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Is the Promotion of Religious Diversity a Dangerous Idea?

Francis X. Clooney, S.J.

When I was teaching at St. Xavier's High School in Kathmandu, Nepal, in the mid-1970s, one of my assigned courses was Moral Science, for the 9th Standard (freshman or sophomore) students. After discovering that teenage boys, even Hindu and Buddhist boys in the Himalayas, were not terribly interested in lists of commandments and pristine logical justifications of good behavior, I sought out some other point of contact. I started learning more about Hindu and Buddhist religious beliefs and practices. I gathered a store of myths, pious parables, and poems, and began to use them in class. In this way I was able to continue communicating the moral values intended by the curricu-

Francis X. Clooney, S.J., is professor of comparative theology at Boston College. Since 1998 he has been the coordinator for interreligious dialogue for the Jesuits of the United States. His most recent book is Hindu Wisdom for All God’s Children (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998).
Hindu and Buddhist boys about what we believe and live by. My idea, only vague and inarticulate at the time, was that we are all better off when we are more explicitly and specifically religious in situations of pluralism.

This idea was confirmed in practice, for our conversations had effects outside the classroom. We set up a prayer room to which the boys brought statues and pictures representative of Hindu Gods and of Gautama the Buddha. At least once a week the boys would gather to meditate, hear readings from sacred texts, and sing traditional religious songs. I was always present at these gatherings—on the side, as a monitor but also an engaged observer. St. Xavier's had a tradition of annual retreats, following the model popular at Jesuit schools in the United States in the 1950s. I felt that these were rather too American, so I adjusted the pattern by introducing Hindu and Buddhist stories, pictures, and simple meditation practices, while still adhering to basic Ignatian principles and drawing on some of the same Christian resources—readings, tapes, discussion format—other Jesuits were using.

But my idea that we were all better off being more explicitly religious, as Hindus, Buddhists, and Roman Catholics, led to one controversial development. On their own, some of my Hindu students suggested that, since their religion was now being recognized as actually valuable, and since the majority of students in the school were Hindu, there should be in each classroom, alongside the Crucifix, an image of Sarasvati, the Hindu Goddess of wisdom and learning to whom students in India and Nepal pray for success in studies. My students took up a collection to buy some images of Sarasvati, but the Rector of the school, a fellow American Jesuit, quickly intervened to veto the plan. That was the end of it, for the students backed down and the moment passed. Had they persisted, the result would most likely have been a still firmer ruling that Hindu symbols simply should not hang in a classroom at a Catholic institution.

I cannot actually recall the Rector's reasons now (if, indeed, he shared them with me at all), but I believe his feeling, supported by most of the fathers at the school, was that hanging pictures of Sarasvati would cross an invisible line between general respect for students' personal beliefs and something that looked uncomfortably like approving of a pagan goddess. If the point was argued, the discussion of specific religious symbols and their underlying value might have become uncomfortably explicit, a charged comparison of Christ and Sarasvati. I doubt any of us were prepared for such a discussion. But my own mind on the topic has not changed: hanging pictures of Sarasvati in classrooms where most students are Hindu was and is a sensible idea. It is a good idea even (or especially) if it is likely to have unpredictable consequences. It would have been good for Hindu students to see Sarasvati each day in the classroom, and it would have been good for us Jesuits to have acknowledged this devotion and taken it into account in moral and religious education.

After two years in Kathmandu, I returned to the United States, studied theology, and was ordained a Jesuit priest. I received my Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, traveled to India a few times, and have been on the faculty at Boston College since 1984. American college campuses in 1999 are very different from St. Xavier's in the mid-1970s, of course. The relative clarity of the situation of religious identities at a missionary school contrasts starkly with our murky yet also exciting contemporary scene, where identities are less clearly marked and many students opt for "spirituality" over "religion" and make religious choices and connections that would never have occurred to me. But the intuition I had twenty-five years ago about a positive religious response to pluralism has stayed with me. It has actually gained new force in my current work at Boston College, where Catholic identity is ceaselessly under discussion even as the university becomes increasingly diverse, international, and (as everyone says) more secularized. If we care about institutional and communal religious commitments, how do we deepen a Jesuit institution's Catholic identity now, in this new situation where other religions are present as lived realities?

Before addressing that question in detail, I need to clarify some terminology. Several words I used just above—"religious diversity," "Jesuit colleges and universities," and "we"—are problematic. "Religious diversity" may rightly call to mind more immediately the issue of diversity among Christians of different denominations, since there are problems and opportunities on the ecumenical level which we have hardly addressed. But here I am focusing on the diversity signaled by the presence on campus of people of faiths other than Christianity. "Jesuit colleges and universities" sounds good, and it is a useful shorthand (in turn a shorthand for "Jesuit, Roman Catholic colleges and universities"), but it is not clear what or who we are talking about. "University," "college," "Jesuit," and "Catholic" are all terms that are understood and used differently by different constituenc-
cies with their own perspectives and according to their own strategic purposes. The idea that a "Jesuit college" can "act" for or against pluralism, or indeed in any way at all as a religious agent is problematic, since it is not clear that "Jesuit college" points to any particular agent—individual or corporate—who can actually do anything. But with some caution we may still feel justified in using such terms. And finally, who is this "we" supposed to be thinking about all this? "We" often masks uncertain constituencies. It may imply a real or imagined array of like-minded people subscribing to one idea. It could also mean "all of us," like it or not. Certainly I do speak as a member of the Catholic community which remains the largest religious presence on every Jesuit campus, and as a Jesuit. I cannot speak directly for people of other religious faiths or those who do not identify with any organized religion; nor, to be honest, can I presume to speak for other Catholics and other Jesuits. When I use "we," I will usually mean myself and people who to some extent agree with the idea I will put forward here, although on occasion I will use "we" when referring to a consensus or common challenge we all seem to face. At no point, however, do I mean to give the impression that there is a veritable host of like-minded people already in agreement with me.

Although some of my terms therefore remain slippery, I do have an idea—possibly dangerous—to put forward, and I believe it is worth spelling out as clearly as I can.

**An Idea**

*Jesuit colleges and universities should promote religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way.* Not only should these colleges and universities not drift into a safe secularism, but neither should their religious identity be conceived of solely in Catholic terms, as if the only things of a religious nature that should get noticed, spoken, and enacted publicly are the Catholic ones. Jesuit colleges and universities should become places of explicitly religious conversation where people on campus notice the religious diversity that exists there (how much diversity depends on many factors regarding particular institutions, but there is always some), and respond to it directly and with religious sensitivity, in an intelligent, educated, and spiritually-attuned conversation where faiths meet and are explored intelligently and practically. This commitment by Jesuit colleges and universities to the promotion of religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way will be a real service to the Church, which needs con-
stantly to rediscover how to think and speak in a pluralistic society. Moreover, since there are no Hindu or Buddhist or Islamic universities in America, we can do a great deal of good by making it clear that our campuses are places where believers of all backgrounds can learn in a coherent religious environment committed to honoring pluralism as religiously significant.

Much of this has to do with seizing the moment. The encounter of religions has taken on new urgency in our world, which seems at once increasingly pluralistic and yet also smaller. Religions that used to be far apart rub shoulders everywhere, every day. How to be deeply and intelligently religious in situations of diversity—a Christian respectful of Jews, a Muslim in a society not ordered according to Islamic ideals, a Hindu in North America’s individualistic society, a Black Muslim or a Native American in a white culture, a practitioner of Wicca in a Christian environment, and so on—is on the minds of those who think seriously about religious life in America today. Even those among us who do not wish to concede in advance that every religion is equally valid or that evangelization is to be ruled out should still want to put together a healthy, honest religious environment where pluralism is viewed intelligently and religiously. No honorable religious purpose is served by preserving ignorance or shoring up barriers to communication.

Catholic institutions should not be or become merely secular, either in a banal sense by simply bracketing religious responsibilities and commitments altogether and privatizing religion on campus, or by using the mantra of tolerance as a ready-made rationale for celebrating everything while in fact managing to avoid serious religious encounters. The majority of people on Jesuit campuses—counting students, staff, and faculty—are Catholic, but an increasing number belong to other faiths. If Jesuit institutions ought to remain explicitly religious and if they are also increasingly diverse, then it is entirely appropriate that we should respond religiously to this pluralism by deliberately inviting people of these different traditions into practices of encounter and communication where religious values remain foremost.

That we see our campuses as experiments in a rich interreligious dialogue of ideas, values, and lives is an ideal with good Jesuit credentials, and not just in the distant past when Jesuit missionaries pioneered intercultural learning in distant parts of the globe. Just four years ago, in 1995, representative Jesuits from all over the world came together in Rome for the Society’s 34th General Congregation, to deliberate on the Society’s current state and future directions. They affirmed that interreligious encounter is an issue all Jesuits need to think about and incorporate into the various ministries in which we have a guiding or collaborative role.

