

The Dilemma of Catholic Higher Education: A Proposed Solution

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Abstract

Catholic higher education in the United States faces a dilemma. Primarily beginning after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), most Catholic colleges and universities in this country began a slow but constant drift away from their Catholic identity which was presumed prior to the Council. Changes in administrative control of these institutions, movement away from theology to religious studies, and an attempt to compete more favorably academically with secular institutions, ideas which were genuinely adopted for the progress and advancement of these institutions, came with a significant cost, a diminution of Catholic identity. While this situation has been recognized, today most Catholic institutions of higher learning have been reticent to address the issue. Strong leadership from administrators and boards of trustees to recapture the “heart” of Catholic higher education is required. The solution to the dilemma is not complicated, but an urgency exists.

Keywords: Catholicism, education, academic freedom, Catholic identity, administrators

In their exhaustive 2006 study *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis*, Melanie Morey and John Piderit, S.J. sounded a warning: “Catholic colleges and universities face dramatic threats to the vibrancy of their religious culture, and perhaps to their survival.” (Morey and Piderit, 2006) This clarion call needs to be renewed as the fabric of American Catholic higher education continues to wear thinner with the passing of time. For approximately 400 years, beginning with the work of the Jesuits and their classical method of *ratio studiorum*, Catholic higher education largely served its clientele well, initially preparing future clergy and later a broader student constituency to be prepared in mind and heart to serve society at large and in many cases the Church specifically. Catholic higher education understood its role; educators, administrators, and the hierarchy were “on the same page” in their common outlook to the purpose and realization of Catholic colleges and universities. By the mid-twentieth century, however, winds of change were clearly blowing and began to raise the roof of the Catholic higher education system. The clarion call that Monsignor John Tracy Ellis issued in his seminal article of 1955 that berated Catholic higher education for its failure to produce any number of notable scholars, the great changes brought to the Church through Vatican II, the simultaneous turmoil to society at large in the United States throughout the decade of the 1960s, the massive shift in direction of Catholic higher education as a result of canonical alienation, and lastly the ramifications of the general trend toward secularism created a significant rupture in the fabric of Catholic higher education that remains today.

The call to progress which each of the aforementioned events sought to achieve, brought unsuspected or even undreamed ramifications for Catholic higher education which continue to be manifested today. There is, however, a way out, an answer that will allow Catholic institutions of higher learning to maintain their hard-fought-for academic excellence while simultaneously restoring the basic purpose of Catholic colleges and universities and reclaiming their heritage and identity that has been sorely compromised for over half a century. Father Basil Moreau, the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, expressed the solution this way: “We shall always put education side by side with instruction; the mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart.” (Quoted in Groves and Gawrych, 2014) Understanding the dilemma of Catholic higher education, the compromise of its identity and purpose to the needs of academic excellence, and the need to restore a united education of mind and heart is the subject of this essay.

The Dilemma: Origins and Manifestations

The dilemma that exists in Catholic higher education was generated over time, but there was no intent to create the present chaos. The comparatively rapid movement of Catholic higher education from the highly structured and rather staid system of *ratio studiorum*, initiated by the Jesuits in 1599 and basically normative in Catholic higher education until the 20th century, to a more open and free flowing system that sought to advance institutions of higher learning to comparative levels with secular institutions, brought many advances and progress, but the cost associated with the shift was indeed high. Collectively, the shift in Catholic higher education, while admittedly aimed toward finding success in areas traditionally measured and promoted by secular education, has created a dilemma for Catholic institutions manifest in several areas, but centered in loss of identity and mission. As Vatican II and the 1960s approached, the first major event that prompted Catholic higher education to re-evaluate its purpose and method was a clarion call challenging Catholic schools to be more academically rigorous in order to produce scholars equal to those from secular institutions. In 1955 in a seminal article, "American Catholics in the Intellectual Life," the prominent American Church historian, Monsignor John Tracy Ellis, chided the American Catholic educational system: "The weakest aspect of the Church in this country lies in its failure to produce national leaders and to exercise commanding influence in intellectual circles." (Ellis, 1955)

