

*Preserving the “Catholic Moment”
by Inaugurating Catholic Studies
at Non-Catholic Colleges
and Universities*

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This paper is intended to convey to educators and intellectuals who embrace (or at least respect) the Catholic intellectual tradition,¹ a simple but urgent message: Preserve the “Catholic moment”—which in this context means to make the study of Catholic philosophy, theology and history, accessible and available as an elective or optional course of study to every student enrolled in any American college or university. Its underlying thesis is that, in order to preserve and maintain the Catholic intellectual tradition, regardless of how one chooses to define it—to keep it alive and vibrant and a potential influence on America’s cultural and religious future, or as an optional alternative worldview to the present normative values that regularly invoke criticism from the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy—Americans will have to be given access and opportunity to study the Catholic intellectual tradition as part of their higher education. Access to such courses and programs

¹ The term “Catholic intellectual tradition” is subject to a very broad range of interpretation, historically and in contemporary discourse, from neo-conservative to neo-liberal. Maritain sometimes referred to the “Aristotelian and Thomist” tradition. His description, if applied to Catholic studies in post-Vatican II American culture, would certainly elicit a mixture of reviews. Mary Ann Hinsdale recognizes a four-fold typology of Catholic studies programs, based on significantly different understandings of the “Catholic intellectual tradition,” in an unpublished paper discussed in detail later in this article. Hinsdale’s paper, entitled “Catholic Studies: Models and Motives,” was read on November 22, 1999 at a conference of the American Academy of Religion, and as of this writing is available online at: sterling.holycross.edu/departments/religiousstudies/mhinsdal/Research99.html

is needed to reach Catholic Americans who do not attend Catholic institutions of higher learning. Put another way, without the availability of courses and programs in Catholic studies at the post-secondary level in schools that are non-Catholic,² the vast majority of Americans—including and especially Catholics—will lack the opportunity to become (re)formed as persons possessing unique vocations in the Church and in the world. Neglecting only one generation can break a long and venerable chain of tradition.

Regardless of the conservative or liberal stance Catholic intellectual leaders may be inclined to assume concerning their Church's place or position in the world, it would not hurt them to stop and think: If a large-scale (re)formation does not soon take place, and a new generation of Catholics abandon their faith because the tradition has become incomprehensible to them, then American Catholicism will have squandered its unique "moment."

A REASSESSMENT OF "CATHOLIC MOMENT"

Writing more than a decade ago, Richard John Neuhaus used the expression "Catholic moment"³ to describe a particular confluence of events that could present a unique opportunity for Catholics in American cultural and religious history. Recent historical research by George M. Marsden,⁴ Julie A.

² I am using the term "non-Catholic" both in the title and throughout this paper to avoid having to differentiate between those colleges and universities that are "secular" and those that claim to maintain some vestige of their original Protestant or other religious affiliations, since this paper is limited to the argument that exposure to Catholic studies should not be relegated exclusively to Catholic institutions. Such a differentiation would be difficult in any event. It would do well to keep in mind that secularist views pervade and in some instances dominate the academic cultures of most American colleges and universities, regardless of their charters. As Neuhaus cautions, "A secular university is not a university pure and simple; it is a secular university. Secular is not a synonym for neutral" ("The Christian University: Eleven Theses," *First Things* 59, [January 1996], p. 20).

³ Richard Neuhaus used this term and the phenomenon he claimed it accurately describes in his controversial book, *The Catholic Moment* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).

⁴ George M. Marsden's influential historical treatment of the role of religion in American higher education is *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Unbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Except for a few hints in a "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," pp. 429–44, which suggests the extent of current discrimination by scholars and administrators who wish to keep religious viewpoints out of mainstream American higher education, Marsden offers no real solution. This comes later in *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Reuben,⁵ James Tunstead Burtchaell,⁶ and others amply illustrates the rapid decline and collapse during the 1960s of the influence of a largely Protestant morality that once dominated mainstream American higher education,⁷ a decline that was over a century in duration, so that by the early 1970s those Christian values were effectively marginal to the academic culture. This marginalization of morality is concomitant with the intellectual transformation of the academy into its present state. As a consequence, mainstream academia is dominated by faculty and administrators who have adopted a secular posture that is exclusivist in the sense that it systematically bars Catholic and evangelical Christian voices from participation through its hiring and tenure decisions, and is sometimes openly hostile toward Christian scholarship.

Thus, as we bravely enter postmodernity, the spiritual vacuum left by the absence of even the symbols of Christian stewardship in American intellectual life, is likely to be filled in one of two ways: The first is *complete* secularization. The emergent American culture is seen to be moving steadily along the path toward subjective moral relativism in response to religious diversity and the lure of a global economy. It is a confluence of ideologies that publicly attributes equal merit to all religious beliefs—whether traditional, eclectic, or syncretic. In practice, however, this new academic establishment permits a kind of “dabbling” into strange and novel spiritualities as if to demonstrate its open-mindedness, while relegating to the private domain those traditional faiths such as Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism

⁵ Julie A. Reuben's *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), paralleling Marsden, demonstrates how influential faculty and college presidents managed, over several generations and often unwittingly, to undermine the moral purpose of the American college and university that many of them were striving to protect and preserve.

⁶ James Tunstead Burtchaell's *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998) contains 17 case studies from Catholic to Congregationalist, Evangelical and Charismatic, to mainstream Protestant colleges and universities. While echoing many of Marsden's and Reuben's sentiments, Burtchaell raises other questions about the nature of secularization. Unlike Marsden's prognosis, which appears to be cautiously optimistic, and Reuben whose work is purely historical, Burtchaell seems utterly pessimistic about the chances of reversing the “slippery slope” of secularization in American higher learning.