According to the Congregation, the encounter with religious people and their many traditions should infuse who we are and what we do. This is a large “should” and, again, we Jesuits cannot presume that the Jesuit agenda translates into marching orders for everyone else. But the idea of a pervasive interreligious encounter begins to appear more plausible when the fathers go on to explain that dialogue occurs on different levels, not just in technical and official contexts. It occurs most frequently and importantly as we live our lives among people who are in some ways like us and in other ways different. For most of us most of the time, “dialogue” is a commitment related to the simple and fundamental requirement that we have to learn to live together in fruitful harmony, work together on shared problems affecting all of us, and form good intellectual and spiritual habits to support intelligent spiritual exchange. This rich and varied approach to dialogue is applicable even on college and university campuses:

Our educational institutions will conscientize their students on the value of interreligious collaboration and instill in them a basic understanding and respect for the faith visions of the members of the diverse local religious communities, while deepening their own faith response to God. (“Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue,” n. 9.8).

Although Jesuits meeting in Rome could not presume to dictate what should happen on campuses in this country, their ideas merit our attention as we rethink and rejuvenate the religious identities of our institutions. If I may be permitted a certain amount of redundancy: for religious people, religious pluralism is a religious opportunity needing the kind of positive response people with religious commitments can offer. Responding to pluralism with religious sensitivity and respect both for our values and those of the persons we encounter offers a religiously valuable opportunity, not merely a necessary evil or neutral possibility. When we respond to pluralism maturely we illumine anew the values and practices distinctive to educational institutions that want to maintain a living Jesuit connection.
Consequences

To think that Jesuit colleges and universities should promote religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way is an idea with consequences for Jesuit colleges and universities as Catholic institutions, and in this section I sketch seven of them. In doing so, I of course presuppose that ideas can still have real-life consequences, that religious ideas can influence people, and that Jesuit colleges and universities are still meaningfully enough Catholic that serious choices can be made about how these institutions are to be religious.

First, we need to take notice of the fact that our campuses are religiously diverse. While secularization is a large problem, there are more people on campus than can be divided largely into two neat groups—the good Catholics and the people who have “gone secular.” The division cannot be so simple. There are also people from other religious traditions among our students, staff, and faculty. We must affirm that this diversity is a religious good, the providential context God has given us for our lives. The challenge is actually to welcome those students, faculty, and staff who are not Christian, on the grounds that we believe they have something to offer religiously, to the profit of all of us on campus. This welcome is not the same as a vague appreciation of diversity. Celebrating the great American mosaic is fine, but it does not measure up to the religious standard we need to set for ourselves. Catholics have to do more than be benignly tolerant, and must cultivate and explore in particular, concrete ways the different religions present on campus. We need to do this with some sophistication, recognizing in people of other faiths the same rich complexity of religious living and believing that we expect others to recognize in ourselves.

Second, once we see that our campuses are increasingly diverse and that this is good, we need also to learn to represent ourselves in ways that are mindful of and attentive to their presence. Conscious and public acknowledgment of religious diversification is preferable to simply allowing it to happen unnoticed, due to changing demographics and the economics of admissions and hiring. This conscious admission of our religious diversity is better achieved not by retreating to a bland religious language which is vaguely but inoffensively Christian. In particular, we need to learn something about these many religious traditions, abjure the habit of speaking in broad terms of the “Judeo-Christian tradition” that “we” all share. We need to make this explicit by the way we present ourselves on campus, and
also by making sure that promotional materials—the administration’s newspaper, the alumni magazine, the college website, for example—draw attention both to the Catholic tradition and to the other religious traditions present on campus.

Third, we need to tone down the rhetoric that suggests a Catholic and Jesuit monopoly on the religious inspiration for lives of virtue. Desiring to emphasize the Jesuit commitment to a just society and to explain how our college and universities are still Catholic, we often give the impression that every good deed undertaken by every student is a fruit of the Catholic and Jesuit tradition, embodying the Jesuit ideal of “men and women for others.” But one does not have to be influenced by St. Ignatius to be man or woman for others, and we should not ignore other possible sources for compassion and selfless action in the world. There are Jewish and Buddhist reasons, for instance, for helping others, and it is wiser for us to see the generous volunteer work by students, staff, and faculty as signs of religious identity, not just Catholic identity. (So too, community service may also have other sources of inspiration that are not aligned with any particular religious tradition, but this raises questions that go beyond this essay.) While good deeds certainly can, and often are, rooted in Catholic faith—we must gratefully admit this—and while many Hindus and Muslims have been inspired by the imitation of Christ, this does not allow us to establish a religious monopoly and speak as if Christian ideals could be the only reason students work in soup kitchens or visit the sick or spend summer in poor urban or rural locations. We must distinguish more carefully between Christian ideals and the more varied reasons for which students undertake social commitments, and honestly acknowledge the diverse motivations they bring to their work.

Once we acknowledge religious diversity, this should also affect how we discuss the values and standards of personal morality we hope to see prevail on campus. Religious people of all traditions try to live lives of personal virtue, and there is no Christian monopoly on sobriety, fidelity, and honesty, or on opposition to abortion, pre-marital sex, excessive alcohol consumption, and flashy consumerism. We might learn a great deal on these topics from our Muslim faculty, students, and staff, for instance. People in other traditions too have had to learn how to adjust their traditional values in the modern world, and they too have argued among themselves about what to keep and what to let go of. An interreligious moral conversation on campus will do us good, intellectually and practically. We are better off if religious people of all traditions, their differences notwithstanding, share a conversation on the religious roots of morality and responsibility. Someone may object that it is playing with fire to start tracing a path from specific religious beliefs to specific moral practices—fanaticism raises its ugly head—but we ought to be able to face this challenge too. If we claim to draw on the Catholic tradition in stating the moral values which are supposed to guide campus life, we should also be able to learn from religious people of other traditions, likewise without ignoring, diluting, or romanticizing the values they actually bring to campus.

Fourth, as those of us who are Catholics become accustomed to listen to our sisters and brothers who are not Christian, we also need to make sure their religious practices are visible in the campus’s religious life, and not merely by providing a spare classroom or lounge in which they can pray. If a college or university claims to be able to draw the community together in prayer, then there needs to be more diversity in that prayer, beyond the official religious cult which tends to be largely identical with the celebration of the Roman Catholic Eucharist. Excepting special events, such as ecumenical prayer services during the Gulf War or Jewish-Christian commemorations of the victims of the Holocaust, no mode of worship has any official, visible presence, except the Roman Catholic. Most of our colleges and universities have an official Mass of the Holy Spirit, a Baccalaureate Mass, and a series of other Masses for incoming freshmen, parent weekends, and other special occasions. There is no doubt that these Masses are excellent and prayerful celebrations, often appreciated by non-Catholics too. But they are always and very specifically Roman Catholic events which culminate not in the often inspiring and welcoming hom-
families which strive to be inclusive, but in the reception of the Eucharist, from which not only non-Christians but also non-Catholic Christians are officially barred.

But this can also be put more positively. If a university or college signals its determination to remain explicitly religious but also to be serious about the participation of non-Catholics on every level of university life, then it is appropriate to invite the university community to gather for worship conducted in Jewish or Muslim or Hindu ways (and even Protestant and Orthodox ways!). While no one can be expected to participate in a mode of religious worship contrary to her or his own beliefs, the prospect of sharing in a university-sponsored way of prayer or cultic practice that is not Catholic should be no more problematic for Catholics than it is for non-Catholics and non-Christians to pray during official campus Masses. It is not prudent for Catholic institutions to insist that “we” have a right to treat the Mass as the official mode of campus worship, presided over by the chief officers of the university. Nor is it true, since there is no obvious reason why factors such as institutional sponsorship and a campus majority should translate directly into the ownership of all campus-wide prayer. Of course we all need to worship as we see fit. But just as we rightly believe that non-Catholics can join prayerfully—to a certain degree—in Catholic worship, a Jesuit college or university committed to a religious response to religious pluralism can also insist that Catholics can profit from sharing—to a certain degree—in the worship of other traditions presided over by members of those traditions. (Nor will it do us Jesuits any harm once in a while to forego leadership roles in campus prayer. We can profit from sitting in the congregation, listening to a Muslim call to worship or witnessing the honoring of innumerable transcendent Buddhas.)