Ellis' "bombshell" comment undoubtedly prompted all associated with Catholic higher education to review academic programs and pedagogical techniques, fearful that the opportunity to compete with secular institutions of higher learning, created as a result of the more accepted status of Roman Catholics in American society in the post-World War II era, might slip away. Thus, Catholic higher education shifted gears, moving toward greater emphasis on academic excellence. For example, in 1974, the author of a small pamphlet, "Jesuit Education at Boston College," wrote: "In short, intellectual development was taken as the principal goal of the college's curriculum and research-oriented graduate school as the standard of excellence." (Gallin, 2000) However, in an effort to compete on a perceived higher plane academically, some of what made Catholic institutions distinctive was subverted. The good intended by Ellis' challenge initiated its own problem. In hindsight, it seems that maintenance of a traditional understanding of Catholic identity based on education of the mind and heart was made more difficult when seeking to improve academic rigor and scholarship. One significant element associated with academic excellence is the concept of academic freedom. The prominent Protestant church historian, Martin Marty, has succinctly framed the contemporary debate: "Academics seek academic freedom; without it they cannot be effective. Religious people seek spiritual freedom; without it they cannot be fulfilled. What happens when there is an apparent conflict between the two freedoms? What happens when a teacher, researcher, or student is caught in the crossfire between upholders of each freedom?" (Marty, 1998)

As one who stands on the side of total academic freedom, Marty continues, "When ecclesiastical authority with heavy hand restricts the teacher at a church-related school, all potential for making these supplemental and enriching contributions to the rest of the academy is lost." (Marty, 1998) However, Pope *Emeritus* Benedict XVI questions absolute academic freedom when it tolerates violations of the institution's mission: "In regard to faculty members at Catholic colleges and universities, I wish to reaffirm the great value of academic freedom. In virtue of this freedom you are called to search for the truth wherever careful analysis of evidence leads you. Yet it is also the case that any appeal to the principle of academic freedom in order to justify positions that contradict the faith and the teaching of the Church would obstruct or even betrayed the university's identity and mission: a mission at the heart of the Church's *munus docendi*, and not somehow autonomous or independent of it." (Pope Benedict, 2013) Absolute academic freedom that contradicts the mission of any Catholic institution of higher learning leads to a diminution of the school's Catholic identity and, therefore, contributes to the overall dilemma of Catholic higher education. Academic freedom was only one element in a much broader drive by Catholic higher education to knit itself as much as possible into the American educational fabric. Indeed the desire to assimilate was in large measure the rationale behind the movement for canonical alienation, beginning in the 1960s.¹ In certain ways the decision to move to a more collaborative (religious and lay) administrative control for colleges and universities was forward thinking.

¹ Canonical authorization, the process granted by the Holy See to remove Church control from college governance, was first implemented in the United States in 1967. St. Louis University and Webster College, which restructured their boards of trustees that year, perceived alienation as the means to achieve long-range goals, in line with the precepts of Vatican II.

