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### CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA

There is a theme to what I have to say today. I am attempting to discuss the objectives of Catholic Higher Education in Twentieth Century America. One might be expected to begin by referring to the seemingly timeless classic on Catholic higher learning: Cardinal Newman's "Idea of a University", and to discourse, as he did, upon theology as it relates to other branches of knowledge, and they to theology. One might then view knowledge as an end in itself, or view it in relation to learning, professional skill or religion. One would, of course, conclude, as Newman did, by discussing the duties of the Church towards knowledge.

I submit to you that this is beautiful theory that neither Newman nor anyone else has ever realized in practice in any institution of Catholic higher learning since he wrote. Newman may well have given us the Irish Mountain top of vision. Our efforts, however, must be measured against the reality of life on the great American plain. Our objectives in Catholic higher education today must have relevance to a new age in a new land. Anything less would be both unworthy and dishonest. The theory may well thrill us. The practice is that with which we must live and earn our daily bread. Let the objectives be all

means be high. But remember that to be useful, they must be attainable. I submit again that Newman's never were such, and indeed never have been attained in any full measure either here or abroad. May I be even more foolhardy by saying that Newman's dream does not even fit the frame within which we must place the present day objectives of Catholic higher education.

Before I completely alienate the audience who, like myself, have probably long since canonized Newman, may I state the simple theme that underlies everything that I shall subsequently say. My theme is perhaps best expressed as the "ancient beauty, ever old and ever new" that St. Augustine saw as a good description of the Church herself.

What this theme really means is that there are two objectives that Catholic higher education must pursue simultaneously today: to hold to the permanent, unchanging values that have made our higher learning something special; and to adapt to the dynamic changing realities of our times which need these unchanging values if rapid change and explosive new realities are to have any dimension of meaning and direction. In other words, Catholic higher education must be neither a dinosaur nor a changeling, but a vital and vigorous force in our times, both ancient and contemporary, both conservative and radical, both traditional and modern. Either value to the exclusion of the other will either date us on the one hand, or make us feebly imitative and shabbily

contemporary on the other. We must cherish both values. We must indeed reflect the "ancient beauty, ever old and ever new."

Perhaps the best perspective is gained by taking a cursory glance at the origins and development of Catholic higher learning. One cannot speak of beginnings without that inevitable return to the Gospels, to the person of Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, ever the same. Despite all our manifold deficiencies across all ages, we derive our most basic dignity from our striving for continuity with the Divine Teacher. It is the truest of truisms that all Christian teaching begins with Christ and must be faithful to His Spirit and His Word, clearly, simply, and plainly manifest in the pages of the New Testament.

Then there were the Fathers of the Church, of East and West, Greek and Latin, who were in their own persons as in their writings the best exemplars of Christian higher learning, especially the martyr-scholar-saints who died for what they professed, as well as the confessor-scholar-saints, who like us believed, professed and taught without the added testimony of martyrdom, save that of being willing should the occasion arise. These Greek and Latin Fathers united in their persons the simple holiness of the Gospel with all the wisdom of philosophy and theology. May we do as well!

In a later age, the silent, working Benedictine monks lit a candle in the darkness, raised their voices only to praise God, and in many hushed monastic cells throughout darkened Europe, copied and glossed the great books that, now preserved, make possible much of our dialogue, conversation, and exchange of views with the otherwise dead past.

All of this ancient classical and Christian learning was institutionalized by the Church in the Middle Ages, in the foundation of famous universities like Oxford and Cambridge, Paris, Bologna, and Pavia. From a contemporary point of view, when Christian higher education is often adjudged as doctrinaire, "safe", and even stodgily conformist, one might well wonder at the wild turbulence of life that characterized these first Catholic universities in mediaeval times where there reigned the broadest kind of academic freedom for the wildest of views and the goriest of academic battles: of Bernard against Abelard, of Thomas Aquinas against the Christian Nominalists and Arabic skeptics, of friars and monks against the secular clergy. That these were lively intellectual places and times is a gross understatement. But from all of this open conflict of ideas emerged the splendor of truth. This is the glorious tradition that we may be proud of in Catholic higher education. We are proud, but all too tame today.