In some real, even if necessarily limited and symbolic fashion, it would therefore be helpful to establish a rotating set of holidays by which to celebrate other religious traditions on a regular basis. In addition to the Christmas holiday, which is both a Christian and American cultural celebration, or an extended weekend off for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter, it would be appropriate to observe holy days occasionally according to the calendars of other traditions, even if not every holy day could be honored every year with a day off. The official college or university calendar—in brochures, course catalogues, on-line—can easily include the major holy days of the religious traditions to which people on campus belong. On a rotating basis, the university or college community could celebrate one or more of those non-Christian holy days with a holiday—Yom Kippur one year, the birthday of the Buddha another year, a campus-wide day of fast during Ramadan on occasion, and sometimes Diwali, a Hindu feast of light. The manner of celebrations on these days could be analogous to the good efforts colleges often take to commemorate the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday—not simply as a day off, or as a day for African American students to have “their” celebration, but as the occasion for everyone on campus to reflect on the values and challenges signaled by the special day. In the long run, too, when students, staff, and faculty are aware of these varied holy days and the values they indicate, even the celebration of Christmas and Easter will gain a stronger, more specific religious profile. If there are pleasant groves and walkways on campus, alumni and alumnae of other faiths could be encouraged to endow religious images from their traditions for honored places on campus.

Fifth, it would be useful and perhaps necessary to adjust hiring practices to insure that it is clear that the campus ministry and student personnel officers really do understand and respect the religious values and expectations of the many different kinds of students on campus. Since institutions can afford only limited budgets to their campus ministries, we cannot expect a vast diversification of campus ministry staffs or that there be a campus minister to represent each and every religious faith on campus. But some diversification of personnel, particularly at the larger and wealthier universities, is appropriate, to make it clear that campus ministry really does appreciate the religious value of religious diversity because the staff itself is religiously diverse and never speaks or acts univocally from the perspective of a single religious tradition. Likewise, counseling services, housing offices, and personnel departments need to consider whether they are prepared to meet the needs of non-Christian students, staff, and faculty whose moral choices and psychological development often have specifically religious aspects and implications proper to those traditions. The point is not that Jesuit colleges and universities are obliged to provide something for everyone, but that we are all better off when we ourselves, as the corporate body of faculty and staff, are intentionally diverse enough to keep lively our discussion of how best to aid students in deepening their own religious commitments.

Sixth, since ideas are supposed to have intellectual consequences, too, learning will be challenged and
enriched on campuses that take religions seriously. A commitment to promote religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way should have meaningful academic components, particularly (at least for a start) in the humanities. Our traditional academic-religious goal has been to educate students to become mature Catholics, literate in their faith and able to reflect on it in a serious intellectual manner. This goal can now be pursued in a pluralistic religious environment, so that Catholic students will be reflecting on how to be better Catholics in an environment where Hindus are thinking about how to be better Hindus, and Jews thinking about how to be better Jews—and where they are all talking to one another about these things. Encouraging people to reflect on their faith—in a manner appropriate to an academic setting—should help everyone on campus (and not just students) to become moderately familiar with more than one religious tradition, and thus more reflective neighbors to people of other faiths. The reshaping of religious self-understanding on campus might then be more strongly fueled by this input “from below”—that is, from students and from their professors. This best begins in each classroom—as it did for me in Kathmandu—where, as appropriate, professors read class materials in light of the particular questions students bring from their own cultural and religious traditions.

Since culture and religion are never easily separable, a further consequence of taking religious diversity seriously as a topic of interest in Jesuit colleges and universities would be to find it a matter of course that faculty in the humanities should reconsider the subject matter and competencies (within departments, across departmental boundaries) appropriate to the contemporary college and university environment. The “great books” are no longer just those European books which have inspired so many of us. Human history has seen more than one high scholasticism, one renaissance, and one enlightenment, and the religious sources of art and music, poetry and performance are as varied as are the many religions of the world. Particularly in fields such as theology and philosophy, of course, a nuanced religious appreciation of religious differences could lead to significant changes even in the way the Christian tradition is contextualized, challenged, reinterpreted. The promotion of religious pluralism and dialogue in an authentically religious way should not undercut the Catholic traditions of theology and philosophy which can remain the catalyst of the curriculum, but rather enliven them.
Clooney, S.J.: Goddess in the Classroom: Is the Promotion of Religious Diversity

by reminding us of just how profound and intelligent the alternatives are. Of course, the goal can never be that everyone must become well-informed about every tradition. There is simply too much to be learned, and individuals must make choices about what to learn. But we can be much more mindful of the location of what we do know within wider horizons of the world’s many cultures and religious traditions particularly as these have come to interact. If American culture at large is engaged in debating cultural literacy, Jesuit colleges and universities should devote considerable attention to issues of religious literacy.

Seventh (and here I speak specifically as a Jesuit, hoping that my fellow Jesuits have read this far), the project of promoting religious pluralism in an authentically religious way will help create for us Jesuits a more engaged and higher-profile religious role on campus. If the goal is to promote a campus environment which is integrally religious and faithful to its traditions—in deed, worship, thinking—while yet becoming really diverse and alive with new religious energies, this goal requires intelligent, imaginative, ambitious, and risk-taking religious professionals who have a knack for bringing out the religious best in people according to their particular religious beliefs and practices. Jesuits are the most logical (though not the only) candidates to play this role on Jesuit campuses, and expectations in this regard would challenge us to be clearly and explicitly religious figures in a way that echoes Jesuit tradition while yet also meeting the special religious needs of whole campus communities in the 21st century. This will do more to clarify Jesuit identity and presence than further discussions of “Jesuit” and “Ignatian” in isolation from other religious ideals.

One consequence that need not follow from my idea is relativism. Nothing I have said suggests that everyone has to learn to agree with everyone else on religious matters or concede that all religions are equal. One key goal is indeed to help Christians to be better Christians, Buddhists to be better Buddhists, or Muslims to be better Muslims. But the sequels are equally important, as mature Christians who know their faith encounter mature Hindus, and both encounter mature Confucians, all entering into an honest and challenging conversation where words and deeds testify to basic religious values. We can still hold to our true beliefs, yet without advocating a policy of institutional neglect regarding religions other than our own. We can learn to argue and defend our faith in a pluralistic environment where religious ideas—our own, those of others—are taken seriously. Religious ideas can be presented, argued, and tested with respect to ways of living, in an intellectual context where no group wins simply by being in the majority, neither Catholics who simply presume themselves right because “we all think this way,” nor those who refuse to believe that religious ideas have objective features and consequences at all. If we construct and engage persistently in this educative religious encounter and make it a habitual part of life on campus—a spring “religions fair” wouldn’t be enough!—then we can legitimately say we are truly advocating not “religion-lite” but “religion-plus.”

Danger?

Thus far I have put forward a particular idea—Jesuit colleges and universities should promote religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way—and suggested some consequences of this idea. One might dispute the idea itself, question any of the particular consequences I have suggested or suggest others, but what remains to be taken up in this essay is just one further question: Is the idea dangerous? Without overdramatizing the power of my own idea, I will suggest six possibly dangerous consequences.

First, the idea that Jesuit colleges and universities should promote religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way may be dangerous simply because taking this idea seriously would change things, and change is a threat. All of us, myself included, would to some extent be inconvenienced by what might follow from my idea. Our “maps” of campus religion and culture would have to be redrawn, customary religious celebrations on campus adjusted, hiring patterns modified, academic programs rethought yet again, and even the purpose of Jesuits on campus reconsidered. Struggling institutions may wonder, “How could we have time for this?” Successful institutions may ask, “Why bother?”

Second, confusion can be dangerous too, and my idea may be confusing because its consequences cannot be predicted. Practical people will want to know where attention to pluralism is to stop: are we to notice only religions that are very old or have many members? Religions that reach a certain threshold on campus? Surely not every new sect that comes along! And what about religions we don’t like? Looking too deeply into pluralism might get us into trouble by raising questions we cannot handle. Since pluralism is not susceptible to coherent planning anyway, one might argue, it is better to neglect the topic altogether. Although this worry is
legitimate, unpredictability and lack of clear boundaries are intrinsic to today's religious environment in America. Such is our situation, the world we must deal with in a seriously religious manner. However true and comprehensive our faith, the world still does not divide up into neatly organized religions where each can mind its own business without ever changing. The messy issue of definitions and social consequences has to be faced if any religion is to be taken seriously on campus.

One might also object that engaging pluralism in the way I have suggested will be confusing to our students, most of whom are young, only figuring things out, not ready to engage pluralism. Students should first master their own particular traditions and form mature religious identities before branching out to encounter other traditions, at some later time in life. This gradualist scenario might seem attractive—maturity in one's own faith now, and then encounter with other faiths—though we might have doubts about so confident a compartmentalization of religious maturation. But the scenario is also something of an abstraction, since Jesuit colleges and universities, like American culture, are already religiously diverse, and ready or not students are already interacting regularly with people of other faiths. They face this unpredictable issue now, so we might as well face it too.