⁷ This applies not only to those colleges founded and once-controlled by the various religious denominations, but arguably to the Land Grant and subsequent public institutions as well—despite current popular misconceptions about the proper legal meaning of separation of church and state.

that are still perceived as posing a potential challenge to the *Zeitgeist* or dominant “spirit of the age.”

An alternative future for American higher education, at least according to Neuhaus, could come about provided Catholic educators and intellectuals recognize their strength in number, conviction, and opportunity, and are able to set aside their internal differences and unite long enough to exert a potentially decisive influence on the course of American public life. Neuhaus envisioned Catholics seizing their unique “moment” which he understood as having been brought about by the vacuum in Protestant moral and political leadership. As Neuhaus seemed to suggest, Catholics alone were in a position to profoundly influence American life by virtue of their numbers and by their already entrenched structures of higher learning.

Neuhaus predicted that the majority of influential American Catholics would fail to recognize their “moment” until it had long passed. As evidence of a longstanding trend toward secularization among the majority of leaders of Catholic colleges and universities, Neuhaus cited the 1967 *Land O’Lakes* declaration which, in his view, constituted a failure of Catholic higher education to retain its uniquely “Catholic” identity in the face of external pressures. In other words, by declaring its independence from all forms of authority “external to the academic community” these institutions were *de facto* offering “a perfect invitation to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone the way so decisively traced by George Marsden.”⁸

Setting aside the lively debates that arose from *Land O’Lakes*,⁹ but assuming a reasonable accuracy in Neuhaus’s assessment of the state of American intellectual life a decade ago, does it necessarily follow that the “Catholic moment” thus described was a mere snapshot in time—a fleeting opportunity which, once lost, can never be recaptured? Perhaps Shakespeare speaks to this situation through Brutus’s words of caution: “There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries.”¹⁰ Equally plausible, however, is the possibility of extending that crucial “moment” by protecting and preserving the heritage until such time as Catholic intellectual life again becomes sufficiently robust and mature (and presumably more adequately prepared) to enable it to take its place in American public life and play a dominant role in the reshaping of the broader culture. In October 2000, an article in *The*

⁸ *First Things* (January 1991), p. 7.

⁹ An assessment of the ultimate impact of the *Land O’Lakes* declaration and its aftermath remains a matter of debate and lies beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁰ Words spoken by Marcus Brutus to Cassius in *Julius Caesar*, act 4, scene 2, *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 1113–14.

Chronicle of Higher Education quoted Marsden as saying: "The general consensus is that there's no reason to have to continue along the slippery slope toward secularism. This is a moment of opportunity for religious colleges." Marsden's optimism could easily be extended to the prevailing climate at public and non-denominational private colleges and universities, where interest in "faith-based scholarship" appears to be coming into vogue. Fears of renewed cultural marginalization notwithstanding, Catholic scholars representing the left, right and center of Catholic thought, may indeed owe it to themselves and to their children to make *this* their "moment."¹¹

If the foregoing appears naïve to some Catholic scholars, yet signals a "call to arms" for others, that is probably because there is not, and never really has been, a univocal or uniform understanding of the Catholic intellectual life in America. Catholic culture—which for the purposes of this paper has been construed broadly and loosely, is mind-bogglingly complex, diverse, dynamic, multiform and polythematic. Its dynamism has always been graced and plagued by the continual process of enculturation, despite well-known and oft-misrepresented efforts on the one hand (from the Nicene Fathers to the Inquisitors, to the campaign against Modernism¹² and—according to some voices—to the current advocates of the *mandatum*¹³) to ensure orthodoxy by curbing dissent, and by such diverse "agents of change" on the other hand, as Aquinas, Ignatius, Teresa of Avila, Maritain, Rahner, and Congar, to name but a few, to preserve what each considered to be the heart of the tradition while capturing and reinterpreting through their distinctively faith-filled lenses the best insights of the spirit of their respective ages. Indeed, at every time and place throughout its long history, some degree of tension has

¹¹ A somewhat different viewpoint on the effects of secularization on Catholic thought and the potential for a renewal of first tier Catholic scholarship in postmodern America is expressed by John D. Caputo in "Philosophy and Prophetic Postmodernism: Toward a Catholic Postmodernity," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (Autumn 2000), pp. 549–567.

¹² "Modernism" was not a single movement but more accurately a tendency among some Catholic intellectuals to make use of the methods and presuppositions of contemporary, mostly Protestant or agnostic, scholarship (much of which was perceived as hostile to traditional Catholic beliefs) over and against neo-scholastic norms. See James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, vol. 1 (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), p. 379.

¹³ The proposed *mandatum* is a canonical "certification" to be issued by local bishops to Catholic theologians who teach in U.S. Catholic colleges and universities; it will constitute an acknowledgement by Church authority that a Catholic professor of a theological discipline is a teacher within the full communion of the Catholic Church. See *Application of Ex Corde Ecclesiae for the United States*, 4, 4, approved by NCCB on Nov. 17, 1999).

existed between those interests that would conserve and preserve the tradition precisely as it was received by them, and opposing interests within the same tradition that would attempt to reinterpret or reframe the Catholic intellectual heritage so that others in subsequent generations might again conserve and preserve the creative synthesis achieved by those creative contributions.

It is certainly plausible that more than one "Catholic moment" may appear and vanish relatively unnoticed, but the coming together of unique circumstances that presents a rare opportunity for Catholics to influence the public life of America is unmistakable. Yet few Catholic leaders today seem aware that this could be their "moment." Regardless of how one might argue, this opportunity can only be met effectively if the stage has already been properly set. In this case, the stage is the American college and university. Most Catholic analysts would agree that the preservation of any distinctively Catholic worldview is inextricably bound to the broad accessibility and widespread popularity of a genuinely Catholic higher education.