In a still later age, the Jesuits and the counter Reformation gave us a form of classical liberal education and a Christian catechesis that still exerts its influence. St. Peter Canisius becomes the model of the Christian teacher. Blessed Edmund Campion and St. Francis Xavier become romantic heroes to long generations of Catholic boys. Nothing bad in this - but not the ultimate answer to everything yet to come either.

The time of toleration after the French Revolution saw a new element born to strengthen the long tradition of Christian higher learning: the emergence of new teaching congregations of priests and brothers and sisters, and the later emergence for the first time of substantial numbers of well-educated laity dedicated to the apostolate of higher education. Now to come home, to our land and our times.

Priests, brothers, sisters, laymen, and laywomen - in American Catholic higher education. Just to say the words summarizes volumes of history, sacrifice, and achievement.

I might well digress here for a moment to signal out the work of the nuns, for all of us know the price that the good Sisters have paid for the universal affection and high esteem that they enjoy: their sacrificial practice of poverty, the total and generous gift of their lives and talents

for which even "dedication" is too pale and overworked a word.

This long tradition of Catholic higher education does not represent one long series of towering peaks like the serried ranks of snow-capped mountains that form the South American Cordillera. Rather it is a history of heights and depths. Almost every age has had some proud peaks, but there have also been in every age periods of failure and depression. Some failures have been forced upon us in the long rub and wear of religious strife. But, let us admit it frankly, much failure has been our own fault: of persons and institutions, often enough through laziness, lack of vision or the mercenary spirit, sometimes through abysmal mediocrity and just plain bad teaching and bad learning. The quality of education is very much akin to the quality of life, and this is true of education by the Church, as well as by the State. When virtue generally declines, the quality of education goes down with it.

So much for the depths. What of the heights. Perhaps the most impressive of the heights is the sheer age of the tradition. No teaching agency in the world, no nation, nor state, nor Board of Education of any kind can compare with the Catholic tradition in the lengthy reach of teaching experience. Having admitted seniority here, let us practice the virtues of mature age: the calm wisdom, the steady purpose, the perspective of tolerance

and patience amid enduring efforts to improve constantly. For whatever else one might say, this much is certain: God is not served well by mediocrity. And let us also avoid the vices of advanced age and seniority: spiteful envy of other good efforts, the suspicious and almost instinctive fear of youth and youthful ideas, the concrete fixation with the status quo and the timid failure to respond to new situations and the inevitable new challenges of every new age.

In other words, to be true to its twin objectives, Catholic higher education must indeed reflect "ancient beauty, ever old and ever new."

When one has taken this brief and necessarily kaleidoscopic glance at the history of Catholic higher learning, several reflections occur quite simply and quite honestly to anyone who thinks of this long history and of our present place in it, as the current segment of American higher education.

I trust you will allow me to share my candid reflections with you. You may well have different and perhaps more valid reactions of your own. No matter. Since I must speak and, for what they are worth, here are my reflections, to be accepted or rejected as you will.

First, may I say that I have always shared the honest pride that legitimately attaches to a proud intellectual heritage. I have likewise always been uneasy at the correlative pattern of looking backward more often

than forward, of holding to the tradition of what has been rather than striving mightily to make the traditional values more relevant, more vital, more meaningful today. I have always been chary of so many intellectual giants of another day, often many centuries past, while the crying need is for men and women of equal wisdom and vision today.

