

(Address given by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the 68th Annual Convention of the National Catholic Educational Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Monday, April 12, 1971)

Catholic education on all levels enters the seventies in better and in worse shape than ever in any previous age. Catholic education is seemingly worse off today because it is, for many reasons, closing out many of its institutions which for decades were objects of its pride. Catholic education is better off today than ever before because the opportunities that face and challenge Catholic education today are greater and more important than ever before.

Today our country and our whole world face many new and difficult challenges. I would think that all of these at base are challenges that relate to a central, in fact, the most central <sup>moral</sup> issue of our times: the dignity of man. Whether one talks of the sanctity of life, the key issue in the overwhelming problem of war and peace, the threat of violence here and abroad, the imperatives of conscience, civil and human rights, poverty in its most dire forms of housing, employment and unemployment and underemployment, education and the lack of it, administration of justice, repression of the poor and beleaguered, drugs, cop-outs, abortion, the draft, the Berrigans, ~~Father Groppi~~, whatever focus one wishes to use in viewing man and

his problems today, it all gets down to a sense of the dignity of man which is being degraded, debased, and diminished (to indulge in a little Agnew rhetoric) on every side.

Education, Catholic or otherwise, is concerned mainly with the young. The young today are in a state of potential, actual, or incipient revolution. We can best understand our situation by trying to understand the situation of the young, since they are our clientele, whatever their age.

I have tried to understand their situation, their revolution, since it has much to say about the current parlous and promising situation of Catholic education on all levels. To keep from rambling more than usual, may I propose to present to you my understanding of 1) why the revolution of the young in our day, 2) the meaning, direction, and future of this youthful revolution, and, finally, 3) what we can learn from the current revolution of the young for an understanding of the present challenge to Catholic education on all levels, in terms of human dignity. I may not be able to bring all of this off, but it is worth trying.

First, why the revolution of youth in our day? I think there are several reasons. There are many more youth today than ever before. The median age of our country is 27, meaning that what America and the world will be tomorrow depends largely on the thinking, the hopes, the desires, and the goals of that half of our population that is presently

under 27 years of age. The other half is on the way out. This youthful half is on the way in. They, for better or for worse, will be the politicians, the businessmen, the judges, the mothers and fathers, the educators, the policemen, those running and representing the America of tomorrow -- in actual numbers today of more than 100 million Americans under the age of 27. They largely are our constituency or our product in education.

With so much at stake, why is the educational establishment, Catholic and otherwise, so troubled today? I can only submit that maybe it grew too fast. I shall speak for the segment I know best, higher education. Higher education began in America in 1636, with the founding of Harvard University. For centuries all higher education was private until the Morrrell Act of 1863 brought a great growth in the public land-grant universities. All the same, by the turn of the last century, 1900, only 2% of the high school population in America, a total of 50,000 students, matriculated in higher education. The next half century brought this total to about 3,000,000 students in higher education by 1950, half in public and half in private education.

The twenty years since saw a monumental change. What had taken over three centuries to accomplish, a higher education establishment of three million students, was practically tripled in between 1950 and 1970.

This meant tripling faculties, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, dormitories, administrative staff, financing, and everything else. I submit to you that it is not easy to triple in twenty years

what previously took over three centuries to build and preserve stability, balance, and equanimity in the process. Moreover, these twenty years saw higher education shift from half public and half private to 75% public and 25% private, including Catholic as a small percentage of this total.

Meanwhile, the world was not standing still. For the student born in 1950, 21 years old today, one can say that more has happened in his lifetime, more change of every kind, more rapidly accomplished during these 21 years, than in the total millenia-long history of mankind before 1950. All human knowledge, the substance of education, has more than doubled since 1950. Speed has been multiplied from 500 to 25,000 m.p.h., an increment of 50 times, since 1950. Man has traveled deeper -- to the Marianna Trench in the Pacific Ocean, and higher to the moon. We have used more energy in the lifetime of these students than in the first 19 centuries after the birth of Christ. More words have been communicated, more books published during these 20 years than in the first four centuries after the discovery of printing. The increment to the world's population during this period would equal the total human population two centuries ago. The number of independent nations has almost tripled, computers, television, and satellites have revolutionized the world scene, and all of this, I repeat, has meant that more change occurred in the lifetime of these students than in all the millenia of human history before their birth. Should we wonder if they are different, that they

are somewhat in rebellion against the world we have made, that they are engaged in a counter culture, that they question traditional life styles, culture, and values? Given the lives they have lived, it is amazing that they have not changed more, that they are as sane, as sensible, and as promising as they are. With all the enormous changes they experienced since 1950, one would think that all the human circuits would have been short circuited or burnt out, especially since their lifetime has been characterized by great social and moral crises.

