

THE CATHOLIC LAW SCHOOL

The Catholic law school, like other Catholic professional schools, faces a double danger. First, there is the very real temptation for Catholic colleges of law to imitate the secular law schools so closely that there is no appreciable or discernable difference between the secular and Catholic law schools. They may use the same texts, follow the same curriculum, instruct with the same secular-minded professors, and, in a very real sense, worship the identical gods of current legal positivism. In this first alternative, the Catholic law school may salve its conscience by adding superficial religious props - placing a Crucifix in the classroom, beginning classes by a prayer, and sponsoring an occasional Red Mass. But the addition of Crucifix, prayer, or even the Holy Mass cannot sanctify what is essentially unchristian. The product of such a law school will manifest the same secularistic impress that characterizes the graduate of other law schools which keep the law in one compartment and religion in another, with the latter being of no real consequence in the theory or practice of the law.

The other danger is no less real or dangerous. It is basically the temptation to substitute religion for the law. The Catholic law school that goes in this direction may graduate pious, but poor, lawyers. Piety is no substitute for competence. Those who espouse the law must give it the full devotion it deserves as a commitment to justice, good order, and the common good of society. Human service of the highest caliber, whether in the law or in other professions, is a most worthy gift to God. God or religion are not served by mediocrity on any level of human life and service.

Catholic wisdom can elevate and inspire the profession of law, but it does so best when legal scholarship and legal practice are technically perfect in their own order.

What is most needed in a Catholic college of law is a simultaneous attainment of Christian wisdom and high legal scholarship, not a mere juxtaposition of the two elements. This is the very integration which we seek as the high ideal of the Notre Dame College of Law. It is this same wholeness of Catholic life and excellent juridical qualities that we desire as the hallmark of our graduates. Nothing less can be the leaven so desperately needed to Christianize the profession which operates best when both God and man are served by the total life of a competent Catholic lawyer.