MODELS OF CATHOLIC STUDIES PROGRAMS

In 1997–98, the most recent statistics available, there were a total of 4,096 U.S. post-secondary institutions.¹⁴ Of these, only 220 colleges and universities (or fewer than 5.5% of the total number of U.S. schools of higher learning) were denominational schools that identified themselves as Catholic. With roughly 3,876 non-Catholic colleges and universities in America, there is no lack of opportunity to establish Catholic studies initiatives at campuses that have no connection with the Roman Catholic Church or the Catholic tradition.

There has been growing interest in recent years in Catholic studies programs at several of the 220¹⁵ American denominational colleges and universities that identify themselves as Catholic.¹⁶ With few exceptions, however,

¹⁴ This total included 615 public 4-year; 1,092 public 2-year; 1,536 private 4-year non-profit; 169 private 4-year for-profit; 184 private 2-year non-profit; and 500 private 2-year for-profit schools. See *The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* 47, no. 1, September 1, 2000, p. 9.

¹⁵ Database of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), One Dupont Circle, Suite 650, Washington, DC 20036–1134, as of October 11, 2000. (The ACCU had 241 U.S. Catholic colleges and universities in its database on October 1, 1996.)

¹⁶ See Hinsdale "Catholic Studies: Models and Motives," cites a number of specific programs of Catholic studies that have flourished in recent years *on Catholic campuses*. However, I am aware of little work that has been done as of this date, and certainly no serious studies have been released which examine the relative success of the dozen or so Catholic studies initiatives (typically an endowed faculty chair) at public and private non-Catholic colleges and universities, possibly comparing those results with Catholic studies outcomes at Catholic institutions.

Catholic studies at the post-secondary level has not been promoted apart from these Catholic colleges and universities—despite the fact that slightly fewer than 14%¹⁷ of all traditional-age American Catholic college students are enrolled in colleges or universities identified as Catholic. The fact that nearly 87% of all baptized (or “cradle”) Catholic college students in the United States today (i.e., roughly six out of seven Catholic college students, or somewhere in the neighborhood of four million) attend schools *not* identified as Catholic, raises the question: How and where will these Catholics (as well as some non-Catholic students who also may be interested in learning about Catholic beliefs, scholarship, and culture), ever become exposed to, much less afforded an opportunity to become appropriately “formed” in, that tradition? From these numbers it is apparent that if the Catholic intellectual tradition (broadly defined) is to be made readily accessible to the vast majority of American Catholic college students as part of their formal higher learning, then programs of Catholic studies of one type or another must be established at non-Catholic colleges and universities.¹⁸

As of this date no formal study has been published that focuses on an assessment of Catholic studies faculty chairs and programs at non-Catholic

¹⁷ This percentage, admittedly approximate, was obtained by extrapolating and combining data from several sources; unfortunately, there was no simple and “painless” way to obtain reliable information. I wish to thank Professor Monika Hellwig, ACCU executive director, for her kind assistance. In a phone interview on October 13, 2000, Hellwig estimated that roughly twelve to thirteen percent of all Catholic American traditional college-age (18-to-23-year-old) students who attended college enrolled at Catholic colleges and universities. According to Hellwig, among the approximately 660,000 students who enrolled in the 220 U.S. Catholic colleges in fall 1999, between 60% and 70% were Catholic. Seventy percent of 660,000 is 429,000—the midpoint estimate of the number of Catholics that were enrolled at U.S. Catholic colleges in fall 1999. Approximately one-fourth of the U.S. population (estimated at 272,690,800 in fall 2000) was Catholic. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, estimated U.S. undergraduate enrollment of 12,450,587, a conservative estimate of Catholics enrolled in all U.S. colleges and universities in fall 1999 was 3,112,500 (September 1, 2000, p. 7). Thus, a rough estimate of Catholic Americans attending non-Catholic colleges is 2,683,500 or 86.2%.

¹⁸ Individual Catholic parishes, missions, and apostolates throughout the United States, as well as campus ministries and student organizations at Catholic and in some instances non-Catholic colleges (e.g., Newman Clubs), offer educational opportunities for teens and adults to learn about the Catholic faith and especially the catechism, e.g., RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults), and CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine). These programs, however, are almost exclusively apologetic in focus and content; and while some attempt to be “formational” they are generally too brief and necessarily superficial to significantly affect the way in which participants view themselves, their world and reality. More importantly, most lack the depth or breadth of intellectual inquiry that is possible by means of “Catholic studies” approached as a post-secondary academic discipline.

colleges and universities. However, a modest but informative body of (largely anecdotal) literature is developing with regard to Catholic studies initiatives at Catholic colleges and universities. Since there would be obvious substantial similarities in program content, subject matter orientation, curriculum, organization and the like, a fair portion of the literature dealing with Catholic studies at Catholic colleges can be useful as a starting-point for inquiry into Catholic studies opportunities for students at non-Catholic schools.

Even at Catholic colleges and universities, the very notion of Catholic studies is of recent vintage.¹⁹ From the available literature, several variables are evident as to how Catholic studies initiatives have developed and fared at Catholic colleges. First, these programs have differed widely in terms of stated (and, in some instances, implied or covert) purpose, aim, goals, and mission. As a result, such programs are variously defined by subject matter content and by their relationship to the overall curriculum. Generally, however, such programs appear to have grown up as a consequence of the perception of at least some influential constituencies that a renewal of emphasis on "Catholic identity" is desirable on the part of the parent or sponsoring institutions (i.e., the Catholic colleges and universities to which the respective Catholic studies programs are affiliated or an integral part), and that a Catholic studies program is a practical means of accomplishing that aim. Second, Catholic studies programs have met with varying degrees of success.²⁰ And third, the "political" agendas of involved faculty, parent institutions, and funding sources have all shaped the development of these programs, giving them some of their more distinctive characteristics. Doubtless, the character,

¹⁹ Interest in Catholic studies programs at Catholic colleges and universities has grown significantly during the 1990s. Doubtless several programs were the result, at least in part, to growing perceptions (especially in the light of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*) that Catholic studies in the curriculum constituted a form of tangible evidence of the host college's Catholic identity. A few colleges have offered Catholic studies in one form or another for longer, e.g., the University of San Francisco's Saint Ignatius Institute recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary.

