



## R. Wayne Kraft Memorial Lecture



This annual lecture, part of the university's *Heritage Week* celebration (previously "Patron's Day"), offers a current theological viewpoint related to or informed by the spiritual tradition of the university's patron – **ST. FRANCIS DE SALES**. Speakers of national prominence are invited to present this lecture on campus. The text that follows is provided for personal enrichment and is not intended as a commercial or professional publication.

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### ***BEING CATHOLIC: WHOLE & ENTIRE***

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#### **The Church at its Best**

More than fifty years ago last September, four baby priests, each ordained two years, sat in a Jacksonville rectory dissecting the problems of the Church, when out of the corner of the room came the voice of the irritated pastor, who up to then was quietly reading his Office: "If you guys are looking for the best of the Church, look to your own priesthood and you'll have no time to complain about your seniors!" The barb was somewhat deserved, because at our age we had no perspective or experience to make judgments on anything. We had just completed — along with 100 other priests — the parish visitation of every Catholic home in the Diocese of St. Augustine, then almost all of Florida and, having walked the streets for three months, we had come face to face with a great many talkers, talkers often being the parishes' best complainers.

The parochial facts, when finally in, were quite impressive. In that year (1944), three quarters of the married Catholics made their Easter Duty and attended Mass every Sunday. These couples had larger families than non-Catholics. The better educated were the better practicing Catholics, and also had larger families than the less educated. More than 85 percent of single Catholics attended Sunday Mass.

Little did I know, then, that I was entering one of the most impressive periods in the history of the Church in the United States, or anywhere. The Catholic population was to double from 20 million in 1940 to 40 million by the opening of the Second Vatican Council, mostly practicing Catholics,

priests doubling from 25,000 to 50,000, religious tripling from 50,000 to 150,000 and a Catholic school enrollment that grew to 5 million and more. This system was already turning out upwardly mobile Americans and practicing Catholics in record numbers. Up until the Council, the most stable and fruitful Catholic families, the most religiously observant, the most zealous lay apostles in the Church, were the graduates of Catholic colleges. Revisionists later spoke only about how the Church was too institutional, insufficiently charismatic, and had failed to penetrate the American culture in those days. Still the piety of the faithful then, and their "*sensus fidei*" cannot be gainsayed, and it would have been difficult to find the equal of the American Church anywhere. As for the culture, the Catholic moment might have arrived had the Church retained its clear convictions and clerical discipline.

Fr. George Bull, S.J., a professor at Fordham, writing for *America Press* in 1956, just six years before Vatican II, asked the question "What is a Catholic college?" He attributed the success of our American Catholic college system to the Church's ability to improve the intelligence level of its faithful in all fields of secular knowledge, and to send forth young men and women well informed about the Catholic creeds and worship. Fr. Bull took for granted the educational excellence of the Fordhams of the United States, but was not shy either to add: "If the Catholic college in this country has neglected even partially either of its two functions, it has not neglected the first. It has, thank God, sent forth from its halls generations of men and women who knew their Catholic faith." Having been a parish priest 14 years by that time, I would hasten to assure you, "and knew how to practice it, too!"

Why should anyone have expected otherwise, when the Church was doing its best? Things were not always so good, however, for our infant Church. When she began to come into her own, about the time of the early Baltimore Councils after 1829, priests were described by one Church historian as men "who knew not how to obey," and Catholic laity were said to be "interpreting their share of Catholic life by non-Catholic norms."<sup>1</sup> The chief obstacle to a vibrant Catholicity at the time, apart from the inherited weakness in all of God's creatures, was the dominant Protestant culture which, though Christian, did not like papists, and whose leaders conducted a crusade to keep them from securing a favorable place in American society.

But then the bishops went to work. They preached to their own all the creedal truths the country's opinion-molders did not like, brought discipline into priestly lives, encouraged the coming and oversaw the development of religious communities of men and women, identified their flock with the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, established a separate school system, defended their poor (even when prelates were embarrassed at times by their prodigal behavior), inculcated in immigrants a genuine love of America and the importance of obedience by Catholics to the laws of the land. Etched in the keystone of every Catholic school was the maxim: "For God and Country." This was the patrimony out of which came as fine a body of Catholic churchgoers and American patriots as this nation, or any other, ever saw.

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## Catholicity as Universe

Again, I ask: When the Church is working at her best, why should this not be so? Is not Catholicity intended to be a cosmos of sorts, a global religious village, a world view whose breadth encompasses God in his heaven and the lowliest of those made in his image and likeness, a universe which embraces Jesus Christ as its Lord, whose Living Body was commanded to "make disciples of all nations"? Is this not the reason Orestes Brownson and Flannery O'Connor became converts, the reason why the Church gained the Sisters of Charity and the Paulist Fathers, because Elizabeth Seton and Isaac Hecker so believed? Who said it better than the greatest convert after St. Paul, the bishop who explained his change of heart by his change of mind: "I would not believe in the gospel had not the authority of the Catholic Church moved me."<sup>2</sup> That convert was, of course, St. Augustine of Hippo.

The Church, therefore, is no mere congregation of people who pray in a different way, whose beliefs and customs are simply alien idiosyncrasies, nor a people who are content to live in their local situation without attempting to change it. No, the Church is a community of believers on a mission to lead all humankind to God, providing this humankind with a world view about human nature itself and about the eternal dimension of their existence. Catholicity is a way of life; but it is also a way of thinking. Some undoubtedly consider this claim to be an arrogant posture, but it belongs with the territory claimed by Christ. Hans Küng compared "Catholicism" to "Communism" to make the Church look bad but, as both Marx and Lenin discovered, their most formidable foe was the Catholic Church. Her total commitment to God guaranteed that the Church would be a stranger in the land of its secular counterpart, and a threat to totalitarianism of any kind, even if the Church at times committed her worst sins by aping the worst features of the omniscient State.