Third, my idea might be economically unwise. To say that the best way to preserve Catholic and Jesuit identity is to promote religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way can threaten to blur our Catholic image when the market requires that we sharpen it in order to preserve our niche. Potential customers will be confused if we move away from clear definitions of "Catholic and Jesuit tradition" toward a more unpredictable Catholic and Jesuit mission that makes sure that other religious voices too are heard and listened to. If a Jesuit college or university makes known that it is committed to promoting religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way, and not just in enhancing a welcoming Catholic ethos, it may seem less Catholic. Trustees will be perplexed, alumni may grumble, benefactors will hesitate. All this may worry those responsible for the financial welfare of a college or university: we cannot afford to think this way. But the preservation of Jesuit colleges and universities as religious institutions is the goal, not the means, of financial stability. Promoting a religious response to religious pluralism is a very good Jesuit way to foster the values that make sound financial planning worthwhile.

Fourth, a commitment to promoting religious diversity in an authentically religious way may seem dangerous because too much religion on campus, in too many varieties, is dangerous. Religions are troublesome, and it is better if at most one, the Catholic, has real influence on campus. Instead of a more predictable and settled ecumenism—a little of everything, nothing in excess—my idea means that there will be more religious symbols, more and different rituals and values, more ways of viewing the world religiously, and more arguments about differing, imponderable religious truths. This could indeed be unsettling. It could mean that there will be public, religious arguments on campuses that have for a long time (and often to good effect) prized serenity as the defining religious virtue. But the point of a religiously-sensitive college or university is to help us—students, staff, faculty—carry through on our religious ideas truthfully, zealously, and in an intelligent and interactive manner. Arguments are better than obscuring differences as if they didn't matter; arguing intelligently and with respect is a real value. Too much religion is a problem only if it is not accompanied by religious respect, attentive religious thinking, and patient religious conversations. Why bother calling colleges and universities "Jesuit" if they do not help young people reach religious maturity in the pluralistic world where we actually live?

Fifth, from another perspective one might say that this is not a dangerous idea at all. An idea can be dangerous only if it has a chance of making a difference in real life, if the people who propose the idea are also agents of change. Perhaps this idea is not dangerous because religious people cannot, or ought not, have
enough influence on campus to make ideas like this count for something. Some of us, I suspect, are actually convinced that people with religious concerns are spectators and no longer agents of change in American higher education. From this perspective, it is too late even to make campuses more Catholic in some old-fashioned sense, much less in the new way proposed here. Perhaps essays like this can make no difference, so skeptics will find my idea boring rather than dangerous. Some may actually be relieved if this is so. Religion is best left a private matter, whether one religion or a hundred are at issue.

But sixth, and again from an opposing angle, my idea will actually seem dangerous to some Catholics who take religious ideas quite seriously. This is not an opportune time to experiment, one might observe, since first we must see where the debate about Ex corde ecclesiae leaves us. Once that issue is resolved, perhaps we can turn to the topic of pluralism. But our encounter with the Church and our encounter with other religious traditions ought not to be treated as separable issues. Catholics and Catholic institutions work out their Catholic identities not only somewhere between the Vatican and the secularists, but also among people of other religious traditions who care about religious truth as much as we do. Those of us who are Catholic must learn to be Catholic in a way that is forthright and credible to them too. Indeed, practicing Muslims and Buddhists, for instance, may then actually turn out to be allies, since they are likely to appreciate people and institutions that maintain religious identities in an open and non-violent way instead of letting them slip away.

Other Catholics will worry that the promotion of religious diversity in an authentically religious way is tantamount to admitting that we have abandoned the essential Christian task of evangelization which is supposed to be at least the goal toward which all our work on campus tends. By actively welcoming people of other faiths and seeking to enhance the visibility of their faiths on campus, we will no longer give even the impression of moving forward in the long-term work of evangelization. But nothing I have said decides that issue. Throughout this essay I have been referring to "the promotion of religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way"—that is, in a way that assumes that religious people continue to have something to talk about. We must learn to talk to one another and to listen, too, particularly if we have something we wish to say. Those of us who are Catholic enter the campus dialogue as Catholics, not leaving the faith behind, but if all we know is the Catholic faith and the Catholic way of explaining things, not even many Catholics will find us interesting, nor should they. The old Jesuit principle applies here: if you wish to be understood, first understand; if you wish to speak of Jesus Christ, first listen. We cannot listen if no one else gets a chance to speak.

Finally, some may think that my idea is dangerous because it is unchristian—not "unchristian" in the sense of "uncharitable," but "unchristian" in the sense of syncretism and idolatry are unchristian. To allow the celebration of a Hindu or Buddhist holiday on campus may seem to be encouraging forbidden rites, encounters with false gods. It may cause real scandal. Having Confucian and Muslim students on campus is fine, but the less said about what they actually believe, the better. Hindus are welcome, but there should be no Goddess in the classroom. That could indeed be dangerous, sort of like having a Crucifix in a classroom where there are people who take religious symbols seriously.

**Conversation or Silence**

We have therefore come full circle. I began by recollecting a small experience from the time when I was teaching in Kathmandu. There was no great tumult over my students' idea of hanging pictures of the Goddess Sarasvati in the classrooms, but it did threaten to upset the compromise that had made it possible for Jesuits to run a high school for Hindu and Buddhist boys. While vaguer ideas of tolerance and respect did not upset the delicate Jesuit balance, the possibility of a positive policy—a Goddess next to the Crucifix—was too much, so it was quickly rejected.

And what about us, now, in the United States? Is it dangerous to think that Jesuit colleges and universities should promote religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way? We will have to see. My idea will have to be tested in practice if we are to assess how good and how dangerous it is, and whether its benefits outweigh its dangers. The idea itself, as a mere idea, will not disturb those disinclined to take ideas seriously. Some will start thinking about this idea only if something clearly comes of it, if unsettling changes start taking place. But if no one argues about this idea, if nothing comes of it on any campus, this may prove that it was merely a bad idea, or just a nice idea. Or it could be that it is dangerous enough to be passed over in silence.
James Tunstead Burtchaell, C.S.C. The 
Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of 
Colleges and Universities from their 
Christian Churches. Grand Rapids, Michigan: 

James Burtchaell's epic of disestablishment and 
dying is a massively detailed indictment of Christian 
higher education in the twentieth century. For those 
who can weather the storm, it is also chock-full of hints 
about "the task of trying again, and better" (851). Only 
those (like myself) largely persuaded by the indictment 
will even care to look for the hints. Only those who look 
for the hints will wonder whether they amount to trying 
again, and better.

The book is indeed long, "of the size usually 
reserved for major wars" (xi). The reason for its 850-plus 
pages is that we need "something of a sojourn at a variety 
of colleges and universities and their sponsoring 
churches" rather than "a flying visit or a quick read" (xi). 
This, it seems to me, is true. A growing literature 
nowadays treats the nature and aims of Christian higher 
education. What Burtchaell provides are stories of 
how it has actually gone, and goes. The book has 
chapters studying seven churches or denominations 
(Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, 
Lutheran, Catholic, and Evangelical), each represented 
by two or three colleges or universities. Although seventeen 
colleges form the major case-studies, there are paragraphs 
on many others along the way. Each chapter also 
supplies historical background for that church as well as 
a concluding analysis of the situation of that church's 
related colleges today. A short preface sketches the 
background and argument of the entire book. A final chapter 
summarizes "The Story within the Stories." The thesis, 
etched in the title, emerges clearly in each chapter and 
the conclusion, although myriad ironies crop up along 
the way. There is a consistency of aim and execution 
(and biting humor) throughout.

In the spirit of Burtchaell, I will not aim to provide 
readers with a flying visit or quick read of Dying of the 
Light. I will sojourn on a few hundred of its pages with 
two particular interests. First, Burtchaell anticipates that 
most readers will begin with the church-related schools 
they know best, then read his final overview chapter, 
and then compare these chapters to the remaining ones 
(xi). My interest here will focus on the chapter on the 
Catholics, with special attention to Jesuit colleges and 
universities. Although the chapter on Catholics is indeed 
the longest one in the book, a reading from the viewpoint 
of other churches would surely yield different lessons. 
Second, Burtchaell's final paragraph says that it is 
not the purpose of the book to offer "instruction on how 
to avoid the failures of the past (and present)." The very 
movement of the book—from case-studies to limited 
conclusions about each church, from such conclusions 
to the final "story within the stories"—leaves lots of 
room for readers to draw their own conclusions from the 
stories, or the story. However, Burtchaell also challenges 
those who might grumble about the book's lack of positive 
preservation in a concluding sentence that virtually 
takes back the promise not to offer remedies for avoiding 
the failures: "Anyone who requires further imagination 
to recognize and remedy them [the failures] is not up 
to the task of trying again, and better" (851). And so 
I will write with an eye to how Burtchaell implies we can 
try again, and better—even at the risk of eclipsing his 
primary end.