²⁰ The University of San Francisco's Saint Ignatius Institute is a well-publicized instance of a Catholic (Jesuit) university that offers *both* a Catholic Studies Certificate Program as part of its mainstream curriculum, and a "separate" Saint Ignatius Institute that aims to provide a formational experience for 160 undergraduates who participate in its "Great Books" program. Until January 2001, the Institute by design stood apart from the rest of the campus, with participating students taking roughly half their classes at the Institute "where core faculty members view themselves as defenders of traditional Catholic teachings and values." On January 19, 2001, the conservative Institute's director was summarily dismissed and the Institute was placed under the same direction as the university's Catholic Studies Certificate Program, setting off a storm of controversy according to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* "Conservative Roman Catholics Criticize U. of San Francisco President," February 15, 2001).

purpose and mission of Catholic studies programs, as well as enrollments and relative importance within the parent institutions, can depend as much upon the motives and agendas of funding sources as upon the mission and self-identity of the parent institution and the involved faculty. (We shall return to this later.)

How can one characterize Catholic studies programs at Catholic colleges and universities? Mary Ann Hinsdale recently identified four models of Catholic studies at Catholic colleges based on each program's chief aim or purpose. Hinsdale refers to the first type as the "cultural studies" model. This approach is to study Catholicism as a multi-faceted "culture." Like "area studies" the "cultural studies" approach is heavily interdisciplinary, drawing not only from theology and religious studies but also from philosophy, history, the social sciences, literature and art faculties. Hinsdale argues that while Catholic "cultural studies" initiatives claim an unbiased stance, e.g., "Catholicism is simply a tradition with a long, influential history, and, therefore, worth studying," the very presence of Catholic "cultural studies" at Catholic colleges "suggests that this particular cultural identity has become marginalized, whether that be through some process of institutional secularization (through design or by default), or as a by-product of the assimilation of white, European immigrant Catholics into mainstream American culture."²¹ Hinsdale cautions that this approach actually is far from neutral (i.e., that indeed it has an agenda, or is motivated by an "advocacy-orientation") to the extent that it prompts the "sense" that the Catholic intellectual heritage has been marginalized (or re-marginalized?) in American culture. Ironically, Hinsdale notes an irony in that the very claim of this approach to neutrality makes it a difficult model to serve as a formative means of passing on a Catholic culture.²²

The second model Hinsdale identifies as "apologetic" because this approach unashamedly promotes "Catholic identity" which is often viewed as an antidote to the secularization of American culture. The "apologetic" Catholic studies program, Hinsdale says, seeks to "restore a unified Catholic worldview" by introducing students to the thought of Catholic "greats"²³ such as Newman, Dawson, Chesterton, Lewis, Maritain, Gilson, Pieper, etc. This approach draws mainly from the college's philosophy, theology and English departments, and often faculty and courses are widely solicited for inclusion in the overall program; however, faculty who are allowed to teach the "core course" in these programs are generally closely monitored, presumably to assure consonance with the program's educational objectives and

²¹ Hinsdale, "Catholic Studies: Models and Motives," p. 7.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

consonance on the part of participating faculty with the "Catholic character" of the program. According to Hinsdale, the true character of such programs is often "monocultural" in that they frequently promote a distinctively "Anglo-American" form of Catholicism.²⁴

The third approach to Catholic studies Hinsdale identifies as the "Catholic intellectual tradition" model. Described as a hybrid of the two previously described approaches, this model like the "cultural studies" approach seeks to be interdisciplinary, but like the "apologetic" model it strives to preserve and expand a long tradition of Catholic intellectual life. Hinsdale describes this approach as tending toward a wider definition of Catholicism, thereby allowing greater inclusion of often-marginalized voices within Catholicism, e.g., women, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, working-class and poor Catholics. According to Hinsdale, this approach is strongly historical, including exposure to the tradition's "dark side" (e.g., the Crusades, witch burning, Inquisition, ties with colonialism, slavery, anti-Semitism). Hinsdale criticizes the "Catholic intellectual tradition" model as missing the sense of Catholicism as a world religion and how it has become inculturated into non-Western cultures.²⁵

The final category of Hinsdale's four-fold typology is referred to as the "formative" or "formational"²⁶ model. In contrast with the other three models, this approach does not seem to exist as an entity in itself. Typically appearing as a service-learning component of programs that attempt to integrate campus intellectual life with the particular charism of its sponsors (Hinsdale uses the example of a Jesuit emphasis on "men and women for others") or through series of retreats. Hinsdale perceives this genre of Catholic studies as attempting to provide an intellectual structure that grounds some service approach such as social justice outreach or peace studies to help make these apostolates more comprehensible as vehicles for "handing on the tradition."²⁷

While stopping short of endorsing one model over the others, Hinsdale does consider "unconscionable" any program of Catholic studies that she regards as "monocultural." Hinsdale argues emphatically for programs that meet today's challenges of multiculturalism and pluralism, on the basis that "[T]he experience of American Catholicism is too rich to neglect the contributions of different ethnicities and regions." Any approach to Catholic studies that meets these challenges would, in fact, provide a strong argument for its implementation at a non-Catholic college or university, since most secular

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁶ Both terms are used, apparently interchangeably, throughout Hinsdale's paper.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 11. Hinsdale notes that she could not find much evidence of successful "formative" programs. Perhaps further studies along these lines could be useful.

institutions of higher learning today pride themselves in meeting the challenges of multiculturalism and pluralism. Indeed, Hinsdale's concerns appear consonant in some important ways with Jacques Maritain's social and educational philosophy.