The Church seeks to cast its spell over every sphere of human life - intellect, will, emotions, conscience, and behavior, humankind's private and public world, society's philosophy, business practices, artistic expression, its law and scientific research. Influence on the culture, if it comes at all, springs from the impact of Catholic lives on the civic community and through the faith-filled Catholic institutions willing to place their witness to Christ out there for all to see. These citizens and these institutions, created by bishops or by religious communities under the jurisdiction of bishops, are not simple self-defense mechanisms for the Church, though they are that, too; nor are they self-interest groupings seeking special privilege. Catholic institutions, if faithful representations of what the Church is, are stand-ins for Christ feeding the multitude, healing the sick, scolding the hypocrites and the money changers, teaching all who will listen how to pray to God. A Catholic body free to function but willing to hide its identity, or to conduct itself as if half-believing/half-unbelieving, is hardly the right witness to a credible Christ.

Would it not be ridiculous for the Body of Christ to be otherwise? Was it not He who argued "No house divided against itself will stand" (Matt 12:25), and in whose name St. Paul inveighed "is Christ divided?" (1 Cor 1:13). What did the final book of Scripture, called Revelation, mean when it importuned the disciples in Laodicea to be "hot or cold," not lukewarm (Rev 3:15-16), the same Christ whose final prayer at the Last Supper petitioned that the world would continue to know him only because his disciples were one (John 17:23)?

Gilbert Keith Chesterton insisted that there is a Catholic way of teaching everything, even the alphabet. Sister Catechismus of eons ago, and the Jesuit Fr. Bulls of old, knew that the best compliment paid in those days to some of our graduates was the surprise of an observant nonbeliever, which caused him to say "You must be a Catholic!" When that happened, the Church was doing right.

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## **Catholicity the Rival of Secularity**

For these and similar reasons, every historian worth his doctorate takes for granted the built-in rivalry between Christ's Church and Secular States,<sup>3</sup> from their study of Emperor Constantine through that of King Louis XIV and President William Clinton. After centuries of absolute monarchs and strong popes invading each other's domain, secular thinkers discovered that a "neutral state" would be a blessed relief from the religious wars of yesteryear. Many Catholics, too, looked upon the American experiment as particularly laudable, in view of its seeming benefits to both religion and civility. However, practice does not always follow theory. The Catholic Church is never neutral toward any State, so why should any State be neutral to her? The Church survived Protestant America because the Founding Fathers, Christians in background, as they were, allowed Catholic bishops maneuvering room. Opinion-molders of the 19th century may not have liked Catholic immigrants very much, and native American Catholics were often embarrassed, too, by the behavior of their new co-religionists, but Catholic bishops had freedom, along with their religious orders, to establish schools and agencies which were totally Catholic in purpose and identity, yet American in sentiment and enthusiasm. Catholic leadership was free to manage these infrastructures without interference, and at certain points of time, Protestant legislators provided money - no strings attached - whenever any of those schools or agencies provided a public service. Furthermore, the mores of the nation, especially as they pertained to family life, character formation for citizenship, or restraint of social deviance, were based on the Ten Commandments of God, which were Jewish before they were Christian.

This is past history, we know. Protestant culture is no more. The Catholic moment never arrived. And the benign Welfare State, conceived with Christian inspiration, has grown up to be secularist. Mind you, it is not secular in the adjectival sense, meaning simply "worldly" or "of the times," but as an ideology which rejects religion "from on high," even Protestantism. Secular Humanism, as it is regularly called, has no interest in God, not even in pagan idols. Their protagonists treasure man and the evolutionary betterment of the human condition. They search for wisdom not by listening to prophets, rabbis or popes, but by collating human experience and studying it scientifically. We of the 20th century know, if anyone does, the profit that has come to humankind from such studies. But we men and women of faith know also that many eternal verities are not scientifically verifiable, like Jesus Christ Son of God. We readers of Holy Writ have not forgotten the kingdom of Babel either, nor the babbling tongues that plagued the children of Noah, when they decided that, by human effort alone, their generations would live prosperously and safely (Gen 11). Nor our Lord's words to his tempter: "One does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4).

In the modern dispensation, the Secular State is a tempter, which looks upon entanglement with Deity, as represented by Churches, as inimical to its worldly pursuits. Its "neutrality" to any religion, putatively from "on high," is feigned. Partisans of enlightened humankind consider revealed religion to be an obstacle to human progress, no less so than do Marxist Socialists. Furthermore, it makes no sense for them to encourage, support or underwrite a contentious rival to secular hegemony over the minds of their citizens.

Significantly, the Supreme Court, beginning in 1947 with its extreme rhetoric in the *Everson* case, began to reinterpret the U. S. Constitution as having a high wall of separation between religion "from on high" and the allegedly neutral government. By 1961, the Supreme Court further declared (in *Torcaso v. Watkins*) that Secular Humanism, though non-theist and "from below," was a real religion, on a par with Judaism and Christianity, protected within the meaning of the First Amendment. (Over the years several "Humanist Manifestos"<sup>4</sup> - akin to Christian creeds - have publicly rejected notions of God, of Christ as Son of God, the baptism of infants, the confirmation of the young, and any Christian indoctrination aimed at children.) Our Protestant forefathers would likely be outraged to discover, on Resurrection day, that their grand experiment with a neutral State, which favored Protestantism, would two centuries later permit the American government to become entangled only with Secular Humanism. Was not the first American Catholic intellectual a perceptive convert? One year after his conversion in 1844, Orestes Brownson saw clearly that if religion was necessary to make democracy work, it must be, he said, "a religion which is above the people." His fear, then, was that despite the promise of democracy, an aristocracy of one kind or another would arise in America, which would arrogate to itself "the voice of God." Brownson foresaw, too, that the inevitable consequence of a populist Protestantism was Secularism.<sup>5</sup> Constitutional lawyer William Bentley Ball calls the recent jurisprudence of the modern Supreme Court as "No Popery in New Garb."<sup>6</sup> What makes anyone, therefore, especially a Catholic, think that the Secularist State can ever be neutral to any religion which claims to be "above the people"?