Personally, I have no ambition to be a mediaeval man. I suspect that St. Thomas in his day had no hankering to be classified as belonging to the golden age of the Latin Fathers of the Church, then long past. Whatever the value of the various ages of Catholic higher learning, there is only one age whose value we can in any measure influence: our own. We can see ourselves as part of a long tradition. We can measure the vitality of our current contribution against the intellectual contribution of other ages, but one factor is absolutely essential to any judgment or any comparison: the vitality of Catholic higher learning in any particular age must be viewed mainly in relation to its intellectual influence and effectiveness in that particular age. It is futile comfort for a Catholic university in the second half of the Twentieth Century in the United States of America to point with pride to the lively intellectuality and critical vitality of the Catholic University of Paris in Mediaeval France. Let the dead bury their dead. We of the living have our work at hand. It is vital, intellectual, and exciting work that only a



university can do. Perhaps the most exciting feature of all is the valid presumption that some of the work can most fruitfully be undertaken only by a Catholic institution of higher learning in the best tradition of the peak eras of Christian wisdom.

May I first be a little negative, and say clearly what I do not mean. The task for the Catholic higher learning will not be done if our philosophers and theologians continue to live among, work with, and speak to people and problems long since dead and buried. This inhabitation of a never-never world by those who speak for Christian wisdom would be bad enough in a day without problems of its own. But today we live in an age of monumental and unprecedented problems. This is no day in which to nit pick among the problems of the past. Here is an age crying for the light and guidance of Christian wisdom. What must future judges think of us if we live in the most exciting age of science ever known to mankind, and philosophize mainly about Aristotle's physics. We live today in the threatening shadow of cosmic thermonuclear destruction and theologize about the morality of war as though the spear had not been superseded by the ICBM.

If we are to create a peak for the Catholic higher learning today, two essential requirements at least are crystal clear: One, we must understand the present day world in which we live, with all of the forces and realities

that make it what it is; and, two, those two best and most unique assets we have, philosophy and theology, must begin to be more relevant to the agonizing, very real, and monumental problems of our times. Now that I have that frog cleared from my throat, may I address myself to the challenging vision of what Catholic higher learning could do to ransom our times and justify our survival.

The key word for the task, as I see it, is mediation. One could spend much time discussing this word, a good and priestly word, a word that speaks of the innermost reality of the Incarnation. Catholic higher education can, in our times, perform an important mediatorial function. Catholic higher education stands for something definite, definable, and, I trust, something true, good, beautiful, and timeless. The world is disjointed today in so many ways, fragmented into so many disparate parts, that one might look far to find a more inspiring, more important, or more central task for the Catholic higher learning than the exalted work of mediation in our times.

Allow me to illustrate this work of intellectual mediation. Many of our most pressing domestic problems today arise from the fact that we live in a multi-faceted, pluralistic society. How urgent it is that some institution attempt to bring together in more fruitful unity the separated and often antagonistic elements of this pluralistic society. Economically there is the pluralism of labor and management. Socially there is the pluralism of the

two races, white and colored, with regional sub-problems for Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Religiously there is the pluralism of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, or perhaps more fundamentally the basic dichotomy between the religious and the secularists. Intellectually there is the pluralism of science and technology vis-a-vis the humanities - the C. P. Snow described dilemma of two great intellectual currents that neither understand or speak to each other despite the fact that they live daily side-by-side in our universities.

What are we doing to mediate, philosophically and theologically, as only the Catholic higher learning can, between these various extremes that make up the divided fabric of our society? Here is an objective worthy of our most talented, most devoted, most inspired efforts. There is nothing humdrum, nothing prosaic about these most anguishing problems of man in the Twentieth Century. Their solutions require the highest theological and philosophical principles, the deepest empirical studies, the most imaginative approaches, the most understanding directives - but what are we doing to bring intellectual and moral light to these regions of darkness.

We are doing something about labor-management problems, but mostly on a pragmatic, non-intellectual level. As to Civil Rights and equal opportunity

for all races, we have been almost universally destitute of intellectual leadership in our colleges and universities. I know of no research in this area. Factually, the worst educational problem at the moment is in a section of the country predominantly Catholic. Despite the central Catholic doctrine of the Mystical Body, the pronouncements of our Holy Fathers and our hierarchy, there are Catholic schools and Catholic parishes and Catholic lay organizations, and Catholic orders and Catholic neighborhoods that do not only not welcome, but which positively repel Negroes from their midst. Is there a work of mediation needed here, a gentle touch of Christian wisdom and understanding to try to ascertain how this can be and what might be done about it? And who will do this work of mediation, theologically, philosophically, and empirically, if not our institutions of higher learning, some of whom might begin the work by admitting qualified Negro students, just to create the proper atmosphere for this study.

