to do." For a number of years, a subcommittee of bishops at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has been studying the issue of lay ecclesial ministers. They have been involved in several consultations, and sponsored varied events, in an effort to understand this new phenomenon of laity in pastoral leadership roles. Based on their listening, one conclusion they have drawn is that "Lay ecclesial ministry is experienced by many to be a call to ministry, a vocation."⁵

Does it make a difference? Are my university colleagues and the Catholic school principals doing a poorer job because they do not have the same consciousness of vocation as the lay ecclesial ministers do? I would say yes and no. Certainly, without a conscious awareness of vocation, committed and effective teaching, research, service, and leadership can be practiced. Individuals can work from a sense of Catholic identity, implicit or explicit, and strive to hand that on to others. But with awareness, with a sense that this is what I should be doing, a new level of meaning opens for us. Parker Palmer's *The Courage to Teach* is an extended

meditation on the theme of vocation. He reminds us that when we teach from a deep place of faithfulness to our call, which is a faithfulness to who we are, then we are in communion with powers beyond ourselves, co-creating the world.⁶

For Palmer, this sense of vocation is deeply human, not necessarily related to a particular religious understanding. As Catholics we affirm that all persons are called into being by God, and therefore all are called into partnership with God in the stewardship of creation. All are called to use their gifts for the good of the community. This understanding of vocation could inform the work of all persons involved in Catholic higher education, making possible a community of commitment formed of those from varied, or no, religious tradition. But in addition, for committed Catholics who are part of educational communities, a sense of their vocation, individually and collectively, allows a focus on the work of the school as part of the mission of the Church, part of the Church's effort to continue the ministry begun by Jesus. In communion with powers beyond themselves, by grace, they become conscious partners in co-creating the kingdom Jesus proclaimed.

However, a question we need to ask is, Why is it that so many Catholic educators do not have a conscious awareness of their vocation to teach, and sometimes to lead? I think that this is also an issue that must be examined in the larger context of Church life. Most Catholics, when asked what a vocation is, would respond that it is a call of God to become a priest or a sister. Some might say that it is a call to vowed religious life, marriage, or the single life. The idea of a call to a particular *work* is not taught, or preached. When we "pray for vocations" as a community, almost always the prayer is for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Our life as a church does not invite young adults into processes of discernment, into reflection on what is their call, except in regard to clerical or religious life. Our life as a church does not invite mature adults into processes of reflection on the meaning of the call they have followed in their work life, and a probing of how to live the call more fully and faithfully.

Institutions of higher education alone cannot change the mindsets of Catholics, but they can be a significant factor in

fostering an awareness of vocation to a particular domain of work, as an important dimension of spirituality. The initiatives undertaken at many schools, designed in response to the call for proposals on this topic by the Lilly Endowment, illustrate various ways in which this can be done. The fostering of a sense of vocation among teachers and administrators is part of a larger whole; it embraces a fostering of a sense of vocation among students, and among all who share in the work of the institution. The stories of efforts to do this, as undertaken by various institutions, need to be shared with the larger Church community, so that bishops, priests, and all of the people will begin to think of vocation more holistically. This understanding relates to many themes emphasized in recent church documents. Notable examples include the call to renew the temporal order in the *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* of Vatican II (see especially article 7), and the call to go out into the vineyard, which is the world, and restore creation to its original value, as proclaimed by Pope John Paul II in *Christifideles Laici* (see especially articles 2 and 14). Perhaps the so-called vocation crisis in the Church today will provide the impetus to explore the vocation of the laity more fully, at every level of Church life.

There is a further specification of the sense of vocation that I think is necessary. Catholic colleges and universities have been called Catholic institutional ministries; that title recognizes that these efforts are part of the mission of the church. As we all know, there has been much dialogue in recent years about what this means; some of the discussion has focused in a particular way on what it means in light of increasing lay leadership. Over ten years ago, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin envisioned “seminars and similar academic programs to help new lay leaders of Catholic schools, hospitals, and social service agencies to understand in greater depth the basic components of Catholic culture, identity, and mission.”⁷ Such efforts have begun, it is true, but I think that the meaning of mission, especially mission relative to institutions of Catholic higher education, needs ongoing exploration by *all* members of these institutions. What is the vocation of each individual serving the institution? What is the relationship of the institution itself to the mission and ministry of the Church? There

is not a formula for defining response to these issues, but rather an answer that each institution needs to discern, corporately, and then to embody.

