

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 4

Article 2

10-1-1993

For Openers: New Ventures

John W. Padberg, S.J.

Follow this and additional works at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations>

Recommended Citation

Padberg, S.J., John W. (1993) "For Openers: New Ventures," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 4, Article 2.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol4/iss1/2>

FOR OPENERS

New Ventures

In the first issue of this new venture, *Conversations*, one of the articles began by noting that "Jesuit colleges and universities changed dramatically in the last two generations." In no way has that been truer and more evident than in the increasing presence and importance of women in Jesuit higher education.

This present issue of *Conversations* wants to stimulate our imagination and encourage our own conversations on our campuses and, most assuredly in the letter columns of this journal, about that subject.

On some of our campuses such conversations are already well under way. To note but two recent examples: at Boston College a group of women faculty members and administrators wrote the whole series of articles that made up the special issue of *Initiatives* from which one of our own articles is taken; at Creighton the latest issue of the university magazine, *Window*, had two feature articles entitled "Women in Our Church: Straining Toward a New Paradigm" and "Was Jesus a Feminist? The Place of Women in the New Testament Church." Of course, there are many more facets to the subject than we can treat of in the limited space of these pages, for example, the circumstances of women students on our campuses. Such issues are for our further conversations on each campus.

To go back to the very beginning, back even beyond Jesuit schools, it was with women that the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius Loyola, had his very first experience of pastoral work after his conversion to a serious Christian life, in conversations with them about things of God. At that time they ranged from middle-class women to wives of artisans, from maid-servants to apprentice girls (one of whom said of herself that she "was very wicked, keeping company with students. I was one of the lost").

If on a few occasions and in common with the times in which he lived, Ignatius unthinkingly employed stereotypes of women's supposed characteristics (and he indeed did so), on the other hand there is his undoubted respect, graciousness, appreciation and friendship for women. They are all clearly evident in the wonderful collection edited by Hugo Rahner SJ, *St. Ignatius Loyola: Letters to Women*. As the years went on, those women ranged ever more widely from royalty and nobility to benefactors and spiritual directees, from family members of fellow Jesuits

to very personal friends. To one of those latter he wrote, "There is not a woman in the world to whom I owe more than to you." We women and men on the campuses of Jesuit colleges and universities owe much to each other.

From campuses not only Catholic and Jesuit, but also as varied as Iowa State and Harvard, Princeton and St. Bonaventure, UCLA and Notre Dame, St. Thomas and Yale, MIT and Illinois Benedictine, came almost seventy participants in another new and extraordinary venture, the first session of a Summer Institute on Faith and Intellectual Life which took place at Fairfield University for eight days in June. Collegium, the sponsoring body, founded with the help of a generous grant of almost \$500,000 from the Lilly Endowment, will, as its founder, Thomas Landy SJ, says, "help to recruit and develop faculty who can understand, articulate and enrich the Catholic intellectual vision on their campuses."

Collegium is co-sponsored by 44 member colleges and universities. Each summer it will bring together young faculty and graduates from a variety of disciplines to explore the meaning and potential of Catholic intellectual life and to give them some of the resources and encouragement needed to bring that vision to life. The thirty-three faculty fellows and twenty-eight graduate fellows, four major speakers, eight mentors, two spiritual directors, and the evaluator and the institute director came from disciplines as varied as English and agronomy, political science and genetics, theology and the history of science and technology, marketing and philosophy, mathematics and medicine, law and engineering.

Noting that Peter Berger, the well-known sociologist, has written that religious belief is more vigorous in the world today than at any other time, but that that general trend is contradicted among only two primary groups of people in the world, Europeans and American intellectuals, Tom Landy, the director of Collegium, agreed with Berger that the lack of belief among intellectuals would have serious consequences at every level of society. Landy went on to say that "for Catholic colleges and universities and the Church at large this poses a great challenge.... The summer institutes will try to show the necessity of

Continued on next page

scholarship in the life of the Church. Perhaps most importantly, they will expose young faculty to outstanding intellectuals who have taken seriously their role as Catholic Christians in many areas of intellectual life. Young scholars can hear the stories of these senior faculty members and find out why they chose the path they did.”

If any of the Jesuit colleges and universities have not yet gotten in touch with Collegium, they surely ought to do so right away. They can write to Thomas Landy SJ at Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT 06430 or at 15 Avon Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

This issue of *Conversations* provides the happy occasion of welcoming several people to what will be a new venture for them, membership on the National Seminar on Jesuit Higher Education, and of expressing my gratitude for the contributions and the devotion to the work of the Seminar by our departing members. The new members are Peter Ely SJ, Gerald Fagin SJ, Samuel Harvey and Brennan O'Donnell. Three of them replace members who have completed three-year terms; one, Brennan O'Donnell, takes the place that Robert Miola had to leave early because of other pressing responsibilities.

The sidebar on the table of contents page gives the names and the schools from which these new members

come and their responsibilities at those institutions. Our departing members are all among the original founding members of the Seminar: Robert S. Miola, who teaches English at Loyola College, Baltimore; James W. Bernauer SJ, who teaches philosophy at Boston College; Gregory F. Lucey SJ, who is presently rector of the Jesuit community at Marquette University and who will in January become president of the Jesuit Conference in Washington, D.C.; and David J. O'Brien, who teaches history at the College of the Holy Cross. The departing members worked long and hard to move the Seminar forward and to get *Conversations* into your hands; the new members with equal generosity have been willing to take on the same responsibilities.

Lastly, a reminder that conversations can be carried out not only face to face—or by computer—but also by letters. So, please do write to let your colleagues share in your thoughts, your ideas, your reactions to the journal *Conversations* and to its articles and the topics which it treats.

—John W. Padberg SJ
Editor
Conversations

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Enlightenment Fundamentalism

Dr. Alfred Lightfoot of Loyola Marymount wrote in the last issue of *Conversations* (Spring '93) about academic freedom in Jesuit institutions. He believes that two forces—the growing pressure of certain justice issues and a deepening conservatism in the Catholic hierarchy—will pressure Jesuit institutions “to conform to certain predetermined modes of thinking and expression.” He fears that “the very essence of ‘Jesuit education’ is on the line.”

Dr. Lightfoot was unsettled that one of his colleagues, evidently a fundamentally conservative Catholic, expressed a doctrinaire opinion in

the university newspaper. While Dr. Lightfoot was fending off the fundamentalist right, his left was invaded by a series of opinions as dangerous to full academic freedom as that conservative's.

Item: “Doctrine has no place in the academic market place.” Will we be able to discuss that, or does Dr. Lightfoot mean us to take it as doctrine? We might need to recall that in the invention of the university in the Middle Ages the “academic market place” was established by the Catholic Church precisely to hammer out doctrine in the full light of day. Conformism in this nation's universities is not specifically

Catholic; it is specifically American. I happen to hold a number of doctrines, and I have gleefully insisted on my freedom to try to sell them in the academic market place of several universities, including Brown, Harvard, Seattle, and St. Louis.

Item: “I can only hope that all Jesuit universities will seek truth as an objective and relegate doctrine to the realm of suggestion, guidance, logic, and caring rather than defining truth itself.” Personally, I have no intention of retreating with my doctrines into this prescribed “realm” of interpersonal mush, a New Age parody of my tradition's academic marketplace. Dr. Light-