Burtchaell begins his chapter on the Catholics by 
noting some distinctive features of Catholic colleges and 
universities. For example, Catholics have the largest...
number of church-related schools—Burtchael's list covers five pages (557-561). A more important but "perhaps least obvious" distinction is that Catholic colleges and universities "have always been more independent from church authorities in their governance, finance, and intellectual initiative than any of the other traditions we have studied" (562). In days when the public conversation is dominated by anxiety sprinkled with debate over the Ex corde ecclesiae guidelines, Burtchael's book is noteworthy for its detailed attention to such issues of governance. But it is even more noteworthy for its insistence that such issues of civil and canon law are not central to the story. We could say of issues of legal governance what Burtchael also contends about interference by churches and economic advantage: they are "sidebars, not the main plot" (828). What, then, is the main plot?

The three "randomly representational" Catholic schools Burtchael selects are Boston College (Jesuit, urban), the College of New Rochelle (Ursuline, outside New York city, was and in part still is a college for women), and Saint Mary's College of California (Christian Brothers, in the countryside). For all their differences, they have similar stories: beginning with "a mission to provide Catholic education by Catholic teachers for Catholic young men and women," they came to a crisis in the 1960s, and now "can truly be said to thrive." But "[m]ore significant and interesting is the failure of nerve, the deviance of purpose, and the degradation of public discourse which have drawn these schools, severally, to abandon their calling to be ministries of the Catholic church" (563). Thriving yet failing—and worse. How can this be?

Burtchael takes the case of Boston College to tell a story, nested in a larger story about the Jesuit educational enterprise in the United States. At seventy-plus pages, the story of Boston College is the longest treatment of any university in the book. But I will here be more interested in the nest than the egg. Burtchael shows Jesuit education, by the 1960s, confronted with several crucial problems. A distinctively Jesuit curriculum was dissolving, especially because of the collapse of the central role of philosophy and theology. There was massive shrinkage in Jesuit manpower, and some of those who remained thought social activism more important than academic work. The system of Jesuit obedience was inhibiting Jesuit institutions, particularly because of "newly intrusive" Vatican attempts to superimpose civilly chartered Catholic universities and colleges. Finally, there was "most urgent of all [or so Presidents judged at the time] the threat of being denied federal or state funding because of church control" (590). Presidents ignored the first problem and tried to solve all the others "by a single stroke," persuading the Society of Jesus to "divest itself of juridical control and management of its American colleges and universities, freeing them to take their rightful place as fully acknowledged peers of other leading independent institutions" (590). They succeeded. The result was stronger Jesuit presidents but weaker Jesuit communities. There was plenty of room for an individual's faith and less for the community's.

Burtchael's story is not as dialectically neat as this precis suggests. For example, in the early period of flourishing, when classical Jesuit education was criticized as too uniform by advocates of diversification at newly developing research universities, "two modes of advocacy" on behalf of classical Jesuit education developed. Timothy Brosnaham, S.J., President of Boston College (1894-1898) viewed a critic like President Eliot of Harvard as a "bully sponsored by a hostile culture" and gave a truculent, well argued, highly theoretical response to the criticisms of Catholic education. The next President of Boston College, W.G. Read Mullan (1898-1903) was less inclined to enmity with the most prestigious educational institution in the country, and was pragmatically inclined "to put the best face on its faith and to emulate, not to despise, those in influence" (573). It is not necessary to say which of these modes of advocacy emerged victorious in the 1960s. Or, as another example of how Burtchael's story is not a neat story from better to worse, even as things fell apart in the 1960s there were some prophetically sane voices. In particular, Burtchael highlights the 1961 call of Robert Harvanek, S.J.—a former
prefect or regional coordinator for higher education in the Chicago province—for the Society of Jesus to choose between withdrawing from universities, retrenching in a few of the best, or acknowledging them “as trusts owed to their local clientele,” and simply continuing to staff them “as best it could.” No plan was made. Or, as Burtchaell puts it, “[i]n the end the choice was made by no choice being made” (581).

In any case, as Burtchaell moves toward the present, the major options are, seemingly, to despair of the Jesuit light, to celebrate the death of the light with little sense of loss, or to repair the damage. Burtchaell gives examples of each, especially the last. Among what we might call “the repairers” are authors of the myriad documents theorizing about Catholic higher education over the last ten to fifteen years. But Burtchaell thinks that the problem is no longer making the claim to Jesuit education—the marketplace, I would say, still makes this essential for most Jesuit colleges and universities. The problem is “to find a faculty of Catholics and Jesuits actively willing to share such a claim” (618). Burtchaell spends time on probably the most prevalent strategy to repair this problem—finding a core, or critical mass of those “sympathetic” to the Catholic tradition to be a sort of “strategic hamlet” for the university. But he is suspicious that such efforts are, at best, the proverbial thumb in the dike. What if (Burtchaell says) we relied only on a faculty who respected teaching but were not master teachers, a critical mass of faculty sympathetic to original scholarship but not themselves scholars, a core of faculty committed to graduate studies but not qualified to direct dissertations, a critical mass of faculty “who took spoken English seriously but had never mastered it” (631)?

This is a good question, to which I shall return. But first it is important to note that the situation may be even worse. Such reparative efforts may disguise the fact that the dike has long been broken. Recruiting Catholic sympathizers may function merely to mask the absence of practicing Catholics. Burtchaell tells a story of select faculty at Boston College coming to agree on three findings: “(1) they wanted BC to be Catholic; (2) only a determined effort to recruit Catholic faculty could bring that about, and (3) they were solidly against such an effort” (625). Burtchaell notes that there are important “critical voices” against such thinking—the recent call, for example, for “accountability” in the documents of the 34th General Congregation—but notes that attempts at something like “Jesuit accreditation will seem no less threatening in the 1990s than they were in the 1960s. This is
especially so now, when some publicly celebrate the death of the light as "the coming of age of Catholicism in this country" (633). If recruiting Catholic sympathizers is not enough and recruiting Catholics has become impossible, then what?

Could it be that Catholics should turn to other, non-Jesuit Catholic colleges and universities as an alternative? Burtchaell offers a summary of "The Catholic Trajectory" that shows the momentum of Jesuit colleges and universities to be an instance of a larger story: Catholic education reaches a manifold crisis in the 1960s, to which a "complex and impulsive response" is given. New presidents seek access to government funding, combined with entrepreneurial expansion into the new market of vocational education. While presidents of Catholic universities bear a great deal of responsibility (according to Burtchaell they are "the most independent, least accountable college presidents in the country" [709]) they are by no means alone. One diagnostician claims that, at one university, "Catholic students would probably have destroyed the viability of the denominational approach... regardless of other factors" (710). Burtchaell provides no examples in support of this claim, but it stands as a reminder of the importance of the student vote on this issue. Further, philosophy and theology are benched (or benched themselves), precisely at the moment when a "freshet of young Catholic philosophers and theologians was becoming available" (711). To complicate the issue, all the participants engage in "a rhetoric of fantasy" that evades the many ironies at stake. Liberal arts are claimed at the center exactly at the moment when education for the professions of the nation-state has displaced them. Recruiting Catholics is eschewed just at the time Catholics are increasingly graduating from the best Catholic and non-Catholic universities in the nation. As higher education has fragmented into a medley of mutually re-enforcing autonomousities, Catholics celebrate their coming of age by joining the crowd. Most of us (in the cave, as it were) see the darkness, or the flickering light, only when the shades of night are gathering.

Each of Burtchaell's seven chapters proceeds similarly for each of the churches discussed. So successful is Burtchaell in focusing on the particularities of the stories that some might be surprised that there is such a thing as "the story within the stories." But, in Burtchaell's final chapter, a story does indeed arise. It goes something like this. Against those out to restore some more ideal earlier time for church-related colleges and universities, Burtchaell says that the connection of Church and college in their beginnings (Catholic and Protestant) was "circumstantial and indirect." Precisely because of the indirect and circumstantial links, when the financial and social demand for autonomy came, the disestablishment project could take on the appearance of reform from within. College presidents initially played a central role, and anyone tempted to think Boards of Trustees are marginal should study the ways in this book that presidents and boards persistently out-wait students, and out-smart faculty. But the breakaway from legal governance had no single pattern. Strong and weak Christian colleges and universities have waxed and waned under a number of different juridical arrangements. Parenthetically, I take it that readers can conclude that, if issues of legal control are a sidebar and not the main plot, Jesuit abandonment of juridical control was bad Realpolitik (perhaps because it tried to solve the web of problems mentioned above "at a single stroke") but not the death of the light—unless combined with: the other factors Burtchaell mentions. This conclusion would not have to deny the humor Burtchaell finds in an Order that gave up legal control of its institutions—but then went on to register "Jesuit" as a legal trademark (605).