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## **Secularized Religion or Religious Secularism?**

But, another type of secularism is also worthy of our attention, viz. Religious Secularism, or, if you prefer, Secularized Religion. Since the secularist thinks that nothing is "above the people," that God does not exist, nor a divinely instituted Church, he also sees religion, whose existence he cannot deny, as being "of, by, and for" the people. Only voluntary associations of searchers for a transcendental experience can be recognized by the secular State, whose authority over the people's worldly well-being is overarching. The study of this religious experience is not theology, but anthropology, the sociology of religion or religious studies. No "Church," therefore, can set parameters for the State; it is incumbent upon the State, however, to set parameters of behavior for any "Church" which claims to be "above the people."<sup>7</sup>

At the turn of the 20th century, when Pius X caught up with this ideology within the Church, he labeled it "Modernism." What was Modernism? It was, and is, a school of thought which considered, or considers, Christianity, whatever be its divine pretensions, to be merely a human religious enterprise, and which, after a scientific study of its needs by those most competent to make proper judgments on such matters, is subject to development according to evolutionary laws

of human progress and change. Although Christianity claims its origins in the credible witness of Christ (cf. Matt 6:21-22; John 5:36-37), a testimony meant to be validated throughout history by the authentic witness of the Apostles and their successors, Modernism's heresy shifted the focus for such judgments, even about Christ and the Church, from bishops to "the knowledge class." Furthermore, the creeds, formulated by early Church Fathers (on the basis of empirical evidence), are neither divinely inspired, nor timeless, nor irrevocable. In the lexicon of Modernists, supernature is out, nature is in, and religion itself, whatever its mystical characteristics, is little more than a body of nonquantitative verbalizations about people's secular experience.

Lest this identification of Secularization with Modernism be seen as a flight of fancy, permit me to single out one area of human experience about which the Church has had a great deal to say, viz. sexuality. Dr. John Marshall, a British member of the *Papal Birth Control Commission*, reasserted his opinion of the Church's teaching on contraception in 1995, more than a quarter century after *Humanae Vitae*. Notice the direction of his argument:

Scripture and tradition do not provide knowledge of the nature of sexual intercourse, its biological function, which can only come from living experience and scientific study.<sup>8</sup>

Now, substitute for "sexuality" in that sentence other words like racism, atomic warfare, sweatshops, experimentation on human fetuses, "lusting in the heart" and sundry conduct that has long been declared immoral by informed and enlightened Christians. Then ask yourself: Where does Dr. Marshall's analysis leave the Ten Commandments, or even Christ? Like all judgments flowing from a Secularist or Modernist rationale, morality is determined by people ("from below"), not according to norms coming "from on high." Call it Modernism, call it Secularism — it is not Catholic Christianity. Permit me to reinforce this point by harking to the words of Professor Bernard G. Reardon about the present plight of the Church vis-a-vis Modernism at this or any stage of future history:

Catholicism, thanks to the modern media of communication, is exposed to world opinion as never before. Argument and protest will not be silenced by imperious gestures, and heresy is no longer a word to scare away any but the most timid. Nor can the non-Catholic Christian stand aside from the anguished discussion, for the crisis of Catholicism is the crisis of Christianity itself. And whatever its outcome will be cannot be foretold. But, "we may be sure" - to quote [George] Tyrrell's words - that "religion, the deepest and most universal exigency of human nature, will survive." We cannot be so sure that any particular expression of the religious idea will survive.<sup>9</sup>

Alfred Loisy, the most prominent Modernist of an earlier generation, was, after his excommunication in 1907, even more specific. The defrocked priest prophesied as follows:

The Catholicism of the pope being neither reformable nor acceptable, another Catholicism will have to come into being, a humane Catholicism, in no way conditioned by the pontifical institution or the traditional forms of "Roman Catholicism."<sup>10</sup>

To this day much of what was called Modernism, or is now known as Secularism, involves a denial of the truth of what Christ claimed to be, and the truth also of the Church which bears his name. In either world, Modernist or Secularist, creeds are human-made concoctions and there are no

moral absolutes. In its world view, only historically conditioned postulates will be lasting or helpful or true, and only as long as they prove to be useful to those who control the Secular City.<sup>11</sup>

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## **The Slippery Slope of Secularism**

In spite of the Church being a universe all its own, and its infrastructures, including colleges, sharing in the universality of her faith, modern secular religionists reached into history for time-tested ways of luring the Godly-minded to think more positively about the advantages available to them under the humanist dispensation. Power, fame, worldly influence, the very temptations offered to Christ in exchange for his disavowal of divinity, were re-presented to Catholics in the hope that this time the answer would not be "Be gone, Satan" (Matt 4).