And what is the work of mediation in the field of religious pluralism. Again we live in an ecumenical age. Our Holy Father says to a large group of Jewish visitors to Rome: "I am Joseph, your brother." How many of us have extended that welcome within our institutions and have tried to understand our differences in our research and studies. A new Ecumenical Council looms before us. In Europe, for many years since they were brought together in the crucible

of common suffering during the war, Protestant and Catholic theologians have discussed their differences and merged their common strengths against their common enemies of secularism and Communism. Why have we been so timid here in our American institutions of higher learning. Must we always be the last to initiate anything imaginative and intellectual, the first only in those obvious causes like anti-Communism, super patriotism, and old clothing drives. Here is another urgent work of mediation long overdue.

I hesitate to undertake the discussion of the intellectual mediation needed between science, technology, and the humanities, because here I easily become vehement, almost in an apoplectic manner. We took the wrong turn in science as far back as Galileo, and while the roadmaps have been officially corrected since, we are still lagging far behind the main flow of traffic in the area of science and technology. I need not document this assertion for there has already been enough public breast-beating in the matter. Besides, I am interested here not so much in diagnosing the past as in charting a present day and future course. That the roads of science and technology may lead to fruitful human goals is obvious enough to anyone who understands or appreciates the new vistas opened up by science and technology. Science is our potent key to the noble modern human quest to eliminate illiteracy, needless

poverty and squalor, hunger, disease, and homelessness in our times. Science can help man achieve the basic material conditions essential to a life worthy of man's inner and God-given dignity. Science can have true cultural and spiritual overtones, too, may indeed contribute mightily to the good life, if only we provide for it the ultimate meaning, direction, and human significance that it must seek outside itself. The least demand, however, must be this: that we respect and truly understand modern science in all its implications, that we do not continue to neglect it in our schools or treat it as a threat rather than a God-given blessing, for all that science finds, God has given - the natural richnesses, the energy, the order, the magnificent vista from within the atom to the outermost reaches of this magnificent universe that is ours. The main reason that we have not mediated in the Catholic higher learning between science and the humanities is that we have generally neglected science and have not particularly distinguished ourselves in the humanities either. Perhaps the latter fault is greater, for here was our true and most obvious heritage. We must redouble our efforts today in both areas if they are mutually to enrich each other in our total perspective of higher learning. Without this particular mediation between science and the humanities, and all it implies, there really will be no truly significant or relevant Catholic higher learning in our times.

These are hard words, but I believe, true ones. Qui potest capere, capiat.

There is another whole area of mediation that is open today to the Catholic higher learning, if we would find the courage to climb the peak. I refer here to the opportunities for intellectual mediation in a pluralistic world. Catholics belonging to a universal Church should be at home in international affairs, but I fear that the American Catholic spirit, somehow untouched by our higher learning, has traditionally been characterized by a narrow parochial spirit, an isolationist complex, an anti-United Nations urge. What has the Catholic higher learning in America done to mediate understanding of the great world cultures, the important emerging areas - even the Catholic ones like Latin America - the dichotomy between cold war and International Law. Here is a challenge that we can hardly avoid and hope to be relevant in our times.

By now, I am sure that you all see, upon reflection, that here is much of Newman in modern dress. May I conclude by hoping that all engaged in the important work of our Catholic colleges and universities see the importance and the urgency of my dual thesis: first, that the Catholic higher learning must ever strive to make the ancient wisdom timely today, relevant to our current problems, and, secondly, that the road to this accomplishment, the simple word that sums up a modern and thrilling objective for the Catholic

higher learning in our times is mediation - mediation that understands both extremes that must be brought together, mediation based upon empirical current fact, as well as timeless principle, mediation that is not afraid to blaze new trails in new wildernesses: that both God and man may be well served in our times and in this new world that so needs new applications of the ancient Christian wisdom.