In any case, chief among non-juridical factors was the fact (so Burtchaell concludes) that "the faculty was the first constituency to lose interest in their colleges being Lutheran or Catholic or Congregational" (828-29). Colleges gradually transferred their identities from Church to Nation and Guild" (835 ff.). "The church has compliantly withdrawn to an impotent distance, while civil authorities at every level now make no apology for imposing their laws and regulations on zoning, gender and ethnic imperatives for enrollment, occupational safety, hiring and faculty appointments, the positioning of chapels, the array of varsity sports, et cetera" (834)—even as many academics still talk as if they and their disciplines were free from influence by such political inci-dentals. The Guild is really (Burtchaell sometimes suggests) a medley of disciplines offering a medley of courses taught by faculty members with "an education that might include very little of the history, philosophy, and theology required to give them a disciplined perspective on their own scholarly pursuits" (836).

It would be interesting to know how deep such criticisms of higher education (church-related or not) go. Certainly it is a central presumption of this book that Christian higher education needs to be deeply critical of the culture's colleges and universities. "Let's come of age"
becomes the juvenile "Everyone’s doing it"—a mode of protest that subverts itself. Yet Burtkaell’s criticisms of the Academy do not go as deep as those of some of the Mennonite, Mormon, Quaker, or Seventh Day Adventist schools he knows he has left out—the study of which, he says, "may have been even more interesting" (x). Burtkaell clearly cherishes colleges’ and universities’ commitment to master teaching and original scholarship. His complaint is less about the Academy than about the Nation whose bureaucratic impositions make teaching and scholarship more rather than less difficult—a Nation whose impositions the Academy of teachers and scholars accepts with less wariness and criticism than we accept those of the churches. Burtkaell, I suggest, calls us to be something like what Michael Walzer, in Interpretation and Social Criticism (Harvard, 1987) calls an "internal critic" rather than an "external critic" of the academy—more like one of the classical prophets, criticizing his own people, than prophets like Jonah, criticizing those in a foreign land. Burtkaell is clearly more interested in the mainstream than "sectarian" tributaries.

But we might wonder how many of the foibles of higher education issue from external mandates of the Nation, and how many from the collapse of the Academy into its own variety of strategic intellectual hamlets. For example, David Kelsey’s Between Athens and Berlin (Eerdmans, 1993) describes “the theological education debate” as a debate between paideia (roughly, character formation aimed at knowledge of the Good) and Wissenschaft (roughly, disciplined research for professional life in the democratic nation-state). I wonder if some such tension or contradiction could not be expanded to apply to other fields in the university, explaining why the Nation’s bureaucracies have been able to invade an academy already divided against itself. And, if the Academy is thus divided against itself more than Burtkaell sometimes seems to think, the suggestion that we repair the damage via strategic hamlets of teachers and researchers sounds quite reasonable—as, then, might the tactic of cultivating critical masses of Catholics and their sympathizers. That is, if the Academy is divided against itself between paideia and Wissenschaft and if we choose the path of the internal rather than external critic, developing hamlets of faculty who combine paideia and Wissenschaft in innovative ways seems reasonable—although it will seem hopelessly utopian to those who aspire only to paideia or Wissenschaft, or to those who have despaired of both. In any case, before we can “try again, and better” we need to know more about how to negotiate these issues.

Whether the strategic hamlet strategy can work not only for teachers and scholars but also for Catholics and their sympathizers will depend on how we diagnose the diseases of the Church rather than of the Nation or the Academy. Indeed, despite what the previous paragraphs might suggest, Burtkaell does not put the primary responsibility for the dying of the light on a “secular” academy out to kill the light, or let it die. There is even a stalwart minority of that secular culture that will resist the light’s own Nation-assisted suicide, and Burtkaell periodically makes their case part of his own. But, again and again, Burtkaell insists that Christians have dug their own graves. The label he comes to give the digging is “the Pietist instability” (838) that seeped into colleges and churches, Protestant and then Catholic. For those unfamiliar with the label, it is important to know that “Pietism” is common parlance among intellectual historians for seventeenth century Protestant movements against the supposed rationalism of the “Protestant Scholasticism”—a Scholasticism that, in turn, arose after the sixteenth century Reformation. Pietism was, it is sometimes rightly said, a “[seventeenth century] reformation of the [sixteenth century] Reformation.” It aimed to transpose alienating public doctrine and institutions into consoling private affections and individual faith. This explains why the best place to see Pietism at work in Burtkaell’s book is less in the chapter on Catholics than in a flying visit to the
non-Catholic churches Burtchaell analyzes. For example, Congregationalist "polity, from the late sixteenth century, has denied that it is acceptable or even possible for them to engage as a community in a defining exploration of their faith" (99). Again, the "Baptist doctrine of the church held that Christian conversion was what the individual, converted believer brought to the church rather than what he or she was invited into the church to share" (437).

Thus, one characteristic of Pietism in such churches is that it explores the faith of individuals rather than of a community. Further, Burtchaell agrees with Marsden's and Longfield's claim about Presbyterian higher education that "the key factor in the secularization of church-related colleges seems to lie in the realm of ideas"—the victory of affect over assent, of spirituality and social justice (Catholics might say) over theology. Similarly, Methodist colleges (Burtchaell judges) "were not an intellectual project" (329)—"they wanted their students' souls, not their minds" (330). Individuals abstracted from or barely attached to community, practice with a minimum of theology, affect with suspicion of intellect—such are some characteristics of Pietism. And many Catholics have become "card-carrying pietists" nowadays (835).

Even further, both colleges and churches are jointly responsible for the dying of the light. But "[Pietism's] self-destructive pathology arose first within the churches, not within the colleges" (847; my emphasis). Just as Burtchaell's book is not a tale of a secular academy out to destroy Christian colleges and universities, so it is not a story of colleges that set out to destroy their relationship to their churches. Non-academic Christians (whether bishops or lay or religious) can take no greater self-righteous delight in Burtchaell's story than academic Christians (whether teachers or students or administrators). If Burtchaell is right, we can add this to his litany of ironies: ingesting the Pietism of the churches, church-related colleges found the warrant for distancing themselves from those same churches.

Burtchaell is, once again, right on track—or so I think. So much for theological dissent: at the precise spot colleges and universities should have been dissenting from their churches, they submitted intellect and will and institution. Nonetheless, I am not sure "Pietism" is the best label for the confluence of Christianly anti-intellectual forces that Burtchaell narrates and analyzes in such amazing detail. It works well for Protestant colleges and universities but less so for Catholic ones. I am not denying that there is such a phenomenon as Catholic Pietism. In fact, I think Burtchaell is right to see such Pietism as the real culprit behind what is usually called ecclesiastical, episcopal, or papal interference. It is not that Burtchaell wants to deny such interference, even if it is not part of the main plot. But the real root (Burtchaell hints) of much such interference is a kind of Pietism that simply cannot understand faith seeking understanding, communally and institutionally. Speaking of an intrusive Cardinal of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities in the 1950s and 1960s, Burtchaell writes, "[K]nowledgeable observers [from within Catholic universities] were aware that the Cardinal's own intellectual gifts were not such as would have gained him admission to any of their institutions had he applied" (588). And the Pietism label also works for those Catholics who lead the disestablishment charge by unifying church and academy "within themselves but not within their institutions" (ix)—pious presidents or board members, faculty or students who erect a wall of separation between their personal piety and institutional embodiment.

But the issues at stake are not only Pietism's individualism versus more communitarian (churchly) understandings of the faith. There are as well competing communitarianisms. (This awkward word is mine, not Burtchaell's.) This, again, is one of those places we need to know more to try again, and better. For example, it is not clear to me that by book's end there is much left of the general project of "Christian" churches or higher education in the book's subtitle. All along Burtchaell diagnoses problems in Protestant colleges and universities as rooted in various seventeenth-century Pietisms, even as he distinguishes Pietism's reform from the classical, sixteenth-century Reformers. But by the book's concluding chapter Burtchaell judges that the "radical disjunction between divine knowledge and human knowledge" is central to "classical [sixteenth-century] Reformation thinking" in contrast to "the older pre-Reformation [i.e., Catholic] view" (842), although the chapters on individual churches seem more hopeful about some Lutheran and Evangelical schools than about their Congregational, Presbyterian, or Methodists or Methodists. This diagnosis is surely preferable to an ecumenical irenicism that avoids substantive oppositions among Christian churches. And the "radical disjunction between divine knowledge and human knowledge" articulates a deep problem with the likes of Luther and Calvin. But it is not the whole story—and neither is

CONVERSATIONS / FALL 1999

45

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17
the suggestion that "the older pre-Reformation view" did not have its own such disjunctions. The fact is that our modern and/or postmodern circumstances raise issues that neither Catholics nor Protestants have previously faced—and that both may well have distinctive resources for addressing. But my point here is not to pursue the technicalities of ecumenical theology. My point is to suggest that the Catholic university needs to be a site where competing Christian communitarianisms are lived and debated. Burtchaell would, I take it, agree. But we need to know more about how Christians with competing conjunctions, or disjunctions, between divine and human knowledge can do this.