Back in 1967, only 8 Catholic college presidents, their religious superiors and/or staff (26 in all) began the walk for all Catholic institutions down the slippery slope of secularization. At Land O' Lakes, Wisconsin, they decreed that they were colleges or universities first, and, therefore, independent of episcopal supervision, from existence under Church law, too. They excused their action as a pursuit of excellence, but really it was a quest for secular blessing and secular money. Linguistically, and morally, any college, be it Catholic or secular, is merely the highest level of someone's system of education. There is no intrinsic incompatibility between academic excellence and fidelity to its birthright. However, by Council's end, the blessings proffered by the government, foundations, and the *AAUP*, tempted leading Catholic higher educators beyond recall. So, to accept the world's favors, they attenuated their juridical status within the Church, choosing instead to accept the controls from their new benefactors.<sup>12</sup> The tragedy is that only a dozen or so of them could ever have acquired the civic status of Harvards or Yales for which they lusted (and none have). In the meantime, the typical small or modest Catholic colleges were pulled down into the swirling vortex of secularization along with Georgetown, Notre Dame, and Fordham. To this day, 150 Catholic colleges are still small, those whose enrollment never goes beyond 2500. It is a matter of some surprise that the hierarchy allowed this theft to happen.

At the very time this country needed authentic Catholic minds to help reshape the vulgar post-Christian deconstruction that arose to alter historic American mores, developments dominating the American scene, the chief framers of that "mind which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord" (Phil 2:5), second only to bishops in that role, chose to walk the secular road. Instead of being clarion witnesses to the whole Christ and to his universal Church, they decided to become testators to the American secular experience, and do this before a predominantly young American Catholic audience. If those young today, by and large, are ignorant of our glorious Catholic intellectual tradition, based on faith, out of which our Western civilization and our Catholic worship of God have developed, is it not because this intellectual patrimony may no longer be appreciated by their teachers? But if those elders chose to extol the American experience, should they not have taken notice that, by the 1960's at least, the national ethos was moving away from anti-papist Protestantism toward anti-papist Secularism?

What had been wonderful about the Catholic experience during the Protestant Crusade was the depth of "*sensus fidei*" developed within the Catholic community. The pious lay Catholic, the

fallen-away Catholic, the apostate Catholic, all knew what the Church taught and what was expected of believers. Many might not have been able to write a dissertation on biblical exegesis or probabilism, but they knew that Christ was the Son of God and Mary was ever a Virgin, believed in the Real Presence, if in mortal sin that they must go to confession, and that Christian marriage was "until death do us part." Over and above their mental grasp of what it meant to be Catholic was their ingrained reverence for sacred persons, places, and things, evident in the poorest practitioners. Fr. Bull was right about Catholic colleges. I directed a marriage course for 400 seniors at Iona College from 1965 to 1965, all virile young men interested in girls. With good humor, we could discuss sex as the sacred thing it was, even though they recognized the fun. They knew what chastity was. And when I joked with them about their virginity, they roared with approval at my caveat - "But you're virgins, because your Catholic girl friends wouldn't let you be anything else!" These were the youngsters, whose fathers had already brought credit to the Church by their conduct in business, in labor, in government and, years earlier had made us proud by their military service.

The Catholic community of those years owed its "*sensus fidei*" to the Church's "white martyrs" who, a century and more before, gave their life's breath and energy to secure the faith of Catholics during the long nativist war against it. I refer to bishops like Jean Baptiste Lamy of Santa Fe, nuns like the Sisters of Charity, or the Schools Sisters of St. Francis, American girls inspired by Elizabeth Seton as early as 1817, or German immigrants forced out of their homeland by the *Kulturkampf* beginning in 1874. How can we fail to mention a bishop, like John Hughes, who in 1840 bought a large tract of land called Rose Hill for a college to upgrade the Catholic intelligence of New Yorkers? Once Hughes persuaded Jesuits to take it over, it became Fordham. The least remembered patriarch of the American Church was a missionary priest who left France in 1841 to save the souls of plainmen in Indiana, and within a year of his arrival decided that the way to do this was to establish Notre Dame. Who, in the vast American Catholic public of 1996, remembers Holy Cross Father Edward Sorin? And so, the Church planted its roots in every nook and cranny of America, edifying the country by educating young Catholics to be civilized, up-to-date and Catholic. Even the *Catholic Theological Society of America*, as late as 1946, was born as a bastion of scholarly defenders of the Church's "*sensus fidei*." In 1962, weeks before the opening of Vatican II, its outgoing president, Aloysius McDonagh, C.P., reminded his Pittsburgh convention of theologians that no matter how important they were to the Church, "in relation to the hierarchy the position of theologian is auxiliary, subsidiary."

The question to be faced thirty years later is a new one for American pastors: Will they be able, in a Secularist America, to retain the "*sensus fidei*" among their own?

Secularism is a more dangerous and devilish foe. It is not simply anti-Papist but anti-Judaeo-Christianity. Like Royalists of old, its protagonists offer power, fame, and worldly influence to Christians who bow down and adore their thrones. Christians are often worldly, to the point of their shame; but Secularists, unlike the best Royalists, abhor all who speak for the "otherworld," and the Kingdom of which Jesus Christ was chief spokesman, or any religion based on revelation "from on high," and its priestly office in particular.

There is another aspect to the Revolution of the 1960's which we rarely discuss: Secularism is much more appealing than Protestantism since it does not demand that one forswear his Catholic identity when submitting to its allure.

The founding fathers and mothers of the Catholic faith in the United States treated their Protestant adversaries with large respect for the power they exercised over the American culture. And, in return, they gave no quarter by using American freedom and opportunity to develop a subculture protective of their faith, and one fully committed to the success and defense of the American enterprise. Catholics were distinguishable from Protestants by their worship as much as by their accents, but was one with their separated brethren in devotion to Christ and in the service of their country. There were certain Catholics, to be sure, who were embarrassed by the studied distinctiveness of their co-religionists, and Protestants, at the street level, although less and less so over time, often remained suspicious of Catholics. Still, by World War II, distinctive Christianities did not mean a divided America.