Identifying approaches to Catholic studies does not provide a complete picture of their diversity. Fortunately, Hinsdale also identifies the most common motives or agendas that lie behind Catholic studies initiatives at Catholic colleges and universities, which can be summarized as follows: 1) nostalgia (or, put another way, disillusionment and/or disenfranchisement with much of mainstream "postmodern" scholarship); 2) an antidote to loss of a culture, or "religious illiteracy"; 3) evangelization, or "handing on the faith"; 4) the pursuit of knowledge (i.e., Catholicism is viewed as a body of knowledge that is worth studying); and finally 5) the solution to "Catholic identity" concerns by parent institutions.²⁸ With the obvious exception of "Catholic identity," each of these could serve as contributory motives or agendas for Catholic studies at non-Catholic colleges. Hinsdale further notes that the most successful programs are those that are enriched by several different agendas, even if these are competing motives accompanied by different ideological stances. Among the ideological positions she identifies are: 1) conserving (a past culture, tradition, heritage or history); 2) dialogical (interacting with culture, moving toward a new synthesis); and 3) pluralist (toleration with little or no evaluation or analysis).²⁹

Hinsdale's cautions about some of the motivations for Catholic studies notwithstanding, the fact remains that roughly six out of seven Catholic American college students are unlikely to receive any exposure to the Catholic intellectual tradition, unless and until some form of Catholic studies is made accessible to them at their non-Catholic campuses. This is not to minimize the important contributions made by Newman clubs and Catholic campus ministries in providing formational activities at secular colleges, such as retreats, speaker series and similar fare. However, a Catholic higher education which, in the days of the Jesuit *ratio studiorum* typically required exposure to ten philosophy and four theology courses, could scarcely be considered an adequately "received" formation on the basis of a few retreats, lectures and self-help gatherings. Without imparting to the student a clear vision of reality—which, in our day, constitutes to some extent *an alternative worldview*—there is little chance of inspiring the typical student to challenge her or his mainstream collegiate "postmodern" worldview, and even less

²⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁹ Ibid.

chance of empowering future generations of Americans with a Catholic intellectual tradition that for so many was their natural birthright.

OBSTACLES TO CATHOLIC STUDIES AT NON-CATHOLIC CAMPUSES

Millions³⁰ of American college students currently lack the opportunity to take courses in Catholic studies because the college or university they have chosen to attend does not consider the subject matter of the Catholic intellectual tradition sufficiently useful, relevant or suitable to be included in the curriculum. Granted, many colleges that have Religious Studies offer courses in Biblical studies or the history of Christianity. But the similarity between such courses and Catholic studies is generally no greater than the proximity of modern analytic philosophy to neoscholastic metaphysics. Much of Catholic studies, as Hinsdale's typology suggests, involves students in a particular worldview that really is at odds with the prevailing *Zeitgeist* of American culture, which tends to be echoed in the ethos of the modern secular university. At its best Catholic studies initiates students into a very different mode of thinking about themselves and their world; it introduces students to an alternative perception of reality that, frankly, some academic leaders today mistakenly look upon as antithetical to or competitive with their personal visions of reality. Other academic leaders, including a few evangelical Protestants who recall ancient prejudices even in this post-Vatican II era, naïvely treat Catholicism as inherently superstitious and anti-intellectual. Still others, schooled in anti-Catholic biases associated with some non-Western or post-modern interpretations of history, privately stereotype the Catholic intellectual tradition as narrow-minded, bigoted, or imperialistic.

Doubtless there are many "covert" reasons that could cause academic leaders on secular campuses to shy away from Catholic studies. Few would publicly acknowledge their fears that Catholic studies might promote an ideology with which their non-Catholic faculty is uneasy, and therefore unwilling to support. The reasons they might offer publicly are likely to have a very different

³⁰ As of fall 1997, among the 12.45 million American college undergraduates estimated by the U.S. Dept. of Education (www.ed.gov), minus the 660,000 students who according to the ACCU attended Catholic colleges, close to 11.79 million students are in this category—a figure that will rise to approximately 16 million by 2010. (Non-Catholics as well as Catholics may wish to avail themselves of Catholic studies courses. More than one inquirer has discovered and adopted Catholicism as her faith in just such a way.) Although students attending non-Catholic colleges in some urban areas *could* gain access to Catholic studies courses with some effort, rarely do colleges make it convenient for these students to transfer credits in Catholic studies to non-Catholic schools except as "pure" electives, which are seldom useful toward graduation.

ring. Such arguments might include the objection that the existing curriculum already offers too many electives, or that Catholic studies would be too costly, or that it is not the proper time to expand, or too few students are Catholic, or those who are Catholic are less than enthusiastic about the proposed program, or the appearance of Catholic studies could strain an otherwise harmonious atmosphere of campus life. Other academic leaders might express concern over possible lawsuits from civil liberties activists if they were to permit the teaching of religion at a publicly supported college or university.³¹ Another likely argument is that colleges are "market driven" and can only thrive in turbulent times following the trends, such as technology oriented programs, and a Catholic studies initiative clearly does not fit this objective.