As you all recall, the 50's were apathetic and things only began to happen with students in the 60's. First, there was their involvement with the civil rights movement, mainly in the South, until the blacks decided to go it alone. But not before activist white students had learned the tactics of passive, peaceful, non-violent civil disobedience. This tactic was in the latter years of the sixties put to work against the war in Vietnam and, when this appeared fruitless and the war continued to escalate, the same tactics were applied to educational problems on the campus. We had Berkeley in '66, Columbia in '67, Chicago and a host of others in '68. Last May, with Cambodia, there was hardly a campus that was not affected by the rising tide of frustration, anger, explosiveness, and dissatisfaction that increasingly characterized the youth revolution on a collision course with an establishment -- governmental, elder, parental, and sometimes educational -- that just didn't seem to be listening or concerned.

The student deaths at Kent and Jackson State last Spring seemed to be a benchmark in counter violence, and SDS violence in Wisconsin this past Fall seemed to slow down what was becoming an increasingly violent scene.

By now, we have seen enough to characterize the youthful revolution or the counter culture in terms of dress, hair style, music, vocabulary, drugs, freedom, and all the rest. Psychologically, we in education have shared the youthful impatience, frustration, anger, disillusionment, and, at times, what seemed to verge on despair.

In the midst of all of this explosive development, Mr. Johnson bowed out of the Presidency, while Eugene McCarthy and Bob Kennedy, tragically, started their trajectory towards it. There were born a host of new movements, pro human rights, against the war, and the draft, and, eventually, against violence in all its forms. There was a push for new relevance, often undefined, in education, a move for participatory democracy in all educational and political circles, a rebirth of service in tutoring the poor, staffing the Peace Corps and Vista, renewed interest in theology as it relates particularly to values and meaning in life, a new psychology of feeling and sense perception and touching, group dynamics and heightened sensitivity as never before, in a word, all that Charles Reich has described as Consciousness III.

Again one would have to note here that all of these aspects of the youth revolution at base stemmed from a new perception of

human dignity, a new concern to achieve more dignity and sanctity for human life, more meaning and more rights for all human beings. In this, the young were discovering anew, and often without our help, exactly what Catholic education had been organized originally to inspire, to foster, and to inculcate -- without startling success up to now, if one can believe the surveys of Catholic school graduates.

Having thus far outlined some reasons why we have a youthful revolution, a counter culture, a Consciousness III, may I now try to indicate where it seems to be going, what seems to be its ultimate meaning and future, insofar as one can speculate about a revolution while it is still in process. In outlining possible understandings of where the youthful revolution is going and what it means, I shall rely heavily on Yale's Ken Keniston, a good friend and collaborator on the Carnegie Commission on the Future of Higher Education. We have spent long hours discussing this. Much of what I say here represents his analysis.

There are, in general, two theories about the significance and thrust of the youthful revolution. One theory, espoused by such as <sup>2014.11.11</sup>Brzezinski, Daniel Bell, and, in a different way, Bruno Bettelheim, explains the present revolution of youth as a counter-revolutionary force, a blind reaction to more truly revolutionary forces represented by the forces of our new technetronic society. This new society is the new world of the future, to be run by highly-trained technicians, a world of automation, huge productivity, large organizations, global communications, a new world with technical

answers for all human problems. In this new world, the knowledge industry is the great engine of change and progress. Technetronics is the king. In the face of all this, the youthful humanist or student of social sciences sees himself becoming obsolete. Consequently, like the Luddites of the last century, he lashes out to destroy this machine that would mechanize and dehumanize man. Humanistic youth is blind, romantic, impulsive, given to feeling, and rebels against the discipline, the rational, the technical elements of the technetronic society. But, say these commentators from the Universities of Columbia, Harvard, and Chicago, these youthful counter revolutionaries will soon be forgotten, they will end up in the dustbin of history. Despite their youthful violence, vulgarity, and rhetoric, theirs is a revolution of failure and frustration. They will surely fail as the technetronic society rides over their futile corpses.

The second theory is quite the opposite in its interpretation. The authors of this second theory are Charles Reich whose "Greening of America" has been a best seller for weeks, also Theodore Roszak and Philip Slater known for his book, "The Pursuit of Loneliness". To these interpreters, the youthful revolution is the counter culture -- counter to all it encounters in the establishment -- a culture that is at once transforming and regenerating modern society. The counter culture is, in a word, the wave of the future and it will prevail among men of all ages to come, as Reich's Consciousness III.