# The Work of Mediation

*We need a full and complete knowledge of theological realities  
and a full and complete knowledge of the world in which we live*

by THEODORE M. HESBURGH

**M**ONSIGNOR Philip Hughes has written many perceptive passages in his books on the history of the Church. One which appeals particularly to me is found in his *Popular History*, where he is writing about the period following the French Revolution.

This is the passage: "The monastic orders had shrunk almost to nothing and the influence of the liturgy with them. Another grave loss was the disappearance of all the universities. They had all been Catholic, and often papal, foundations. In all of them there had been a faculty of theology, and round this mistress science their whole intellectual life had turned. Now they were gone, and when restored they would be restored as State Universities, academies for the exploration and exposition of natural truths alone. Education, the formation of the Catholic mind in the new Catholic Europe, would suffer immeasurably, and religious formation be to its intellectual development an extra, something added on. There would be the further mischievous effect that henceforth not universities but seminaries would set the tone of theological life. The leaders of Catholic thought would not be the professional thinkers whom a university produces, but technicians, those to whom the important work of training the future clergy is committed and who, among other things, teach them theology. The effect of this destruction of the old faculties of theology in the universities of Catholic Europe, the disappearance of the old Salamanca, Alcala, Coimbra, Bologna, Douai, Louvain, and Paris, is a theme that still awaits its historian. Louvain was indeed restored in 1834, but the healthy interplay of the theological intellects of half a score of Catholic universities, the nineteenth century was never, alas, to know."

What of our century, or at least, the second half of it? What is past is already history, but what is present

and future is ours, with God's grace, to make. There is, however, this great value in the past, that we can learn from it, from its deficiencies and strengths, where our best part lies now and in the days to come.

Our challenge in Catholic higher education could mean many things in present-day America. I would much prefer here to limit the consideration to the task of Catholic universities, rather than colleges. And because our words have become so confused, I would clearly limit the title "university" to those American Catholic institutions that confer the doctorate in a reasonable spectrum of various subjects. I do this for no snobbish reason, but merely to clarify the setting of these few observations.

First, may I pause for a moment on those words of Monsignor Hughes relating to theology. One might casually remark that twentieth-century America will not have the intellectual deficiencies of nineteenth-century Europe, because we have created here a number of Catholic universities. To this I would say, read Monsignor Hughes again, and carefully. He says that the intellectual tragedy was precisely this: that Catholic universities were replaced by state universities which dealt with natural truths alone; that without the mistress science of theology as a university faculty, the intellectual world was bereft of the professional thinkers whom a university produces, and suffered the loss of the healthy interplay of the theological intellects of Catholic universities.

**C**ERTAINLY, we have Catholic universities in America today, but does their intellectual life really turn round the mistress science of theology? Are they really producing professional thinkers in theology, and are they characterized by a healthy interplay of theological intellects? I think not. If my judgment is in the least valid, then here we have the central challenge which faces Catholic higher learning in America today.

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I have long pondered this problem. One obvious answer is to re-examine our theological faculties and what they are doing in the university context. Perhaps a more precise approach would be to consider what they should be doing. This is also an excellent way to become very unpopular, even in one's own university, but I believe that the critique is not only necessary, but highly urgent.

One immediate complication that faces one in this quest is the obvious fact that history has not stood still since the demise of the once great Catholic universities. The state and secular universities that replaced them may have confined themselves to the exploration of natural truths, but however incomplete this task inherently is, they have succeeded in uncovering such a vast field of natural knowledge, hitherto unknown to man, that the task of theology in the face of all this new knowledge is nothing short of monumental.

I have attempted on another occasion to sum up the central problem in one word: mediation. This attempt was less than a complete success, but I still think it is the key word, so let me try it again, with a little more substructure this time on what it is that mediation must mean.