These lines of argumentation could be quite misleading and their (mis)use could become a serious deterrent for any proposed initiatives that would seek to draw Catholic scholarship into the public university. Of course, virtually every one of these objections and similar concerns should be anticipated and can be successfully countered. Unfortunately, objections often have a divisive effect upon groups that, once aired, can thwart or delay the inauguration of a new Catholic studies program even though proponents of the initiative were able to offer a reasonable response. While some of these objections are likely to be based on legitimate concerns, there is none that cannot be resolved where the desire exists. The greater difficulty seems to arise with hidden agendas or "covert" objections that are difficult to address because they are never acknowledged or brought into the open. Some hesitation is to be expected among certain segments of the faculty and administration, and perhaps a few trustees may be opposed to the idea of Catholic studies. Unfortunately, the opposition may not be forthright and direct about the true nature and scope of its objections. The culture of the American academy, much like that of big government and large corporations, is such that centers of resistance to innovations are difficult to address because they often shield themselves from view within their respective bureaucracies and rarely voice their objections openly and honestly within the

³¹ Actually, matters pertaining to religion are found in Article 6 of the Constitution as well as the First and Fourteenth Amendments. However, since the matter of teaching religion in a public school was clarified by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963), the legal "bottom line" for publicly supported colleges and universities is that the Catholic intellectual tradition can be taught in the classroom as a body of knowledge suitable for study, in the same way that evangelical Christian, Native American, Buddhist and Wiccan religious beliefs and practices can be taught. See Robert Booth Fowler and Allen D. Hertzke, *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), p. 1. See Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, pp. 435–36.

wider university faculty and administrative communities. In other situations, of course, perfectly sincere and potentially valid arguments and concerns may be raised, most of which can be adequately addressed by knowledgeable advocates of Catholic studies.

One obstacle to the introduction of Catholic studies in non-Catholic colleges arises from a misperception commonly shared by students, faculty and parents that, although Catholics represent the largest religious denomination in the United States, any student who has any interest whatsoever in learning about the Catholic intellectual tradition can and will necessarily matriculate in a Catholic school.³² This notion is easily refuted by UCLA's national annual poll of entering freshmen, which makes it clear that there are many different (and often more compelling) reasons for the selection of a college or university than its religious affiliation.³³ This is not to suggest that Catholic students are insufficiently curious about their heritage or so uninterested in their faith that they would not bother to enroll in Catholic studies courses, e.g., as general studies electives or for personal enrichment, assuming that

³² Some "market driven" Catholic college leaders hesitate to discourage this misperception due to concern over preserving their Catholic "niche." They believe, unnecessarily in my opinion, that the perpetuation of this "myth" especially among Catholic parents is essential to keep Catholic higher education afloat by perpetuating its "corner" on the Catholic higher education market. In reality, their concern is overblown, since students choose colleges for a variety of reasons other than its religious affiliation. To use my *alma mater* as an example, among all undergraduate students at Penn State's main campus at University Park (State College, Pennsylvania) who in spring 2000 listed their religious preference drawing from a list of 36 possible selections including "other" and "unknown," the largest percentage by far identified themselves as Roman Catholic (35.7%). It is ironic that one of the largest public universities in the United States, with fully one-third of its diverse student population reporting themselves as Catholic, has yet to perceive sufficient student interest for a single course specifically designed to teach the Catholic intellectual tradition, despite the fact that its Religious Studies program supports an expansive Jewish Studies major which includes an endowed chair, and sponsors the peer-reviewed, award-winning online *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*. (To be fair, Penn State does offer several Religious Studies courses in various aspects of Christianity, which are taught from an ostensibly faith-neutral or "history of religions" perspective.)

³³ A mere 5.8% of the 261,217 incoming college freshmen surveyed in fall 1999 representing 462 American colleges and universities indicated the religious affiliation/orientation of the institution was very important in the college they selected. In contrast, far greater numbers of respondents gave other reasons for selecting their college as very important, e.g., academic reputation (47.6%), social reputation (23.1%), financial assistance (30.2%), special program offerings (19.5%), low tuition (27.7%), proximity to residence (20.5%), size of college (31.1%), and perceived ability to gain admission to a top graduate school (27.5%) and/or to get a good job upon graduation (44.6%). From "The American Freshman National Norms for Fall 1999," American Council on Education and University of California at Los Angeles Higher Education Research Institute. *The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*, February 15, 2001, p. 28.

more pressing economic and career-related reasons for attending a particular college or meeting specific curricular requirements have already been satisfied or are in the process of being fulfilled. Many future scholars claim to have taken their first course in philosophy, theology, or history merely out of curiosity or to satisfy a humanities requirement, only to become so inspired by the subject matter that it made all the difference in their lives.³⁴

Typically the traditional college-age person (eighteen to twenty-four year old) stands at a crucial point in their spiritual and moral development. College is a time of tremendous change between the relative safety of family life during late adolescence and the great unknown of young adulthood.³⁵ Most adolescents in their pre-college years are dependent upon significant others for confirmation and clarity about their self-identity and meaning; they have not yet developed a transcendental perspective from which to evaluate self-other relations. The act of leaving home for the first time, in combination with the college experience itself with its seemingly inexhaustible diversity and competing values, often triggers a sort of crisis during which the entering student begins to critically examine her tacit system of values, beliefs and commitments. Simultaneously, the personality that had been previously formed and supported by its roles and relationships is forced to struggle with the question of identity and worth apart from its previously defined connections. At the heart of this double movement is the emergence of third-person perspective taking. By acquiring this transcendental capacity, the college student is able to more effectively adjudicate the diverse voices and conflicting expectations of external and internal authoritative voices.³⁶ James Fowler, an expert in stages of faith development, suggests that in order to sustain their reflective identities, persons in this stage

Compose (or ratify) meaning frames that are conscious of their own boundaries and inner connections and aware of themselves as worldviews.

³⁴ Prof. Louis P. Pojman recounts (in a personal word to students prefacing one of his many college textbooks) the unexpected outcome of the first college course he took in philosophy, a course that led Pojman to read Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*: "Kierkegaard's book had a devastating effect on me, forcing me to become totally dissatisfied with the mediocre life I had been living in college and drove me to depths of intensity and seriousness that I have still not recovered from." *Philosophical Traditions* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1998), p. xix. See Paul M. Anderson, *Professors Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of Christian Faculty* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

³⁵ See Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini, *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

³⁶ James W. Fowler, *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1996), pp. 61–63.