This theory would agree with Messrs. Brzezinski, Bell, and Bettelheim in insisting that we stand today at a watershed of history in which there will be enormous historical, cultural, organizational, and institutional transitions from what was the pattern of the past. This second theory insists that the present capitalistic liberal society is bankrupt and exhausted. It has not delivered on its promises to distribute wealth equitably to all, especially <sup>to</sup> its minorities who are left out of the mainstream of life. This corrupt and corrupting society has spawned neo-imperialistic wars, dehumanized and mechanized man, manipulated the population at large by electronic means.

The counter culture would change all of this, would introduce new human values and freer life styles, would add human liberation to affluence for all. The counter culture is the true wave of the future, for all, and its ultimate triumph is as inevitable for Reich, Roszak, and Slater as the victory of technetronics <sup>and technology</sup> is for Brzezinski, Bell, and Bettelheim.

There is obviously some truth in both of these interpretations of the meaning and direction of the youthful revolution, although both of them are too prophetic, too sure that history is on their side, too given to theories of inevitability, the wish being the father not only of the thought, but of the total future.

For those of us in education, and especially those of us in Catholic education, it would be well to learn what truth might

be learned from either analysis of today's youth and their revolution without conceding either prediction of inevitability. History is on no one's side, but cedes to those men of vision and value who forge out each day's history by each day's effort. If our lives in education have any meaning or significance, it will be in our reading the signs of the times and in educating the young of our times in the visions and values that will civilize and make for reasonable human progress and lasting peace on earth. These visions and values will today inevitably hinge on the dignity of man, the sacredness of human life, the calling of man to greatness, even to the portraying of God's image and likeness in his life. The vision hinges as well on a sense of faith, and hope, and charity that transcends the travail of the hour or the changes of the moment. Whatever the changes in the theological perception and description of Christianity in our times, there can be no diminution of Catholic education's lifelong commitment to a concept of human life that derives its meaning, purpose, and direction from faith and hope and love of God and man.

All of this brings me to my final point: what we can learn from the revolution of the young in our time that will illuminate and even inspire greater efforts on the part of Catholic educators to make possible in our day a very special contribution to the totality of educational effort around us. We, especially in Catholic higher education, have over the past two decades been unusually defensive and self-deprecating. That day is over and gone. I have voiced my share of the earlier criticism regarding the academic

excellence of Catholic institutions. Now, the key concern is to use this newly-acquired competence in the interest of man's dignity and human progress. We must now endow students not only with competence, but with the compassion and commitment to use their competence in the interest of the less fortunate. While we might have fewer schools and fewer students, and fewer faculty, especially religious teachers, in the days to come, the fact is that our new role has never been more important, more needed, or more welcome.

The whole educational enterprise has fallen upon hard times and is in disrepute among many who view it with scorn or deep concern. Most people think little about the cataclysm of change through which we have passed and are passing. Few have bothered to analyze the movements or the behavior or the concerns of the young. It is too easy to condemn them out of hand, to proffer simplistic solutions that make sense to the elders and dismay their children. We in Catholic education cannot afford the luxury of nonsense or simplistic solutions. We must understand the young, and their revolution, and bridge the generation gap between young and old, teacher and taught, adult and adolescent. Personally, I believe that Catholic education on all levels is in a position to profit greatly from such an enterprise, to deepen our efforts and to justify, as never before, our very special kind of educational effort, if it is responsive to the needs of our times and our youth.

Take the issue of war and peace. It is certainly in our tradition that violent solutions are idiotic approaches to the resolution of human problems, that they are only productive of widows and orphans, destruction and ruin, degradation, not civilization. Our educational efforts should be sensitive to every endeavor to foster peace and non-violence as the greatest values for humans in a world given over to violence, destruction, and war. The first time that Notre Dame offered a class in the non-violent solution of human problems, 500 students immediately signed up for it and began to make non-violence a life style, as well as an academic study. Our educational efforts have too often in the past equated patriotism with militarism, rather than stressing the wide spectrum of possible services to our country in non-violent ways. While our students have often distinguished themselves in the military, I was astounded to find that, while Notre Dame produced more Peace Corps volunteers than any other Catholic university, there were over thirty secular universities -- some admittedly much larger -- ahead of us in the number of Peace Corps volunteers they produced. All other Catholic universities were way down the line, if they appeared at all, on the list. Incidentally, the list is not classified. You can have it for the asking and it does tell us something about war and peace, and Catholic education, and a fostering and a focus on human dignity through humanitarian efforts.