And then, seemingly out of nowhere, after World War II, a new class of Catholic evangelizers arose, especially in Europe, convinced that the time had come for the Church to mesh more agreeably with the secular culture. In America the de-Protestantization of the State helped make that idea attractive. If the Church was only less hierarchic, they thought, more democratic, less clerical, more lay, less divine, more human, less otherworld, more this world, less Roman, more American, a grand Catholic moment in the country's life was possible. Indeed, the argument was made in some quarters, one that had a 19th century ring to it, that if the Church was ever to be accepted as an equal partner in the ongoing American experiment, suitable arrangements must be made with the State, now that it was becoming "neutral" to religion.

Secularist opinion-molders were prepared to go more than half way to provide Catholics with an opportunity to tone down their uniqueness, to mute that authority which separated the Catholic Church from other religious bodies. The gifts they offered were old ones, the kind once made to Popes by Kings and Emperors - status and money. (The difference, of course, was that even strong Popes today would lack influence over the scions of Secularism, the kind they occasionally exercised over the baptized royalty of Europe.)

The proffered gifts by themselves are not the Church's modern problem. Such temptations have been with us since the days of Constantine. The trouble always begins when compromises of faith and morals are exacted under penalty of rejection, or conceded as the price of gaining secular favor. Almost immediately after Land O' Lakes, for example, two well-footnoted books appeared almost at once expounding the theory that, once a Catholic college incorporated under civil law, it became primarily a public institution serving a civic purpose.

Allegedly, this legal tie to government severed the juridical tie with the college's religious sponsor.<sup>13</sup> (The Roman *Congregation for Catholic Education* never accepted this view.<sup>14</sup>) After the 1968 Bundy Report recommended that New York State provide direct aid to private colleges (including religious schools), Fordham University led 20 Catholic colleges to claim their fair share of tax money (based on the number of degrees granted), accepting in return "non-denominational status" before civil law. One need not imagine what John Hughes and Edward Sorin would have thought of any Catholic college ceding or muting its birthright. And for dollars? Just imagine, too,

what those pioneer priests, brothers and sisters on the other side of eternity, must think, those who gave their youth, their health, a longer life perhaps, the comforts of rest, summer vacations, pocket money, so that poor Catholic teenagers might advance the quality of their American lifestyle while they deepened their Catholic intelligence and piety.

Regrets are a small recompense for paying the price of secularization. What about the cost of dissipating the most valuable educational assets ever amassed by any particular Church in the entire history of Christendom? Have you noticed today, once the secularist perspective is accepted as a given for the Catholic enterprise, how difficult it becomes to define the word Catholic, or Catholic marriage, or Catholic theology, or Catholic priesthood? One contemporary academic, purporting to explain his new view of what a Catholic college is, made this claim:

Vatican II recast the very ideas of Church, authority in the Church, and the context of lay-religious relationships so that the terms of discussion in the 1940's and 1960's were not those of the post-Conciliar period.<sup>15</sup>

No matter what he intended a sentence like this to mean, its explanation, as given, cannot be found either in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nor in John Paul II's *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Still, the openness to the secular rationale which it implies, is prevalent across the Catholic landscape. The overtones for Catholicity, that the recent Council changed the nature of the Church, revised the meaning of magisterial authority, or liberated the consciences of laity from the domination of clergy, are revolutionary indeed. We already have a commentary on the new *Code of Canon Law*, commissioned by the *Canon Law Society of America*, which teaches that Church law does not become effective when promulgated, but only when it is "accepted and acted upon by a community of intelligent and free persons."<sup>16</sup> (If a Catholic reacted to a serious civil law in this wise, he would likely end up in jail!) Are Catholics liberated from Christ, too, at least as the Church has always understood him?

Another Church document in the making, allegedly dealing juridically with Catholic college identity, wants such an institution to demonstrate its Catholicity by programming issues pertaining to social justice, but does not demand first that it program into its campus way of life the creed, code, and cult of the Church. From a Catholic point of view, good works without faith are dead.

Apparently we have begun to reap what we have allowed to be sown in the Church's field of mission. Immediately after the Council, one bishop commissioned me to evaluate his educational machinery. It did not take long to discover who was setting the tone for his post-Vatican II teaching corps. Three of the leading savants were Sr. Mary Augusta Neale of the Harvard Divinity School, Brother Gabriel Moran of Manhattan College, and Bernard Cooke of Marquette University. The nun did not think that Church institutions were sacred, nor did she highly esteem obedience to Church leaders either; the Brother looked upon both the religious order and the parish as obsolete, while the priest considered that apostolic succession to the Apostles fell on the whole Church, not simply on the hierarchy. Within a year of the Council's end, the Catholic Revolution was already in place, and we have been living through its aftershock ever since.

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## The Significance of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*

For almost thirty years, the Holy See had quietly acknowledged the perils of Land O' Lakes, not only for the United States but for the Church worldwide. Given the genius of Americans for exporting their creations, bad and good, the Holy See recognized the need to bring its higher education under Catholic law. When the first universal Code came into being in 1917, there was no need to cover Catholic colleges because bishops and/or religious superiors were in command of both their college presidents and/or Boards of Trustees. Today autonomy from such ecclesial oversight has become the rule. While secular agencies are probably quite satisfied with the secular competence of Catholic colleges, the Holy See has reason to be dissatisfied with their Catholic performance.

Promulgated law is unlikely when *laissez-faire* works. In such circumstances, most of the citizenry are behaving themselves. St. Paul's counsel to Timothy, however, was on target: "Law is not meant for a righteous person but for the lawless and the unruly, the godless and the sinful, the unholy and the profane" (1 Tim 1:8-10). In 1976, when the Pontifical Commission was writing the new *Code of Canon Law*, for what was already perceived as an unruly Church, Paul VI told the cardinals in charge: "Ecclesial life cannot function without a juridical structure." Rome had spent ten years by then trying to bring Catholic higher education under some kind of Church discipline.