Even prophetic in that the loss of religious (priests, brothers and sisters in religious communities/orders) and a severe dip in vocations during the 1960s and early 1970s would have made total religious control unsustainable. The Jesuit scholar Neil McCluskey, forecast the future: "The Spirit is again moving over the waters. It doesn't require the gift of prophecy to see that in the years immediately ahead the role of the laity in Catholic education on every level is destined to become central." (McCluskey, 1958) While bringing many benefits, the loss of control of the institution by the religious community has, as with many other factors, brought unsuspected consequences. Boards of trustees with high percentages of nonreligious as members, while adding much through their expertise to various important, even critical aspects of higher education, cannot, because of their nonreligious status, understand or in many cases even highly value the historical rationale for Catholic higher education and its absolute need to maintain a distinctive identity. Additionally, since most members of boards of trustees only meet three or possibly four times per academic year, with an agenda set by the university president and his/her advisors, it is impossible for them to grasp how the basic purpose and/or identity of a Catholic institution has been damaged or compromised. Only "those on the ground" can fully grasp and appreciate such realities. Once again, positive intentions have created unsuspecting consequences. This assimilationist attitude that has grown in Catholic higher education over the last 50 years, while believed by many to be the salvation of Catholic education, has also been highly problematic. Jesuit Father William Rehg has captured both the hope and consequences of Catholic higher education's move toward assimilation: "The institutional and economic pressures to enter into the mainstream of higher education joined forces with the opening to modernity initiated at Vatican II, and Catholic higher education could never be the same." (Quoted in Shea and Van Slyke, 1999) According to Professor *emeritus* Philip Gleason, cultural assimilation of Catholic education lessened its distinctiveness. (Hesburgh, 1994)

The perceived need to be assimilated into the mainstream of higher education was also problematic for it in many ways placed Catholic institutions of higher learning in conflict with the hierarchy and magisterial. The scholar of American Catholic higher education, Sister Alice Gallin, OSU, suggests that to achieve a status of equality with secular schools, Catholic institutions "may also have shut out, at least temporarily, some of the wisdom resident in their own rich tradition." (Gallin, 2000) A lengthy dialogue was initiated between Roman authorities and Catholic colleges and universities concerning the impact of changes "required" to gain acceptance and their impact on Catholic identity. Indeed, as the American Catholic historian, David O'Brien, has suggested the tension lies between ensuring institutional autonomy and academic freedom while at the same time making Catholic institutions of higher learning "perceptibly present and effectively operative." (O'Brien, 2003) The assimilationist spirit found in the drive for greater diversity at Catholic colleges and universities has also led to a diminution of Catholic identity. The Jesuit educator, Thomas Rausch, has written, "For many of them, a tendency to minimize Catholicism in their self-descriptions developed in order to attract a more diverse student body, gain financial support, or out of fear that the school can be seen as 'unwelcoming' or 'oppressive' for others." (Rausch, 2010) The positive goal of creating a more diverse and welcoming environment prompted many areas of Catholic colleges and universities to play down Catholic identity. Academic requirements centered on religion and philosophy, especially Catholicism, were lowered or removed.

Significant changes in the curriculum of Catholic colleges and universities, especially in philosophy and theology, also added to the dilemma. Indeed, Alice Gallin has written, Perhaps the greatest change in curriculum in the Catholic colleges and universities occurred in the areas of religion and philosophy. What had previously been seen as two essential components of a unified search for truth now became simply two different academic disciplines taught according to the specialties of the professors. No longer was philosophy seen as the necessary foundation for theological studies. Furthermore, there was no agreement as to what kind of philosophical system might serve to integrate a liberal arts curriculum in the way that neo-scholasticism once did. (Gallin, 2000) Not only did Catholic colleges and universities move away from requirements in the areas of philosophy and theology, but equally problematic was the movement from theology to religious studies as a program of study. The study of religion from a merely academic, non-confessional perspective, was given significant validity by the 1963 Supreme Court decision in *Abington Township School District v. Schempp* when the judges decided that the academic approach to the study of religion and the Bible in public institutions was a legitimate part of general cultural education and not a violation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

This reinforcement of the study of religion in public institutions fostered the idea of religion as a neutral topic. Thus, in keeping with the general post-Vatican II trend, beginning in the late 1960s, many Catholic colleges and universities broadened their theological offerings in two ways: (1) shifting from theology to religious studies or (2) maintaining theology, but broadening the base and understanding the nature of theological thought.