Utilizing their capacities of procedural knowing and critical reflection, persons of [this] stage “demythologize” symbols, rituals, and myths, typically translating their meanings into conceptual formulations. Frequently overconfident in their conscious awareness, persons of this stage attend minimally to unconscious factors that influence their judgments and behavior. This excessive confidence in the conscious mind and in critical thought can lead to a kind of “cognitive narcissism” in which the now clearly bounded, reflective self over-assimilates “reality” and the perspectives of others into its worldview.³⁷

College should be and often is a special time in the lives of most persons who are fortunate enough to attend. The search for identity and meaning in an apparently absurd world necessitates a rethinking of previously held values and often leads either to a recommitment to one’s previous held beliefs or to the adoption of a new faith commitment. Developmentally, the traditional college years are an especially fitting period in which to introduce a person to her intellectual heritage, especially if that heritage constitutes the foundation for an emerging life-perspective or worldview prompted by the college experience. Moreover, the college or university is the appropriate *situs* for intellectual inquiry that constitutes spiritual formation or involves the content of faith.

Nor is it reasonable to assume that Catholics are equally “at home” on secular campuses. The largely anecdotal evidence I have accumulated over the last six years³⁸ suggests the contrary—that significant numbers of Catholic students, especially those who graduated from Catholic high schools, soon after they enter secular colleges and especially larger universities experience anxiety which arises from exposure to contrasting systems of moral values and an unfamiliar environment that is often hostile to an explicitly or implicitly Catholic worldview.³⁹ I do not wish to overstate my case. My perception is that the

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

³⁸ One of my ongoing research interests is to measure the impact of higher education’s academic and environmental circumstances upon the moral and faith development of Catholic students. In this connection, I used in-depth interviews to compare and contrast experiences of first-year Catholic students attending a Catholic university (Fordham) with those of Catholic students at a secular university (Penn State). See Frederick Erb III, *Spiritual Development and the College Experience With Emphasis on First-Year Catholic Students* (unpublished paper presented Dec. 7, 1994, Penn State University’s Higher Education Program).

³⁹ This appears consistent with the enrollment successes enjoyed at Catholic colleges which advance traditional, conservative, evangelical and/or classics (“Great Books”) outlooks, such as the Franciscan University (Steubenville, Ohio), Christendom College, (Front Royal, Virginia), and Thomas Aquinas College, (Santa Paula, California). Critics accuse such formational approaches to higher education of sheltering young adults from the “real world” to their detriment, while proponents argue that a proper formative experience better equips a person to defend their chosen ideology against an obstructive or, at best, less than supportive world.

majority of Catholics studying at non-Catholic colleges, especially those who do not arrive directly from a Catholic high school background, tend to be much more comfortable with the student culture of the secular academy. Among the more religiously conservative Catholic first year students who initially feel "out of place" at secular colleges because their beliefs and lifestyles differ markedly from those of the majority of students, most tend increasingly to conform to pressures from peers and faculty as their college careers progress, while only a small percentage complete the college experience with their Catholic faith intact.⁴⁰

What does this psychological snapshot of the traditional college-age student's spiritual development suggest to us about the popularity that Catholic studies courses or programs would likely enjoy on non-Catholic campuses? Although it is difficult to make a blanket generalization, it stands to reason that even if a modest percentage of Catholics at non-Catholic campuses were to choose to include individual courses in the Catholic intellectual tradition among their general education electives, and an even smaller number were to major, minor or earn a certificate in Catholic studies, the secular colleges and universities would be enriched and the Catholic intellectual tradition at its best would have the necessary means first to survive and then to thrive. The universities, most of which in the United States are non-Catholic, can provide both the fertile ground and the leading minds necessary for the Catholic tradition to flourish.

So, given these circumstances, why do academic leaders resist? Why are there so few Catholic studies at non-Catholic colleges? Framed in a more personal way, why is Catholic studies overlooked at major universities like my *alma mater* Penn State, despite the fact that there is no Catholic college within a fifty mile radius of its main campus at University Park, and Penn State enrolls about the same number of Catholic students at its main campus as the entire undergraduate student population of the University of Notre Dame? George Marsden hints at some likely underlying causes of the present

⁴⁰ Although *intact* is a "loaded" term, it conveys my point better than "unaffected" or "untouched" because virtually every traditional college-age student must struggle to some extent with the symbols and stories by which their lives were previously constructed. The issues involved are complex; however, Fowler suggests that a fair percentage of young people, especially males, experience a split between the emotional and cognitive functioning that can be directly attributed to unresolved relations and issues from early childhood. In such cases, emotional development fails to keep pace with cognitive functioning, resulting in overconfidence coupled with insensitivity toward others. Such persons are often drawn to more rigid forms of religion and authoritarian leaders because of seemingly unambiguous teachings. (Fowler, *Faithful Change*, pp. 62–63.)

paucity of Catholic studies programs on secular campuses. At the risk of oversimplification, Marsden argues convincingly that some of the most powerful interests within mainstream academia today, groups such as secularists, postmodernists, persons of Jewish descent,⁴¹ ex-fundamentalists, Marxists, radical feminists, lesbians and gays, typically view traditional Christianity as one of those oppressive powers from which the world needs to be liberated.⁴² Since virtually all of these groups have suffered at the hands of Christians when Christianity dominated the Western world, and since the differences between some of these groups and traditional Christians on fundamental issues of morality are quite incompatible, Marsden explains:

Academic struggles over such issues take place in a cultural context of bitter contests over moral standards for public policy. So the issues cannot be resolved simply by tolerance and learning to get along better. The fact is that many contenders on the various sides of such debates are imperialistic in the sense of wanting to set the moral standards for all of society.