Learning (or re-learning) from Israel how to be a particular people amidst the nations—a theologically strategic hamlet, if you will—would be a good start. But the fact that some Catholics would find an allusion to the Jewish community in an essay on Christian education strange is a reminder that my point about competing communitarianisms (not just individualistic Pietisms) applies closer to home: other examples of competing communitarianisms are found within the Catholic community itself. There are, of course, what students of Catholic life and thought will recognize as modernizers and Americanists among us—as there are integralists and ultramontanes. But then there are the rest of us—on the faculty, in the student body, on boards of trustees, in student life and campus ministry. And we disagree, both within our bureaucratic classes (faculty and student and administrator) and between them. "Dynamic membership in the Catholic communion," Burtchaell says, "is a primary professional qualification for any academic on a Catholic campus, and any campus whose faculty disclaims the capacity, the interest, or even the legitimacy of appraising this along with other credentials is as out of place as a paraplegic in a fire department" (713).

I agree that the best of the next generation of Catholic colleges and universities will be those that successfully recruit as faculty, among others, the best Catholic graduates of the best graduate programs. This will become increasingly clear as interested Catholic parents and students notice the growing number of strategic hamlets for Catholics on several excellent non-Catholic campuses. However, if Catholics led Catholic education into this mess (and Burtchaell makes a good case that this was so), what has changed to make Burtchaell think that there are good Catholics to be hired to lead us out of it?

The problem that needs more exploration is one Burtchaell himself, not surprisingly, notices. Catholics have yet to figure out how to handle what Burtchaell rightly calls that "internal dissent and criticism" that "burst forth with pent-up force in the late 1950s" (707); in still other words, we have barely begun to learn (as John Paul II put it in his first encyclical) to be critical even of our self-criticisms. In such circumstances, I know of no better tactic than theologically strategic hamlets, dedicated to embodying the best of our self-criticisms in our personal as well as professional lives.

But I should finally add that this defense of theologically strategic hamlets, even if there were time and space to fill it out with concrete detail, could well be whistling in the dark. If "internal dissent and criticism" is not a severe problem, then the strategy of theologically strategic hamlets is tantamount to self-marginalization (much as, if the Academy is not divided against itself, academically strategic hamlets will be acts of intellectual despair). But there may also be a deeper worry. As Burtchaell argues that Catholic colleges and universities have abandoned their calling to be ministries of the Catholic church, he leaves us to wonder "whether—and in what sense—the drive for self-survival is, as the anthropologists tell us, our most basic instinct, if the who or the what threatened is not the who or the what that survives" (563). Could the dying of the light be the death we want, even under the mask of survival and flourishing? Like many of Burtchaell's unanswered questions, this one is deep. It would lead us eventually to Jesus' crucifixion. But that will have to be a matter for another day. I hope it is clear that my criticisms of Burtchaell's book are mere quibbles—at least quibbles compared with the status quo that will surely resist his indictment. We need to know more than Burtchaell says to see how to try again, and better. But Burtchaell's book will be, I hope, the epic of that future sojourn.
Celebrating the Ratio Studiorum at Saint Louis University

To commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of the definitive edition of the Ratio Studiorum or Plan of Studies, the foundational Jesuit educational document, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Saint Louis University sponsored a panel discussion on the history and present significance of the Ratio. The following are edited versions of three of the panelists' remarks, delivered January 17, 1999.

I An Exploration of the Ignatian Roots of the Ratio

Michael W. Maher, S.J., Assistant Professor of History

On December 13, 1779, the great American statesman, John Adams, stopped in the port city of El Ferol, Spain, during his European tour, representing the interests of the new and struggling Republic. While docked outside the city he attended a captain's banquet on board a ship. Adams left a record of this resplendent meal and the subsequent conversation in his journal:

A very fine turkey was brought upon table, among everything else that Land, Sea or Air could furnish. One of the captains, as soon as he saw it, observed that he never saw one of those Birds on a Table but it excited in him a deep regret for the Abolition [the suppression of 1773] of that order of Ecclesiastics the Jesuits to whom We were he said, indebted for so many excellent Things, and among the Rest for Turks. These birds he said were never seen or known in Europe till the Jesuits imported them from India. This occasioned much Conversation and some Controversy: but the majority of the officers appeared to join this regret. The Jesuits were represented as the greatest Masters of Science and literature; as practicing the best system of Education, and as having made the greatest improvements, the happiest Inventions and the greatest discoveries for the comfort of Life and the Amelioration of Man and Society. Till this time I had thought that although millions of Jesuits, Pharisees, and Machiavellians still existed in the World, yet the word Jesuit as well as that of Pharisees and Machiavellian, had become so odious in Courts and unpopular with Nations that neither was ever advocated in good Company. I now found my Error, and I afterwards perceived that even the Philosophers were the principal Friends left to the Jesuits. (4:197)

John Adams' opinion concerning the Society of Jesus had, thanks to a turkey, changed dramatically. Especially worth noting is the admiration expressed by his dinner companions toward the Jesuits as the "greatest Masters of Science and Literature and practitioners of the best system of education." This year, 1999, celebrates the four-hundredth anniversary of that "system of education." Perhaps it would be worth going back ad fontes, as the Documents of the Second Vatican Council recommend for groups seeking renewal and reinvigoration of their founding charisms, to look once again at one of the most formative documents in the history of Jesuit education.

Four hundred years ago, on January 8, 1599, the superior general of the Society of Jesus, Claudio Aquaviva, promulgated the Ratio Atque Studiorum. This document presents several challenges to the late twentieth-century reader. In order to understand this document and the subsequent influence it played in shaping Jesuit education, we must start with the very beginnings of the Jesuit Order.

Officially approved by the Pope Paul III on September 27, 1540, the Society of Jesus established the primary goal of its existence as the defense and the propagation of the faith and the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine. The founding document, the Formula of the Institute, identified these goals and suggested various means by which these goals could be achieved: teaching, preaching, administration of the sacraments, and working with the poor. Very soon after the founding of the Order in 1540, Ignatius and other Jesuits quickly realized that the work of education supplied one of the best means for attaining the goal set forth in the Formula of the Institute. The Jesuits established their first schools for their own members in training and not for those outside of the Society, known as "externs."

The Jesuits inaugurated a new ministry over 450 years ago, on April 24, 1548, when they opened a school specifically for "externs," in Messina, Sicily. This first school in Sicily marked a direction in ministry that would soon characterize the works of the Society of Jesus. Three years later, the flagship school of all future Jesuit schools—the Roman College—opened on February 23, 1551. Ignatius quickly became convinced that the schools provided one the best means for promoting the goals for the Society. In a letter to a fellow Jesuit dated December 1, 1555, he observed that schools provided good training ground for young Jesuit teachers, supplied the students with the proper environment for the acquisition of doctrine, learning, and morals, and relieved parents of the burden of supplying good education for their sons. Ignatius also noted that the future graduates would become civic and religious leaders and that the education they received would by extension benefit others. By the time that Ignatius died in 1556...
there existed thirty-three Jesuit-directed colleges or universities. How, we must ask, did the Jesuits create an educational enterprise which gentlemen, while dining on drumsticks more than two centuries later, would praise as the "best system of education"? A full answer to that question would require a book, but a good start might well point to two ideas of Ignatius of Loyola that permeate the Ratio and therefore provide the Ignatian grounding for Jesuit education: (1) Ignatius's basic understanding that all creation, if properly understood, has the potential of moving a person closer towards God; (2) his conviction that this progress towards God takes place more successfully if it is assisted by means of a well-ordered plan.

Some philosophers and theologians, especially those who favored the Platonic tradition, distrusted the material world as a valid means for coming to knowledge about God and perceived created things as a stumbling block to any form of spiritual ascent. Ignatius, on the other hand, viewed the world as reflecting its Creator and therefore having the potential for assisting men and women in moving them towards a fuller awareness of God in this life and eternal beatitude in the next. The First Principle and Foundation in Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises states the matter clearly:

Human beings are created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created.

From this it follows that we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it.