The separation between the study of religion and the spiritual formation of students was clear. Speaking of this shift toward religious studies and its rationale, the American Catholic historian, Patrick Carey, has written: The discipline was conceived as an academic study of religion. ... Its aim was not to foster faith or confessional agendas (as was a general aim of Catholic theology prior to the 1960s) but to examine and understand the universal religious dimension of human existence, whether evident in world religions or specific Christian denominations or secular enterprises. (Gallin, 2000) The movement to divorce spirituality from the academic study of religion was reinforced with the creation of campus ministry departments. Again, the Church historian, Patrick Carey, comments, "Campus ministries became the Catholic institutionalization of the separation of spiritual formation from intellectual development." He continues, "The most significant indirect effect of the movement (to campus ministry) was the secularization of the college discipline [theology]." (Quoted in Gallin, 2000) The loss of Catholic distinctiveness through attempts to assimilate into the broader culture and the shift from Catholic theology to a more generic religious studies program are part of a more basic but fundamental element of the dilemma of Catholic education, namely the loss of Catholic identity. Prior to Vatican II, institutions of higher learning had a clear identity and made no bones about professing their Catholicity. Catholic identity at this time was so clear because Catholics were self-consciously different. They felt the need for their schools to remain distinctive.

Relating to Catholic identity, and another element of the dilemma, is the division created by the 1990 publication of *Ex corde ecclesiae*.² Caught in the middle between the specifics mandated by the document and the pressure exerted by those who rejected these mandates, administrators and bishops chose to ignore the issue, thus widening the growing gap between Catholic colleges and universities and the institutional Church. Today the issues associated with *Ex corde* do not even seem to be part of the discussion. The aforementioned manifestations of the dilemma which presently plague Catholic higher education have all been generated as a result of decisions made by those within the Catholic community, and even more specifically those associated with colleges and universities. However, two additional factors that have deepened the dilemma, and over which the Catholic community has no control, are the rise of secularist and liberal thought and the persistent presence of anti-Catholic prejudice in the United States. Many academics today believe that education should have a moral center, but the politically correct default setting for any discussion suggests that there is no way to determine what that center is. The demands for diversity and sensitivity suggest that there is no universal truth. People cannot accept the possibility of divine revelation.

Anti-Catholicism, the second generic ingredient to the dilemma of Catholic higher education, is still manifest, continuing its long and inglorious history in the United States. The academy sees no place for a religion that continues to profess doctrines which by the politically-correct and liberal standards that dominate higher education today are perceived to be antiquated, not useful and, therefore, must be changed to accommodate modernity. While, generally speaking, academics go out of their way to be open, tolerant, and positive in their words and actions that impinge on various world religions, including most Christian denominations. Catholicism becomes the "tar baby" that can be roughed up and kicked around, seemingly without impunity. At times the manifestations of this anti-Catholic rhetoric are subtle, but on other occasions it is rather overt. Clearly, as American historians Philip Jenkins, and Mark Massa, SJ, have both written, Catholicism is "the last acceptable prejudice" on campus. (Jenkins, 2000) The multiple and varied changes in Catholic higher education that began with the clarion call of John Tracy Ellis and found its apex after Vatican II, brought much good, but with significant consequences. This "revolution," as David O'Brien calls it, undoubtedly achieved for Catholic higher education a higher level of professional excellence.

²*Ex Corde Ecclesia* (1990) was an encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II that addressed the relationship of the Holy See to Catholic colleges and universities across the globe. While the bulk of the document produced little negative feedback from the vast majority of Catholic higher educator and administrators and faculty, its call for the majority of the faculty to be Catholics and for Catholic faculty in departments of theology and religious studies to receive a *mandatum* from the local bishop to teach raised significant controversy.