I would like to conclude with a story that I think describes an institution that had done this. Some years ago I served as a member of an accreditation team at a seminary. The self-study was thorough, and had included reflection by representatives of all those who comprised the community: support staff and students, faculty and grounds keepers, administrators and food service personnel, board members and diocesan leadership. Customarily, the accreditation team holds its final meeting with the rector and anyone he chooses to have present to hear a summary of the evaluation. When the team arrived for this meeting, over fifty people were present, including some in the uniforms of their work, some faculty we had interviewed, and some graduates who had taken part in the process. All waited to hear the comments about *their* school, the mission *they* shared in.

Vocation and mission do not belong to a few, but to many. And, in classic Catholic practice, vocation is discerned communally, not simply appropriated individually. The task involved is, therefore, both personal and communal. A spirituality rooted in a sense of vocation and of sharing in mission is properly Catholic, focused on the individual, in community. This needs to be fostered and nourished in and by our institutions of higher education, and by the larger Church.

Notes

1. *The Study of the Impact of Fewer Priests on the Pastoral Ministry*, unpublished document prepared by eight committees of the Conference for the general meeting of June 15-17, 2000, pp. 4, 17, 19, 27.

2. Patricia Byrne, "In the Parish but Not of It: Sisters," in *Transforming Parish Ministry: The Changing Roles of Catholic Clergy, Laity, and Women Religious*, ed. Jay P. Dolan, R. Scott Appleby, Patricia Byrne, and Debra Campbell (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 113; *The Official Catholic Directory* (New Providence, NJ: P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 2000), 2093.

3. Byrne, "In the Parish but Not of It," 113; *The Official Catholic Directory*, 2093.

4. Philip J. Murnion and David DeLambo, *Parishes and Parish Ministers* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 1999), iii.
5. *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: the State of the Questions*. A Report of the Subcommittee on Lay Ministry (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1999).
6. Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 183.
7. Charles J. Fahey and Mary Ann Lewis, eds., *The Future of Catholic Institutional Ministries* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 24.

Response to Lawrence S. Cunningham

MONIKA K. HELLWIG

I heard four themes in Dr. Cunningham's presentation. The first was a definition of spirituality with which I find myself cheerfully in agreement: Christian spirituality is discipleship of Jesus; in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit; within the community, that is shaped by scripture, tradition, and sacrament. Such spirituality reaches out in compassionate friendship to the needy, along with all those concerned with transforming the world in the light of the coming Reign of God.

A second theme I heard had to do with vocation of the laity and the ways that the academic life, the intellectual life, may be seen as a lay vocation. Dr. Zeni Fox has addressed that, so I will not. A third theme had to do with academic life as a quest for truth, and more particularly that truth which is wisdom. Such a search is not only for personal, spiritual, and intellectual growth and becoming, but also for engagement in the culture and for concern with public affairs. That is something that I will return to. The fourth theme that I heard consisted of interesting practical reflections about where we are in our project with Catholic colleges and universities in the present context and where we may want to be in the future. Though I will not address this here, it could be a topic for fruitful conversation in the future.

I return to the third theme to flesh out how the academic life of our Catholic higher education institutions is or can be an exercise of Christian spirituality. The essence of Christian spirituality, the essence of living the Christian life, is faith, hope and charity. Faith, hope, and charity are about an individual and communal vision and longing and commitment. What we really mean by faith goes far beyond believing that certain propositional

statements are true and immediately relevant to ourselves. That is part of the understanding of faith, but much less than the whole. In its essence, faith is openness to the continuing self-revelation of the Divine—always and everywhere, in all things, when convenient and when inconvenient, when intensely private and intimate and when directly concerned with public affairs. We are concerned, therefore, with opening our eyes progressively wider to the self-revelation of God in everything.