At this point, one might well consider the words of Father Robert Drinan, the second Catholic priest to be elected to the United States House of Representatives in all our history:

"I am afraid that I cannot expect much support from the Catholic community in America in relation to my conviction that the draft should be repealed. Catholic opinion on the subject is probably about the same as that of middle America, or perhaps even more reluctant to eliminate conscription. This state of affairs raises the troubling problem of the failure of communication between church leaders and the laity on the fundamental questions of conscription and war.

"The widespread ignorance of Catholics in America regarding traditional Catholic and Christian opposition to military conscription has once again intensified within me the shattering realization that on the primordial moral questions regarding peace in the family of nations, millions of Catholics are morally and theologically illiterate."

Take civil rights, another focus of the youthful revolution. Here again human dignity is at stake, in education, in housing and neighborhoods, in employment -- our institutions included -- in the administration of justice, public accommodations, and all the rest. Again, we have, theologically and philosophically, a strong tradition for human dignity and human rights. It should be a keystone of our educational endeavor. But is it? One thinks of the Catholic educated who stoned nuns and priests in Chicago because they were marching for integrated neighborhoods and equal rights for blacks. One thinks of the very few blacks we have educated in our schools and, even worse, the very few Chicanos who, as Catholics, have had an even closer claim on our apostolic efforts. In my 14 years in the

civil rights movement, in and out of government, I have met surprisingly few Catholics, although our schools educate millions annually, presumably in Christian values relevant to the problems of our day. I do receive a surprisingly large number of hate letters from Catholic ethnics every time I put in a good word for blacks or Chicanos.

The young, thank God, largely do not share these ugly prejudices of their elders. Our education should nurture in them this hunger for equality, this respect for the human dignity of every human being, whatever his or her race or color. The young are open to our teaching and example, and we have the wonderful opportunity of reversing past studies which show our students to be singularly undistinguished in their values relating to human equality following years of Catholic education. We also teach by whatever we do, as much as by what we say. After 125 years of existence, Notre Dame had 45 non-academic minority employees among a total of over 2000. With a little effort, four years later we had 345. How hallow our words without our actions.

Another concern of today's youth is for the poor and the needy in every human category, including knowledge. The proudest boast I can make for our students is that the vast majority of them are involved in some kind of social action, helping those less fortunate, whatever their need. Should not every Catholic educational establishment say the same: that the majority of its

students are learning by doing, that they do indeed serve the poor in every way possible, and, in some ways, highly imaginative. Again, we teach human dignity best by serving it where it is most likely to be disregarded, in the poor and abandoned.

I could go on, speaking of national priorities as reflected in our national budget, speaking of the 18 year old vote and all that might mean in the campaign for human dignity. Let me say finally a word about sex, not because it is eye-catching or attention-grabbing, but because it does have some relevance, rather large, to human dignity.

We are living in a sex-drenched civilization today. Catholic education has to face this fact among others. Sex is not unimportant, but neither is it all important as many magazines, books, and dramas would lead us, and our students, to believe. By making sex common, cheap, and omnipresent, modern man has made it meaningless. Here is another challenge for Catholic education: to restore sex to its relatively high importance in human life, to clothe it with the human dignity that makes it so much more important than animal sex, to grant it real dignity and importance within the dimensions of the truly human. No easy task, but one worthy of Catholic education in a world steeped in meaningless or prostituted sex.

One could speak of many other areas that should concern Catholic educators today and tomorrow. They all bear on human

dignity and human rights and the sanctity of that life we call human. One could speak of specific concerns, like abortion, marriage, conscientious objection to a specific war, pentecostal enthusiasm, total dedication, monasticism, service abroad in the missions, contemplation and action, and so many others. We have a full bag of concerns in Catholic education and a most exciting life ahead of us.

To give Catholic education on all levels full scope and efficacy in the days ahead, we shall have to be deeply concerned with human dignity and all that this implies in the life and actions of each human being. If this becomes the leitmotif of Catholic education, the deep concern of Catholic educators, I foresee the day that our schools will overflow with students who find in them a true resonance of their deepest concerns. If this happens, our faculty will be overworked, but happy, because of what great work <sup>they are</sup> it is doing. Whether or not we will at this time be receiving federal aid, we may well be receiving much more: the respect and gratitude of our fellow educators for the unique work that we are doing in the interest and promotion of human dignity in our times. This would indeed be worthy of our faith, consonant with our Christian hope, and faithful to our charity which, if truly Christian, surpasses all obstacles and overcomes all that would oppose man being truly man. And, as modern advertisers would say in the jargon of the day, this is what Catholic education is all about.