The dream was that this intellectual movement would advance Catholics so that the dialogue between American culture and a Catholic voice could be heard with Catholic colleges and universities leading the way. Alice Gallin provides a general analysis of both the positives and negatives associated with this revolutionary shift in Catholic higher education, but she goes further, stating, "These changes became far more radical than anyone had anticipated." (Quoted in Shea and Van Slyke, 1999) In a similar context she comments:

"Decisions made and actions taken by the leaders of Catholic higher education between 1960 and 1965 ... [had] serious consequences." (Gallin, 2000) It seems clear that Catholic higher education was not properly prepared for this dramatic shift. The Catholic historian and theologian, James Hitchcock, has explained the situation, by suggesting that changes and adaptations were made without clear direction or how this new direction related to the previous tradition. The loss of Thomistic philosophy, as one example, happened with no clear vision of where the institution was moving. This attempt at what he calls "a liberal Catholic synthesis" did not allow religious identity to accompany the institutions' now greater openness to the larger world. He writes, "The crisis of the Catholic university is obviously part of the larger crisis of the Church. It is commonplace to say that most Catholics, including most priests, were not prepared for the Council and the crisis was thus more severe than it needed to have been. But, although the lack of preparation is often attributed to inadequate education, it is doubtful if the Catholic universities themselves, at least in the United States, were much better prepared either in practical terms such as governance or in terms of their intellectual mission." (Quoted in Shea and Van Slyke, 1999)

The Solution to the Dilemma

The present dilemma in Catholic higher education is a reality that cannot be denied, but those in positions to resolve the situation cannot, as has been the case for far too long, continue to wring their hands asking "What can be done?" Before concrete solutions can be presented, however, it is essential to articulate the traditional purpose of Catholic higher education. In 1980 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops stated the purpose of Catholic colleges and universities, tying it to the Church's mission in total: "All Catholic activity must of necessity be pointed to an objective that is ultimately religious: how to know God better and serve Him more faithfully. The goals of a Catholic college are specified by its very nature as a place of learning. But learning itself does not constitute the perfect and fulfilled life. It needs to be integrated with our search for the Lord and in our living with our neighbor a life of faith in Him and fidelity to His way. Our concern, then, is that students and faculty find on our campuses the community of faith which can encourage and support them in reaching for that goal. Unless a Catholic institution of higher learning fosters such a faith community, it contradicts its own mission." (National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), 1980)

The bishops clearly state that "academic freedom and institutional independence ... are essential components of educational quality," but this must be tied to a "commitment to the gospel and the teachings and heritage of the Catholic Church [which] provides the inspiration and enrichment that make a college fully Catholic." (NCCB, 1980) Indeed, as John Garvey, President of the Catholic University of America, has written, "Catholic education aims at nothing short of helping students to foster a friendship with God." (Quoted in Pope Benedict, 2013) Understanding the purpose of Catholic higher education, we can begin to solve the dilemma by acknowledging that Catholic colleges and universities must be places where faith and knowledge meet, where the traditional study of arts and sciences are infused through the light of faith. Bishop David O'Connell of Trenton, New Jersey, in presenting the Keynote Address to the 2011 Catholic Higher Education Collaborative Conference on Catholic identity, has clearly captured this idea: "Catholic schools are places, as the saying goes 'where faith and knowledge meet' but unless that meeting inspires, unless that meeting engages, unless that meeting lights a fire, unless that meeting changes lives, our schools are simply that, just schools." (O'Connell, 2012) O'Connell went on to say that the Catholic educational enterprise is evangelistic seeing "every administrator, every staff member, every alumnus, and every benefactor as a partner or 'potential' partner in the Church's mission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ." (O'Connell, 2012) This synthesis has also been captured by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in "The Catholic School": "The task of the Catholic school is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through subjects taught in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of virtues characteristic of the Christian." (Quoted in Krebbs, 2012) Similarly, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) suggests the purpose of Catholic education is to bring the Good News into every human situation." (O'Connell, 2012) Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who labored many years as a college professor before his selection as Archbishop of Munich and later supreme pontiff, clearly understands the connection between knowledge and faith.