Some of the most inspiring words on mediation were written by Thomas Aquinas when he discussed the Priesthood of Christ. He says that the priest is essentially a mediator because he joins the greatest of all separated entities: the all-holy God and sinful humanity. Christ Our Lord was the perfect and only eternal priest because, by the central Christian fact of the Incarnation, he joins, in His Person, the two extremes: human and divine nature, the natural and the supernatural. Christ is the *fons et origo totius sacerdotii*, the source and origin of all priesthood. What He is in His Person, He accomplishes in His Work. Redemption, like Incarnation, is essentially priestly and mediatorial. All this is summed up in five words: *Habemus Pontificem, Jesum Filium Dei*—We have a Pontiff (a bridge-builder), Jesus the Son of God.

Can this concept of mediation at its highest level shed any light upon the enormous responsibility of the Catholic university in our times? Yes, if we again recall that St. Thomas sums up the mediatorial work of Christ as the Source of Grace and Truth. St. Thomas also insists that Christ is primarily a mediator as man: "Insofar as Christ is man it belongs to Him to join men to God by proffering the precepts and gifts of God to men."

There is much in all of this that strikes close to our problem. We are men committed to Truth, living in a world where most academic endeavor concerns only natural truth, as much separated from supernatural truth, the divine wisdom of theology, as sinful man was separated from God before the Incarnation. If these extremes are to be united, a work of mediation is

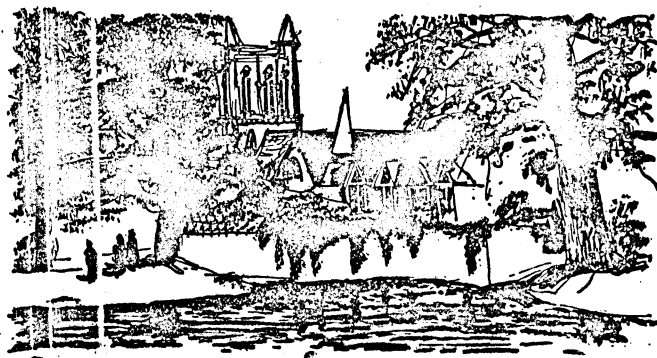
needed. The ultimate pattern is before us in the Incarnation and in the mediatorial work of redemption that follows the Incarnation.

The mediator, the university or the university person, must somehow join in his person the full reality of the two extremes that are separated. This means that we must somehow match secular or state universities in their comprehension of a vast spectrum of natural truths in the arts and sciences, while at the same time we must be in full possession of our own true heritage of theological wisdom.

This is precisely what I meant when I said on the other occasion: "Catholic higher education must be neither a dinosaur nor a changeling, but a vital and vigorous force in our times, both ancient and contemporary, both conservative and radical, both traditional and modern. Either value to the exclusion of the other will either date us on the one hand, or make us feebly imitative and shabbily contemporary on the other. We must cherish both values. We must indeed reflect the 'ancient beauty, ever old and ever new.'"

IS THIS an impossible task? Not since the Incarnation and Redemption. It is most certainly not an easy task. Presidential rhetoric will not accomplish it. Nor will the inspiring words in our university catalogues. Somewhere, somehow there must be a beginning, and this cannot come without a deep comprehension of the unique mission of the Catholic university in our times, joined to equal comprehension and understanding of the very difficult task of the Catholic intellectual, without whose presence a university is Catholic in word only. A beginning might also be made by realizing that the Catholic layman also shares in the priestly work of Christ by reason of the sacramental characters of Baptism and Confirmation. Also, faculties of theology must come of age in our Catholic universities, and they must do this by becoming more relevant, more involved in the act of mediation between natural and supernatural knowledge.

It has been often said that all human problems are at base theological, since they ultimately involve a true or false concept of the nature and destiny of man. We cannot rightly expect state or secular universities to



take the leadership in theology. Nor can we expect to find acceptance for our theological leadership if we lag behind in competence on the level of natural knowledge. Christ, the perfect Mediator, was true God and true man.