The physicist's work, for instance, reaching into the immensity of creation and also into the most intimate composition of matter, is, properly understood, a contemplative study that looks and wonders and tries to understand, as a prelude to collaboration in the work of divine creation. Such study tries to understand the wisdom of the creator and to locate human life within the immensity of the whole and in relation to the teasing illusiveness of the inner composition of matter. It suggests respect for all that is, reverence about tinkering with the immense potential power revealed. It also asks for responsible screening of possible manipulations of nature in terms of their predictable and unpredictable impact on the quality of human life and the harmony of the whole.

Something similar can be said of the study of biology. The proper way to go about unlocking the secrets of life, the miracle of growth, and the mystery of ecological interdependence is with great awe and with great reverence for life as divine gift in all its manifestations. That reverence for life becomes so much the greater as the living things that we study are more a reflection of the Divine in sensation, consciousness, self-direction, choice, and so on. The reverence for life of the biologist is especially called for in terms of the impact of applications on human life and the ecological balance of forces that sustain human life. Everything that we do in our laboratories has consequences, often evaluated very differently from a commercial and from a Christian perspective.

One might say something similar for the mathematician who tries to grasp the patterns of relationship, the very possibility of number, the illusive and wonderful structures of space and time, the realities of proportion and relationship and relativity. The proper way to study those things and teach about them, drawing

young people and the not-so-young into the subject matter, is not with the primary motive of mastering, but with the primary motive of seeing, admiring, and understanding to the best that we can, and accepting responsibility for the practical consequences that come from insight, discovery, projection, calculation, and application.

One might ask: Is that real academic work? Is that an appropriate motivation for what really goes on in the research and the teaching of a university? Can one engage in this way in the academic enterprise as it is in fact being conducted in the higher education world, and be accepted well enough to function there? I think so. The most serious perennial problem that we have in the academy is the desperate competition. There is the competition to be the first to publish something. There is the terrible hunger we have for recognition for our individual achievements, that intense desire we have to do it better than other people, to be popular as teachers and acknowledged as scholars. Those things get in the way of real scholarship, solid research, and truly good teaching. True progress and success in science, not only in the natural but also in the human and social sciences, depends heavily on collaboration, and collaboration depends on a certain level of selflessness and generosity. The work often needs to be interdisciplinary, and many of the most worthwhile projects need to be unhurried. This requires a larger and stronger motivation than does work for quick results and personal advancement.

Faith is the openness to God's continuing self-revelation in the creation as well as in our own consciousness and our conscience about right and wrong. In the works of nature and in the unfolding of history, it is precisely if we can accomplish that kind of detachment from personal promotion that is facilitated by the attitude of contemplation, reverence, and awe, that we will be able to do meaningful and good work in scholarship and in teaching. And faith, of course, points beyond itself to hope, the second of the key elements of Christian spirituality.

What do we mean by hope? Some of our traditional definitions seem remote from the real spiritual life of most Christians. But one of the more helpful insights developed in traditional spiritual theology is the following. Hope consists of a great desire and a

confident expectation that together generate the energy to pursue the desired goal. Traditional spiritual theology also asks what that goal is, or what the content of Christian hope is, and answers that it is quite simply God, or union with God. Jesus, in the Gospels, makes it more practical and more contextualized when he directs hope to the coming Reign of God, to be realized in creation and specifically in the human situation, in human society and in human history.

How does this relate to the academic project? In the study of history, sociology, languages, literature, or even human psychology, we are looking at the potential for the realization of the Reign of God in creation. That is not the introductory explanation one finds in undergraduate sociology or psychology textbooks. But it is the much deeper reality of what we are doing. We are trying to understand, to observe more carefully, to make comparisons, and sometimes to do experiments. In all of this we are trying to know and analyze the problems and to understand the potential in the human situation from a stance of great and abiding hope.

Unfortunately, as we know, the contemporary academy is not the exercise of hope that it should be. It is commonly an exercise of dull acceptance of the status quo, as though our economic, political, and military systems were the inevitable traps in which we are going to live forever. Christians can do better than that because we see the world in terms of sin, and redemption. We are called to see our history, our economy, our international relations, our political affairs, in that way. By seeing the world in terms of creation, sin, and redemption, we have the basic requirements for an energetic public hope. The doctrine of original sin means that what one sees in the world is not the everlasting and inevitable entrapment into wars, poverty, racism, and oppression. It is quite the opposite. What one sees with Christian eyes is a challenge to discern what is of God's good creating, what is a distortion of human efforts to collaborate with God, and what is already of the redemption.