He has written, "Catholic universities are called to promote a 'new humanistic synthesis' [where] knowledge is illumined by faith." (Pope Benedict, 2013) He sees the Catholic university as a laboratory "where, in accordance with the different disciplines, even new areas of research are developed in a stimulating confrontation between faith and reason that aims to recover the harmonious synthesis achieved by Thomas Aquinas and other great Christian thinkers." (Pope Benedict, 2013) Benedict succinctly described the mission of Catholic education:

"The essential task of authentic education at every level is not simply that of passing on knowledge, essential as it is, but also of shaping hearts. There is a constant need to balance intellectual rigor in communicating effectively, attractively and integrally the richness of the Church's faith with forming the young in the love of God, the praxis of the Christian moral and sacramental life and, not least, the cultivation of personal and liturgical prayer." (Pope Benedict 2013) The holistic concept of imbuing Catholicism in every aspect of Catholic colleges and universities has been promoted by many bishops and scholars. Archbishop Charles Chaput, OFM, Cap. of Philadelphia has written: "The genius of Catholic higher education is the schooling it gives in the mutual dependency of faith and reason. At its best, it refuses to separate intellectual and moral formation because they are inextricably linked. This gives primacy to the disciplines that guide the formation of a holistic view of reality—philosophy and theology. It aids the creation of the Christian culture and explains what this means for human thriving. It offers a coherent anthropology that treats the human being as a whole and actually gives meaning to the words human dignity instead of turning them into a catchphrase for the latest version of individualism. It offers an immersion in the virtues and an appreciation of humanities material and spiritual realities—the visible and invisible world—all of which get their life from belief in Jesus Christ." (Chaput, 2012)

John Garvey counters those who feel Catholicism in some way retards the capacity to think or "dumbs down" intellectual thought, stating, "Far from diminishing our capacity to think critically, Catholicism enriches it." (Quoted in Pope Benedict, 2013) The Jesuit William Rehg puts it this way, "The distinctiveness of Catholic higher education will lie in how its Catholicity impinges on the understanding and carrying out of its academic mission." (Quoted in Shea and Van Slyke, 1999) The essential nature of the element of faith as the integrative element knitting together the various aspects of Catholic higher education has been recognized by many. A theologian presenting a more holistic view, Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington, D.C. suggests that the Catholic university should be a place where faith permeates the culture: "On a Catholic campus, the faith should be woven into the entire fabric of university life. That is the only way the university can help the student engage the culture from a uniquely Catholic perspective." (Wuerl, 2012) Lamenting the absence of the Catholic tradition outside departments of theology and philosophy, the Jesuit Thomas Rausch has commented, "The Christian faith, mediated by the Catholic tradition, must have a privileged place in the university, not just in theology and campus ministry, but in the curriculum and the educational work of the various departments and divisions of the university." (Rausch, 2010) Pope Benedict XVI also recognized the need of faith as the integrating tool for Catholic higher education. He suggested that the contemporary "crisis of truth" is rooted in a "crisis of faith." Indeed, when addressing the presidents of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States during his 2008 pastoral visit, he stated, "It is no exaggeration to say that providing young people with a sound education in the faith represents the most urgent internal challenge facing the Catholic community in your country [USA]." (Pope Benedict, 2013) The Pope *emeritus* summarized his view on the need of faith in Catholic schools of higher learning by connecting it to the institution's identity:

"Clearly ... Catholic identity is not dependent on statistics. Neither can it be equated simply with orthodoxy or course content. It demands and inspires much more: namely that each and every aspect of your learning communities reverberates within the ecclesial life of faith. Only in faith can truth become incarnate and reason truly human, capable of directing the will along the path of freedom." (Pope Benedict, 2013) Resolving the present dilemma of Catholic higher education also requires acknowledging the need for theology as a basic academic building block of higher learning. This need was noted in 1980 by the American Catholic bishops who wrote: "The distinguishing mark of every Catholic college or university is that, in an appropriate academic fashion, it offers its students an introduction to the Catholic theological heritage. This is a moral obligation owed to Catholic students." (NCCB, 1980) The centrality of theology as an element of the resolution to the dilemma of Catholic higher education must be combined with the need of Catholic colleges and universities to maintain a close connection to the Church universal. Indeed, Pope *Emeritus* Benedict has commented on this need for Catholic higher education to be linked to the Church: "A Catholic academic community is distinguished by the Christian inspiration of individuals and of the university community itself in the light of the faith that illuminated thought,