From 1968 to 1973, the *Congregation for Catholic Education* undertook a survey of varying university opinions around the world (not only organized bodies), which concluded with an International Congress of College and University Representatives, not all of whom were "official." In 1972 Cardinal Gabriel Garrone, Prefect of the *Congregation for Catholic Education* invited each Catholic college president (1) voluntarily to set out in statutes and "without equivocation" its Catholic character and commitment; (2) to create instruments of self-regulation in faith, morals, and discipline; and (3) to keep in mind that "relationship with ecclesiastical hierarchy" which must characterize all Catholic institutions. Nothing happened.

By 1980, work was well under way on the new *Code of Canon Law*. Americans resisted "the college canons" every inch of the way. Nonetheless, when the new code appeared in 1983, canons 796-821 specified that no school could claim the name "Catholic" without the consent of competent ecclesiastical authority; that those who teach Catholic theology at the college level or above need a mandate (license) from the same authority; that bishops have the obligation to take care that the principles of Catholic doctrine are faithfully observed in those institutions. Those canons - though the Church's universal law - were dead letters in the United States from the beginning.

Six years later (March 1, 1989), the Holy See, on its own initiative, upped the ante for Catholic college presidents and their faculties by requiring a "profession of faith" for new teachers "in any university" dealing with faith and morals, and an additional "oath of fidelity" for anyone assuming an office to be exercised in the name of the Church. The appropriate university personnel were expected to affirm their faith in what the Church teaches as divinely revealed, to accept all that is taught definitively concerning faith and morals, and to adhere to authentic hierarchical teaching, even when it is not proposed definitively. The Oath of Fidelity additionally calls on certain officials to preserve the deposit of faith and to foster the discipline of the whole Church and Christian

obedience to the Church's shepherds. In one place they are told to shun those who teach contrary to faith.

The response of the American Catholic education community - from important members of the faculty of the *Catholic University of America* to delegates of the *Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA)* to university presidents - has generally been one of hostility. Notre Dame University's president simply said "No." Msgr. Frederick McManus, CUA canon lawyer and a leading voice against Roman interventions on many occasions, was even alarmed that pastors might be forced to take these oaths.

A year later, John Paul II went further still, issuing his own "Apostolic Constitution for Catholic Higher Education" (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*), which requires hierarchies to establish a system of statutes called "Ordinances" binding on every college which would wish to call itself "Catholic." Recognition of Catholic identity comes only from Church authority. Professors in the field of ecclesiastical science are to be licensed (mandated), somewhat after the fashion of engineers, doctors, and lawyers in civilized countries. Bishops are to keep an ongoing eye on the quality of the Catholic performance. As of the moment, the universal law of the Church has not been applied to American Catholic colleges.

What is strange about the status quo is that almost every Catholic college president speaks as if his institution were a Rockefeller University, housed in a giant sheltered series of laboratories, on some city's lakeside or riverside - away from people and detached from the magisterium - Catholic to the extent that its personnel sometimes explore God's inner being and psyche. The fact is that most Catholic institutions of learning are "little" colleges, structured to pass on accumulated secular learning and the authentic content of the Catholic faith and way of life.

As for their insistence on "non-juridical" treatment by bishops, college presidents and/or some of their faculties cannot have it both ways. More than a few of their chief spokesmen and women have already taken a juridical stand against hierarchy. The contemporary challenges given to bishops include expressions like "We want due process," "Prove our offenses," or "Let the civil law decide." As long as a college's compensatory statutes do not protect Catholicity, the scales of justice favor secularity, and will by the nature of the case be tilted against *magisterium*. If canon law, which binds all the faithful in one way or another, and *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, which binds all Catholic colleges, do not draw the lines of the playing field of Catholic higher education, then loose canons will be unleashed up and down every line of Church authority.

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## **The Nub of the Problem**

The nub of the problem is that many Catholic elites who form public opinion within the Church, and who have a critical role in determining the policies of Catholic institutions, no longer believe in an objective revelation from God, one that can be translated by authority alone or in such a way as to distinguish with certainty dogmatic truth from falsity, moral right from wrong. The so-called Word of God must be filtered through the subjective experience of their academic minds, or that of people in general. The penitent can say whether or not he sinned, not the confessor. "What does

the Word of God mean *to me*?" is a question often asked by professional educators after reading the new *Catechism*, as if the answer is theirs alone to give. The arbiter of truth and right becomes personal conscience, not the magisterial Church. At rock bottom we deal here with a form of Protestantism or, in our day more likely with Secular Humanism.

In the same vein, the Catholic performance of Catholic college presidents and their faculties is professionally determined, independent of outside interference from those alone who have the responsibility to decide what is authentically Catholic. Most professors are sharp enough to avoid saying or doing anything that might lead them into federal or state prisons. But, if Catholic, some academics apparently have long since discounted the authority of Catholic hierarchy to restrain their freedom to represent or misrepresent Catholicity to the Church's young.

But whose authority do they mean? Theirs, to redefine doctrine? And what freedom are they talking about? And who says that their self-definition of authority or freedom makes it true? Is the Church a mere political enterprise, with belief and unbelief co-existing as a matter of personal right? Are believing Catholics not free to hold on to their faith in peace? Are popes and hierarchies not free to protect the freedom of believers to believe as Christ told his disciples to believe? Are the Catholic creeds worthy of this protection? Granted, believing Catholics should expect to suffer for their faith, and bishops, too, in protecting it. Granted, also, American Catholics have been spoiled by the earlier vitality of their Church, bishops, too, by not hitherto having to find their very role challenged from within. But a different die is now cast. What appeared as a debate in 1965 over abstractions has become a struggle in 1995 for power over who governs the Church according to its own definitions, or over who can force the Church to be something Christ and his Vicars promised she would never be. In the last analysis, the ultimate freedom, and responsibility, rests with the Pope and the Bishops in union with him.