The challenge is to understand this and to find ways to act on that understanding. When we study history and the social sciences, we are not seeing a flat given, an inevitable, unalterable state of affairs. In fact, we can readily trace and document why and how the rich get richer and the poor poorer, the dominant countries

and factions get more powerful, and the powerless and oppressed even weaker. Influential “think tanks” continue to purvey “trickle-down” theories, flattering those in power in the world, even while the facts daily contradict the claim. Christian scholarship and analysis must be done in the light of the truth, both the truth of the factual data and the truth of faith and hope. There is no contradiction between the two kinds of truth. There is a special vocation for those whose scholarly work is in the social sciences, because the social sciences are intimately linked to the process of redemption in the world. We see a challenge through them to discern what is both desirable and possible in human society. God’s reign in human affairs and in creation is not an empty desire. The desire that is cultivated in us is coupled with a confident expectation that it can be realized, that there can be a transformation of society, that all things can be brought to meet the Reign of God, though not necessarily on any timetable we set.

As faith leads to hope, so hope must lead to charity. But what is charity? What is love? It is not primarily about words, but in commensurate deeds to the demands, the needs, the situation of our times. We speak of faith, hope, and charity, but the meaning may be clearer if we speak of vision, longing, and commitment. Nowhere do these central Christian virtues become more evidently necessary than in the academic enterprise, because the scholarship and teaching and the productive work in which we are engaged are not games that we play in the academy to have fun. To be sure, they are generally a lot of fun—more fun than most people in the world are ever able to have—but we cannot let it corrupt us into the seeking of fun for its own sake without responsibility. Even less can we let it degenerate into the seeking of status, recognition, of being there first, and so forth. No, the point of our scholarship, the point of our teaching, is what we can do for others. Certainly, as Professor Cunningham has said, the point of all of this is what we can do to grow spiritually and intellectually ourselves and how we can foster spiritual and intellectual growth in our students. But it is not for us alone as privileged people, but rather for service to the world. It is for cultivating a vision out of which can come a prophetic presence in our relationships to creation, to one another, and to our responsibilities in the world.

To repeat, faith is a matter of acquiring vision, of constantly deepening and clarifying vision, that is, the vision of God's self-revelation in creation, in the community, in ourselves, in history. Such faith leads to longing, to hope, to a forward thrust. And that forward thrust leads to commitment. As one lives out the commitment, it increases and further clarifies the vision, which in turn, leads again to a greater longing, hope, and thrust forward. Professor Cunningham earlier used the term *perichoresis*, the round dance, the dancing in and around and coming back to the same place, which is never really the same place again. We have more usually used that term when expressing the Christian's groping attempt to understand the mystery of God analogously in triune terms. But this same image of the round-dance is also applicable to our lives of faith, hope, and charity, and to our experience in any work, especially in academic work.

So what about the poor administrator? I talked about the scholar as scholar and the teacher as teacher. This, however, is certainly not to belittle or ignore the work of the administrator. The work of the administrator is a godly work in the literal sense, a divine work. As the teacher fosters the becoming of the students, so the administrator fosters the vocational development of a community of teachers and students. The administrator fosters that kind of community that Professor Cunningham spoke of, which is living out of the resources of scripture and tradition and sacrament, which is the community of faith, hope, and charity expressed concretely, but which is also a community of outreach. The administrator has a very special vocation. The administrator, more than anyone in the higher education enterprise, must have a broad and deep understanding of the meaning and implications of Christian faith in the context of the contemporary world. The administrator must have this grasp in order to guide the whole institution in a scholarly and educational enterprise that is really in service of the redemption in individual lives and in the world.

In this conference a number of speakers have ended with a good and inspirational story. I am not going to end with a story, because I want to say, both to the original listeners at the conference and to the readers of the volume, that you and I are the story and it still has to be completed.