for the fidelity to the Christian message as it is presented by the Church and for the institutional commitment to the service of the people of God." (Pope Benedict, 2013) Ultimately the dilemma which has plagued Catholic higher education for close to a half a century can be resolved only by acknowledging the need for and making steps toward achieving an education of both mind and heart for all students. John Crosby and David O'Brien, although coming from opposed viewpoints, both acknowledge, that the Catholic college or university is born from the heart of the Church.

Crosby argues, "If Athens and Jerusalem really belong together, whence this chronic antagonism between the Christian commitment of universities and their commitment to intellectual excellence and seriousness?" (Crosby, 1991) Understanding this apparent conflict, Father Basil Moreau, founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, wrote, "We shall never forget that virtue ... is the spice that preserves science. We shall always place education side-by-side with instruction; the mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart. While we prepare useful citizens for society we shall likewise do our utmost to prepare citizens for heaven." (Groves and Gawrych, 2014) Lest one think, however, that Moreau did not appreciate the need for academic excellence, he commented in the same letter, "Even though we base our philosophy course on the data of faith, no one need fear that we confine our teaching within narrow and unscientific boundaries. No, we wish to accept science without prejudice and in a manner adapted to the needs of our times. We do not want our students to be ignorant of anything they should know. To this end, we shall shrink from no sacrifice." (Groves and Gawrych, 2014) The dilemma of Catholic higher education has been presented and a resolution proposed but what is the way forward? First, the proposed solution does not seek to return Catholic higher education to a mode prior to Vatican II. On the contrary, it seeks to recover some of the traditional principles of Catholic higher education, especially its purpose and mission, and unite them to the gains made in intellectual rigor and other important areas over the past 50 years. The solution is not rocket science, but it will require discipline and most importantly a commitment to acknowledge the present dilemma and the courage to do something about it, especially in the face of opposition which grows steadily more strident with time and the failure of those associated with Catholic higher education to address the dilemma.

A series of steps can with time and persistence recover what was lost and unite it to what has been gained. First Catholic colleges and universities must adhere to their mission by assuring that all members of any particular academic community are "onboard" and willing to support it. Next, Catholic institutions of higher learning must reconnect themselves with the hierarchical Church. As much as faculties and boards of trustees can assist with oftentimes invaluable suggestions and advice, institutions must remain connected to local ordinaries and to the Church universal. (Shea and Van Slyke, 1999) Thirdly, Catholic colleges and universities must also stop apologizing for being who they are, but rather celebrate their catholicity, their universalism, which is not exclusive but rather inclusive, welcoming to all who wish to join the mission. Colleges and universities must loudly profess their Catholic identity without caveats or diminution of their beliefs in any way. The aforementioned dilemma has grown to its present state through a failure of the collective leadership of Catholic colleges and universities to properly guide their institutions away from the prevailing tidal wave of movement toward the secularization of the academy, seemingly oblivious to the gradual diminution away from the basic purpose of Catholic education that this slippery slope has created. Possibly due to a desire to avoid confrontation or uncertain as to what steps should be taken, senior leadership in many Catholic colleges and universities has failed to challenge those who seek to separate institutions from their Catholic roots. Unfortunately, as the scholars of American Catholic education, Melanie Morey and John Piderit, SJ have written, "Not all senior administrators ... [are] convinced that Catholic colleges and universities have a responsibility to educate students about the Catholic tradition." (Morey and Piderit, 2006) The leadership failure that requires resolution comes on two fronts, senior administration and boards of trustees. Senior administrators must acknowledge the dilemma and courageously act to resolve it. For far too long those in positions to act have done little, largely because of confusion concerning their charge. Philip Gleason has accurately stated the reality, "The crisis is not that Catholic educators do not want their institutions to remain Catholic, but they are no longer sure what remaining Catholic means." (Gleason, 1995)