Every society, to be true to itself, certainly to accomplish the purpose for which it was created, must be governed by norms necessary to preserve its integrity and peaceful existence. The anarchic state of American society is a good example of what happens to the well-being of all the people, when the freedom of the individual against his society is institutionalized to such an extent that the freedom of society to be what it is, is of lesser account. Granted, there are dangers in autocracy. Still in Catholic social philosophy, the common good of society prevails over the right of an individual to do his own thing, if in the doing he jeopardizes the peaceful and meaningful life of the community.

Christian society requires the rule of law. At present, the intellectual and moral chaos, which our media is exporting all over the world, represents the triumph of ideas spawned more by the French Revolution than by the American. Freedom to think, say, and do what you want - divorced from truth, right, and social order - was the invention of atheists like Voltaire, not of Deists like Thomas Jefferson. Voltaire intended his propaganda war to destroy the Catholic Church. Jefferson led an intelligent political revolution so that Christians of all persuasions could practice their religion in peace under law. (Significantly, the greatest enemy then, of the cynical and immoral Voltaire, was the Society of Jesus.)

Freedom, in most Western societies and in the Church, is plentiful for ordinary members, and for the creative, too, as long as it is exercised respectfully. A certain amount of antisocial behavior is

expected, and tolerated, and of sin - within limits. But, once exercised, freedom, even if academic freedom, is subject to the laws of civility, of truth, of morality, of responsibility to the society to which the member belongs. When society is civilized, citizens by and large are disciplined in their social behavior, whatever the anarchic tendencies of some of them may be. In Christian society, believers are expected to be more than civilized. They are called upon, if they say they are believing Catholics, to "think with the Church," especially if they hold positions of teaching, moral, or pastoral authority within the Church. In any case, it is the function of society's governors to deal, according to its own laws, with public nuisance, with repugnant, uncivilized, or criminal behavior, as well. It is the function of pastors, good shepherds that they are, by appropriate laws and enforcement procedures, to protect the Church from heretics, schismatics, unscrupulous public sinners and public dissenters. And let me add: "pick and choose Catholicity," seeking legitimacy from hierarchy, is a form of heresy.

While freethinkers and/or habitual wrongdoers do what they can to characterize law-enactment and law-enforcement as oppression, failure by any society to do either places its law-abiding membership in captivity to the unruly and the wicked. The Church is not dispensed from responsibility to protect its own common good and the faith of the faithful, even if, in doing so, it becomes an object of ridicule among those who think virtue is found only in freethinking, or in a *laissez-faire* form of government designed mainly for them, or cynicism from those who have lost their faith but choose not to lose the Church.

The excesses of the post-Vatican II era have been amply demonstrated by Paul VI and John Paul II as inimical to the religious life of the faithful. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* itself is being undermined in large segments of Catholic higher education, as four recent commentaries on it by college professors make clear. The Church's public dissenters obviously do not "think with the Church." It is the responsibility of the hierarchy, and the Pope, to deal with this situation. Surely, withholding honors and privileges from those who divide the Church doctrinally or morally is a reasonable exercise of Church authority. Otherwise, Alfred Loisy will have gained the last word over Pius X, viz. that Christian creeds, codes, and cult are but the fruit of the historically conditioned human experience or scientific research, not hand-me-downs either from Church authority, or from Christ.

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## **Beyond the Law**

When the Church is in trouble — and, like Christ, she is always in trouble somewhere — the renewal of her life and her glory somehow follows the appearance of saints in unexpected places. When law does not seem to be working, Providence arranges for the faith that moves mountains to reappear in little known people. Today, the American Church is blessed with many uncanonized saints.

I find it difficult that we do not see more presidents and faculty - even if only few in number at the start - rising in the midst of the crowd to make a public confession:

"I would like my bishop to recognize my college as authentically Catholic."

"I would like to make a public profession of my Catholic faith."

"I swear my fidelity to the faith of Christ, to the Catholic Church, and to Christ's Vicar."

"I, as a theologian, wish to be licensed to teach Catholic theology."

Less than thirty years ago a few important Catholic presidents, speaking of a college constituency that, by American standards, was small in enrollment, led their institutions away from a corporate commitment to the Catholic faith, and little college presidents followed dutifully in their wake. When I think of recovery from that fall from grace, the messianic prophesy of Isaiah comes to mind:

The wolf will dwell with the lamb

And the leopard shall lie down with the kid,

And the calf, and the lion, and the fatling together,

And a little child will lead them (Isa 11:16).

Already in this country little colleges are walking away from that Land O' Lakes pack to demonstrate how academic excellence and authentic Catholicity go hand in hand. Far beyond the scope of their uniqueness or the size of their budget, the presidents of these institutions are turning out priests, religious, and zealous lay apostles - often Harvard, Yale, and Princeton bound upon their graduation - to replenish the supply of disciples the Church always needs, and which other, larger, self-styled Catholic institutions have long ceased to contribute. Their presidents have courage, but more than that, they possess a zealous Catholic faith burns within them ... The salvation of the Church may well depend on the Allentowns presently existing all over the country.

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### **... With St. Francis De Sales**

Few schoolmen in the United States associate Francis De Sales with Catholic higher education, except the people of the diocese of Allentown, Pennsylvania.

How appropriate it is, therefore, that we close this address with the inspiration of this particular Bishop and Doctor of the Church. More than that, he is particularly relevant to our age because during his lifetime his apostolate was mainly to people forced by circumstance to live secular lives in a very worldly French State. His primary goal: To make them devout Christians.