This First Principle grounds the Spiritual Exercises and therefore grounds Jesuit identity, Jesuit-directed ministry, and, in particular, the ministry of education. In the First Principle, Ignatius asks all men and women not to look at created things as ends in themselves, but rather, as means by which creation reveals the Creator. "Finding God in all things"—an expression often used by Ignatius—captures this same idea. The First Principle and Foundation had the most profound impact on the nature of Jesuit education. Because of this foundation, all creation became the legitimate subject matter for learning about God. The goals of the Ratio and of the Spiritual Exercises are in fact identical. Just as the First Principle and Foundation in the Exercises identified the correct use of created things as helping a person move towards God, so too did the Ratio insist that educational endeavors have as their purpose helping the students move ever closer to their Creator. The authors of the Ratio Studiorum of 1599 made this point clear from the very beginning of the document: "The aim of our educational program is to lead men and women to the knowledge and love of their Creator and Redeemer." This First Principle and Foundation encouraged Jesuit minds to work on subjects ranging from astronomy to zoology; and, yes, some studied philosophy and theology as well. Scholars who delved deep into God's creation and grew in their understanding of how all things came from God and had the potential to lead humanity to God followed the insights and the goals established by Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises.

The second important idea of Ignatius that permeates the Ratio is his insistence that well-ordered progress provides one of the best means of obtaining a desired end. Ignatius benefited from divine grace but also gained no little knowledge from his time spent in the school of experience. Ignatius's first attempt at higher education was guided only by his own misplaced fervor. In his attempt to excel as quickly as possible he made an indiscriminate attempt to digest the logic of de Soto, the Sentences of Peter of Lombard, and the physics of Peter the Great. This haphazard approach undertaken at the University of Alcalá left him frustrated and, after a bout with the Spanish Inquisition, he packed all his books on a donkey and left for Paris in January of 1528. In Paris he experienced the well-ordered progress of studies known as the modus Parisiensis. At Paris, each course built on previous knowledge and at course completion the young scholar was left with questions that were answered in the following course. This method resonated with Ignatius's propensity for ordered progression, the same sense of order he recommended for advancement in the spiritual life as described in his Spiritual Exercises. The experiences of Alcalá and Paris left an impression on Ignatius and later, when he composed the Constitutions of the Jesuit Order, he insisted that: "[An order should be observed in pursuing the branches of knowledge] (Part IV, chapter 6: 4). Several decades later, the authors of the Ratio implemented this admonition and laid out a well-ordered course of studies.

The Ratio Studiorum, therefore, does not stand outside of Ignatian spirituality, but rather incorporates its very essence. Did these gentlemen in Spain, in the midst of their turkey dinner, recognize that Ignatian spiritual insights permeated the "best system of education"? Probably not. These gentlemen understood the benefits of Jesuit education but perhaps were ignorant of the driving principles behind the Ratio. In our effort to continue the "best system of education," perhaps these Ignatian insights and their method of implementation in the Ratio have something to say to us today.

II Instruction

Paul Shore, Associate Professor of Educational Studies

Central to the execution of the program outlined in the Ratio was the instructor, and without a grasp of the duties and expectations of this instructor the Ratio cannot be understood. The teacher of the curriculum outlined in the Ratio was a Jesuit. This meant, among other things, that the instructor would approach the content to be taught from a fully integrated perspective of one who saw spirituality and academic formation as completely intertwined. This integrated viewpoint, common to many educational programs in sixteenth-century Europe, informed all aspects of instruction detailed in the Ratio. The instructor was expected to provide moral as well as academic leadership, and to be a role model of probity and religious orthodoxy at all times. The teacher was censored both by his superiors and by standards set out in the Ratio, and functioned himself as a censor, an interpreter of literature and an exegete of philosophical and theological texts. He was authority, judge,
and guide to his students, some of whom were as young as ten or eleven. Yet be did not possess academic freedom in the sense that it would be understood by a modern-day teacher or professor. Undoubtedly many of the parents who entrusted their sons to such teachers saw the instructors functioning in loco parentis, looking to these teachers to provide structure, supervision, and role modeling to their students.

The Jesuit teacher was both a representative of, and a part of the corporate identity of the Society of Jesus. Jesuits observed their classrooms carefully to try to recruit their most able students for the Society. As frequently very visible members of the community in which they worked, these teachers were expected to model ideal conduct as representatives of the Society, hence the emphasis in the Ratio on the high moral standards and intellectual competence expected of them.

These instructors were aided in their work by the structural unity of the educational program they taught. A noted scholar of Jesuit educational history, George Ganss, has pointed out that "[t]he procedural unity established by the Jesuit Ratio was in fact much greater than would be desirable or possible today" (27). Central to this unity was the use of Latin not merely as a subject of instruction but as the instrument of instruction. Jesuit schools from Portugal to Transylvania were thus able to maintain a remarkable uniformity of instructional practice because of the use of Latin. Modern students of educational techniques should note that this meant that in effect, the entire Jesuit school, scholars and teachers, were interacting in a language other than their mother tongue. When teachers and students spoke different mother tongues, as might often be the case in the Low Countries or Central Europe, this use of Latin may have been a distinct advantage in reducing regional or ethnic rivalries.

The Ratio mandated a very high level of mastery in Greek, as well, although instruction was never carried out in this language. The teacher of Rhetoric, for example, is enjoined to "correct any fault in oratorical or poetic structure, in elegance and grace of expression, in transitions, rhythm, spelling, or anything else." Here the teacher had to function not merely as the corrector of mechanical flaws, but as an aesthetic arbiter. He was allowed a fair degree of leeway in the interpretation of Greek texts, as well. The teacher thus was a self-conscious descendant of the instructors in the schools of oratory that had flourished in ancient times, teachers such as Quintilian and St. Augustine. The teacher in turn trained his students to carry on this aesthetic tradition in their own work as diplomats, clergy, teachers, or men of affairs.

The curriculum of the Ratio was focused upon the mastery, recall, and production of the written and spoken word, and so it is not surprising that instruction would likewise focus on rhetoric and declamation. The instructor of Greek, for example, would deliver a "prelection" or oral summary and analysis of the text in question. This performance, for it can be considered nothing short of one, did more than simply convey content. The prelection would both establish the authority of the teacher with regard to the curriculum, and more importantly, provide a model to the students of a skilled oral performer. Teachers were encouraged, whenever possible, to lecture without notes, thereby rendering their performance more lively and engaging.

Students also performed in the Jesuit school, where disputations were a central element of instruction. The instructor's role in these events was to be an unbiased moderator, and to take the opposite side of each argument, seeking to test the limits of the students' ability to think on their feet and to manipulate the content of their arguments. Such disputations were to be undertaken with a good deal of the competitive spirit common to the Ratio, but also, it should be noted, with "moderation and harmony." The victors in such disputes received public recognition, and in the most formal disputations of the higher grades, distinguished members of the community were in attendance. Students of rhetoric and humanities were expected to perform declamations, in which they would demonstrate their oral skills in a more structured context. Declamations were also attended by the teacher, who would no doubt provide what we would call today "feedback" to performers. Repetition was an important part of Jesuit educational praxis. Hour-long sessions of repetition of significant texts formed part of instruction at the higher level. By modern standards these periods of repetition might seem boring, but the Jesuit intention was to foster complete auditory recall, which was an esteemed skill in Renaissance culture. Recall was likewise an important element in the examination program outlined in the Ratio.

The teacher, as described in the Ratio, was accessible to his students. We are told, for example, that professors of the higher faculties were to remain in their classrooms both so that they could be available to answer questions, and most interestingly, so that they could learn how effective their lectures were. Thus the perceptions of the pupils, so seldom taken into consideration in the educational practices of the Renaissance, were part of the process of instructional review and evaluation. Jesuit schools pointedly made little distinction in their treatment of noble and common students (although an exception to this was found in the lower school, where "nobles are given the choicer seats"). We are told that the professor, "with the help of God's grace . . . must give his attention to the advancement in studies of the poor and the wealthy with equal solicitude." Moreover, while Jesuit schools unquestionably saw their role as a support of the Catholic faith, a fair degree of tolerance was allowed the teacher when dealing with materials that were controversial among Catholics. The Ratio enjoined teachers to exhibit a "prudent charity" and to be sensitive to the feelings of Catholics who might resent a particular interpretation of an author. The Jesuit educator was not to pose as an alien and hostile element in the community, but as an individual capable of understanding and adapting to local conditions.

An unfamiliar feature of Jesuit education outlined in the Ratio was the "public censor" appointed for each class in the school. This was a student, sometimes also called a cæcutor or Proctor, who noted infractions committed by others: students, but also had the right to beg off the punishments allotted to his classmates. Whether his classmates regarded this individual as a person of standing or merely a privileged snitch is not entirely clear, but this practice continued for almost two centuries in Jesuit schools, and even longer in some of the elite English "public" schools.

What the Ratio as a document of course cannot tell us is how well the men who taught according to its principles lived up to these principles, or how effectively they carried out the