We have then a double task if we aspire to mediation in our times: a full and complete understanding of the theological realities joined to a full and complete knowledge of the world in which we live; a world split by conflicting religions, cultures and races, a world often bewildered by the implications of modern science and technology, a world in the process of doubling its population by the turn of the century, a world of haves and have-nots, a world full of promise and disillusioned hopes, a world in which the forward march of Communism acts as a kind of Scourge of God reminding us that in our materialism and pragmatism we have abandoned our true heritage: the spiritual values that alone spell ultimate victory. This is a very real world. In a true sense, we alone can save it; and yet this too is impossible unless we understand it, deeply and with compassion for its profound misery and confusion.

To understand the world means to study it in all its aspects. This is what universities exist to do. As we come to understand the causes of our present confusion, we will also have to be critical of ourselves and our meager efforts in spite of our great heritage and our stupendous mission. This, too, is what universities exist to do. In all of this we cannot be less zealous than our secular counterparts or scorn the knowledge of all the natural truths that they have uncovered. We should, on the contrary, join them in this exciting quest for understanding in the spirit of Terence: *Nihil humanum mihi alienum*. Nothing human should be alien to us.

Suppose for a moment that our theological faculties sought to understand more deeply the meaning of human freedom, human dignity, human rights and human aspirations in the democratic tradition, and would strive to apply their findings to the present frustrations of Asians, Africans, Latin Americans, and Negroes in America. Would this be mediatorial and illuminating? Suppose our theological faculties would make a serious sally into fields such as psychoanalysis, religious sociology, leisure, and technological society of our day, the cultures of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, religion and the arts, Church liturgy, architecture, and music. Would our Catholic universities be more exciting and more fruitful and more respected? Would we be better Catholic universities in the truest meaning of these words?

**T**OO LONG, I think, we have in the social order put a premium on the virtues of patience and prudence. We have had the prudence and the miserable of this world have had the patience. Why not strike a blow for two more appropriate virtues in our time:

wisdom and courage. These have been the time-honored virtues of Catholic universities. They are difficult to live with, but ultimately they vindicate the unique mission of the university if they are practiced.

One great man in our times really understood all of this profoundly. Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard in his now famous *Growth or Decline* practiced both wisdom and courage. Hear some of his words: "We have explained the general part to be played by intellectuals in drawing up the 'Catholic Synthesis' which shall reconcile tradition with progress, transcendence with incarnation. We remind you first of all that their work is to be done in independence. It is not the Church's mission to solve directly problems which belong to the technical sphere. She leaves to the specialists their rightful autonomy; she is not held in fief by any system, in science, social questions, or politics; and she gives her children freedom to follow their choice and pursue their researches. . . . It is not for her to lay down what the structures of tomorrow shall be; she respects too highly the rights men have and their freedom to initiate. . . .

"But what she cannot herself do, Christians can do and must bring to pass; because being also of this world, they have an equal right with others to share the search for truth and to take part in all the debates and transformations of a City to which they belong. . . . We, therefore, tell you, Christian thinkers, that your duty is not to follow, but to lead . . . . It is a question of building the new world, of specifying and preparing the structures which will enable man to be fully man in a city worthy of him, of transforming all things to make of them a Christian world. This is a vast program, far beyond the capacities of one generation, and one which demands two things. First a process of analysis: you have to pronounce upon our present civilization to judge it for its condemnation or its correction . . . . then, secondly, by a process of synthesis, beginning with the weaknesses of the present order, but above all starting from its aspirations and the promise that it contains, you will draw up a plan of urban civilization and of humanism on a vast scale, seen in relation to the nature of man, his capacities and his needs . . . .

"In the researches you make and the reforms you propose, you alone will be the best humanists, for you alone have it in you to provide the emerging civilization with a standard which will be complete, namely, the right conception of man. It is the Christian conception of human nature, and it alone, which will save man from being dehumanized."

Certainly, all of this is inspiring. Whether or not it will be accomplished in our times will depend in large measure upon our understanding of the unique challenge that faces the Catholic university today, and in our readiness to rise to this challenge.