Francis came into this world two years after the Council of Trent (1567), and died the year that his model and mentor, Philip Neri, was canonized a saint (1622). The culture of France and Switzerland in his day was not unlike that of our own, alien to Christianity - romantic, sentimental, individualistic, earthbound, and pessimistic. To those who were sad this bishop taught joy, to the poor he offered hope, and to those who thought they were the lords of the universe, he made known the power of God. A creature of Trent, he taught its Catechism, made

the Redemption of Christ the centerpiece of his preaching and, following the Council, saw to it that the worthy reception of the Sacraments became the heart of his pastoral mission. (He himself was good at hearing confessions.) He taught his people to enjoy life, elevating their vision of what it meant to be human to include the practice of the Catholic faith. The entire life of Francis De Sales is captured by the word "devotion," a synonym for "piety" and "fidelity." He was called a "humanist" because he wanted his people to deal as Christians with the world where they lived, and a "secularizer" because he trained them to be devout, not as religious, but as parents, teachers, statesmen were devout. (He anticipated Pere Cardijn by three centuries.)

Were Francis alive today, he might sense what is wrong with so many of our modern Catholic campuses - they lack devotion. Not simply daily worship that calls out to the young, or prayers before class, or Christ's crucified body on the walls, or the Angelus at noon or at three, or little grottos around the grounds - but a "*sensus fidei*" everywhere, an inculcated respect for the sacred as much as for the mundane, for immortal life as for this, for the Scriptures, the Person of Christ, and his Vicars, as well as for men of learning and wealth.

A college need not be a cold calculating place of cerebration, critical of things uninspired earthlings do not understand, or a house which thinks it is successful if it enriches the talented or patronizes the less fortunate, or one which substitutes politics for faith, reduces religion to good works, esteems self-fulfillment over doing God's will. The Catholic college campus, by definition, is a house for mental development, but also a training ground for intelligent saints. The Catholic college strives to gain endowments and to be known for its medals. Yet, from the perspective of faith, what do these profit on the Day of Judgment, if graduates are men and women of little faith, who go through life not knowing that they have been deprived, who live in sin without consciousness of being in sin, or who die without the Sacraments.

Christ once said, "I have come to set the earth on fire and how I wish it were already blazing" (Luke 12:49). The word "fire" appears more than 300 times in scripture, most often as a symbol of God our Father, Christ our Savior, and/or the Holy Spirit our Counselor. Fire consumed the sacrifice of Abel, sealed the covenant with Abraham, fell upon the tabernacle of Moses. John the Baptist foretold that we would be baptized "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt 3:11). The Holy Spirit rested on the eleven Apostles one Pentecost morn in the form of tongues "as of fire," and through them on their teaching successors to this very day.<sup>17</sup> It was to set the American soil afire with the special spirit of God that the Catholic college was established in the United States by the likes of a John Hughes or an Edward Sorin, to provide the country with intelligent and trained Catholics who loved God, who were grateful for Christ's dying and rising, exemplars, also, to the world of his continued presence by their worthy participation in the Church's sacramental life. From this sacred task no believing Catholic is absolved, certainly not a Catholic teacher nor a company of Catholic teachers. Or, to borrow a different metaphor from St. Francis De Sales:

God commanded Christians, who are the living plants of his Church, to bring forth the fruits of devotion, each one in accord with his character, his station, and his calling.

To this prayer, and for all of us here tonight, let us say *Amen*.

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## NOTES

1. Peter Guilday, *History of the Councils of Baltimore, 1791-1894* (Macmillan 1932), p. 185.
  2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 119.
  3. See the Church's claim to independence from the State in Vatican II's *Dignitatis Humanae* ("On Religious Freedom"), no. 13.
  4. *Human Manifestos, I and II* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1973).
  5. In the *Brownson Quarterly Review* (October 1845).
  6. See his *Mere Creatures of the State?* (Crisis Books 1994).
  7. For a brilliant exposition of this unfolding secularist drama, see Paul Mankowski, S.J. in George A. Kelly (ed.), *Church and State in America: Catholic Questions* (St. John's University edition, 1992), p. 213.
  8. *London Tablet*, 10 June 1995.
  9. See his *Roman Catholic Modernism* (Stanford University Press 1970), pp. 66-67.
  10. Marvin R. O'Donnell, *Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* (Catholic University of America Press, 1994), p. 370.
  11. See Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (Macmillan) and a Catholic response to post-Vatican II developments within the Church by Donald J. D'Elia and Stephen M. Krason in *We Hold These Truths and More: Further Reflections on the American Proposition* (Franciscan University Press, 1993).
  12. Notre Dame's Marvin O'Connell succinctly stated the conundrum in *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University* (ed. Theodore Hesburgh) (Notre Dame University Press, 1994): "Does it not seem odd that the same educators who legitimately resisted undue encroachment from those who, at least, were members of the household of the faith, should, in the next breath, confess themselves more than ready to accept dictation from government bureaucrats, secular accrediting bodies and honors societies, foundation executives, moguls of business with tax-deductible dollars to give away, and, a little later, from race and gender lobbies?" (p. 239).
  13. John J. McGrath, *Catholic Institutions in the U.S.: Canonical and Civil Status* (Catholic University of America Press, 1969); Walter Gelhorn and R. Kent Greenwalt, *The Sectarian College and the Public Purse: Fordman - A Case Study* (Oceana Books, 1970).
  14. See Adam J. Maida and Nicholas P. Cafardi, *Church Property, Church Finances, and Church-Related Corporations* (Catholic Health Association, 1984).
  15. J. Bryan Hehir in J. Langan (ed.), *Catholic Universities in Church and Society: A Dialogue on Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (Georgetown University Press, 1993), p. 29.
  16. Paulist Press (1985), p. 29.
  17. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 688 and 696.
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