Bishop David O'Connell, former President of The Catholic University of America, suggesting that the administrators must lead the charge for Catholic identity, presents a positive way forward: "To do so the administrator must understand and believe in the Catholic identity of the school; must see its mission determined, supported, and motivated by its Catholic identity; must lead the school effectively—its faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni, and benefactors—toward the accomplishment of its mission; and, must motivate his/her collaborators in the process of institutional assessment or evaluation so that everyone will recognize that the

school is what it says it is, does what it says it does, and is excellent at both." (O'Connell, 2012) Morey and Piderit suggest that serving as a senior administrator "imposes a burden and the clear expectation of fidelity to the Church and its teachings and [for Catholics] active participation in its sacramental life." They continue, "Providing leadership for religious cultural advancement is the responsibility of presidents and boards of trustees, not sponsoring religious communities. These officials must be given the authority to act decisively to enhance the Catholic culture on campus in every venue. Such authority must be given by boards of trustees who carry a heavy burden of responsibility for promoting the Catholicity of their institutions." (Morey and Piderit, 2006) Morey and Piderit suggest that boards are highly attuned to civil legal compliance, because failure to comply may place the institution in jeopardy. A similar attitude is necessary with respect to the institution's spiritual dimension. They write, "Ignorance of the law of the Church or disregard for its obligations also can have serious implications for Catholic colleges and universities. Both trustees and presidents have a responsibility to make sure the college is fulfilling its obligations." (Morey and Piderit, 2006) Senior leadership must take up the challenge to recognize the reality of the dilemma and then have the courage to act as necessary to return their institutions to ones that promote education of both the mind and the heart. Catholic colleges and universities can and must move forward proclaiming proudly their Catholic identity. It is time to reclaim what was lost, by adhering to the basic purpose and mission of Catholic education, as articulated before and now during this period of dilemma, but action and courage are absolutely necessary.

Conclusion

From the foundation of Georgetown University by Bishop John Carroll in 1791 to the present first quarter of the 21st century, Catholic higher education in the United States has evolved from institutions for minors as a pipeline to seminary training and priesthood to some nationally-known institutions noted for both scholarship and state-of-the-art research. Catholic higher education in the United States can rightly be proud of its progress, acceptance in the academy and general society, and most especially the millions of graduates who have made significant contributions to our world. Yet, the significant progress made has come with a high price that for many institutions has led to a loss of focus, direction, identity, and purpose. A combination of several factors, all of which actually sought to positively develop Catholic colleges and universities, have led, through many unexpected consequences, to a dilemma in Catholic education as manifested today most prominently in a general acceptance of the secular academy's ideas as normative, an increasingly tangential and strained relationship with the hierarchical Church and magisterial teaching, a rise in anti-Catholic rhetoric as an acceptable prejudice, and a loss of identity, namely what it means to be Catholic.

The situation is serious but there is a solution and it is not complicated. There is no possibility and, therefore, no need to return to the pre-Vatican II Church and the then contemporary understanding of Catholic higher education, but Catholic institutions of higher learning today, led by those who serve in administration, must reimagine and recapture the traditional purpose and identity of their schools lost when an over emphasis on the perceived need for change and updating, one might say an *aggiornamento* for Catholic higher education, transformed these institutions over the past 50 years. When these institutions have re-solidified their purpose and identity to their base foundations, then reasserting that the basic premise of Catholic higher education seeks to develop both the mind and the heart of students can become a reality. Such an endeavor requires people of vision and the courage to challenge a tidal wave of opposition that grows higher and stronger with time. The time to act has arrived!

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