Granting that there is some basis for concern [among academics from these dominant groups] about resurgent Christian imperialism, we should ask whether such concerns are sufficient to justify the effective silencing of traditional Christian voices in much of mainstream academic culture.⁴³

Marsden answers in the negative. In his opinion, secular academic voices have far less to fear from Catholic and evangelical Christian voices than the reverse. He cautions that

there is more danger [within the academy] of the imperialism of secularism excluding conservative Christian voices than of the reverse. . . . I do not want to imply that conservative Christian voices have been totally excluded from mainstream academia. They may be rare, but sometimes

⁴¹ That Jews as a group have suffered terribly under Christian hegemony cannot be denied historically and should not be forgotten. This caveat notwithstanding, Marsden prudently clarifies the inclusion of Jews on his list of powerful academic lobby groups that are potentially if not actually opposed to the readmission of Christian scholarship at secular campuses: "Many Jewish scholars . . . are understandably wary of any suggestion of resurgent Christian influence. In the view of such scholars the issue is more a matter of politics and power than of abstract principle. Jewish scholars might readily support Jewish studies centers where scholars openly advocated Zionism and the preservation of Jewish practice. On the other hand, they might ardently defend separation of church and state in this country and oppose overt expressions of Christian perspectives. The difference in their minds is that Christians have been the oppressors and, as the majority in this country, are not to be trusted." See Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, p. 32.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

they indeed do get a hearing. That granted, it remains true that some powerful lobbies would like to see those voices silenced. . . .⁴⁴

According to Marsden, it is those forces that promote a more standardized and secularized academic culture that should not be underestimated.⁴⁵ As Marsden explains:

The irony of the current situation is that much of the animus toward conservative religion comes in the name of multiculturalism and diversity. . . . When it comes to religion in public life, the impulse for integration and uniformity typically overcomes diversity, despite the rhetoric to the contrary. Certainly this is the case in mainstream universities. . . . The result is not diversity, but rather a dreary uniformity. Everyone is expected to accept the standard doctrine that religion has no intellectual relevance.⁴⁶

The process of the secularization of American higher education leaves little room for Catholic and evangelical voices precisely because these are so often perceived by dominant groups especially within the larger secular universities as antithetical to the academic culture. Paradoxically—and this seems to be a main point of Marsden's book—if Christian scholarship at its best were allowed to enter the academic mainstream, then its inclusion would have the effect of intellectually enriching American higher education.

It is reasonable to assume that proponents of a successful new Catholic studies initiative at a non-Catholic college and university will have first "done their homework" by thoroughly researching the viability of such a program in that particular setting. They will have identified those academic interest groups that would be most likely to resist Catholic studies, and will have prepared appropriate responses to mollify any legitimate concerns, presumably prior to bringing their case before those academic leaders who make the ultimate decision.

STRATEGIES FOR INTRODUCING CATHOLIC STUDIES AT NON-CATHOLIC CAMPUSES

Apart from the rhetoric, the politics, the posturing and the neglect, the true motivations of academic leaders will remain a matter of speculation. In contrast, the dearth of Catholic studies in the curricula of non-Catholic colleges is an irrefutable fact. Only a small number of teaching faculty who specialize in Catholic studies at non-Catholic U.S. colleges and universities hold designated or endowed chairs in academic specializations that are even re-

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 34–35.

motely related to Catholic studies. Most of these chairs were instituted within the last decade. Although at least twelve schools currently (or intend to) offer individual courses in Catholic philosophy, theology, or history, into their curriculum, few (if any) currently offer their students a major, minor or certificate in Catholic Studies.

Several years ago I developed a typology of Catholic higher learning that included several creative strategies aimed at providing American undergraduate students not enrolled at a traditionally Catholic college or university the option of a higher education of a distinctively Catholic character.⁴⁷ Among the alternatives described were four approaches for structuring Catholic studies⁴⁸ at public and private non-Catholic colleges and universities. These structural models included: 1) individual courses or programs in Catholic history, philosophy, theology, etc., arising from the establishment or endowment of chairs in Catholic studies, modeled on the Harvard University chair once occupied by Christopher Dawson; 2) Catholic studies offered within a non-Catholic college, either as an independent department or program, or as part of the college's religious studies, theology, philosophy, history or similar department typically situated in liberal arts or humanities; 3) the "Catholic studies consortium" model, in which two or more separate institutions of higher learning, including at least one Catholic and one non-Catholic college or university, become involved in an effort to offer Catholic studies "for credit" to students enrolled at participating non-Catholic colleges; and 4) the development of initiatives made possible through more innovative organizational structures. I will refer to this as the "independent Catholic institute" approach, since it would aim to offer Catholic studies at a convenient off-campus location through an arrangement with any fully accredited Catholic college to guarantee participating students the necessary regional accreditation and to facilitate the transfer of course credits to the non-Catholic college or university where the participating students are enrolled.

Of the four approaches described above, the most common is the academic chair in Catholic studies (although only a dozen or so have been established at non-Catholic institutions). As professors who have held these chairs know only too well, the existence of an endowed chair does not necessarily

⁴⁷ See Frederick Erb III, *Profiles of Catholic Higher Education in America: Prognosis and Prescription* (unpublished M.A. thesis, Pennsylvania State University, January 1998), pp. 85-113.

⁴⁸ The term "Catholic studies," while broadly defined, is delimited here to post-secondary programs that offer degrees, majors, minors, certificates, or individual courses for undergraduate or graduate credit.

lead to a full-fledged Catholic studies program, complete with a major, minor and certificate in Catholic studies. It is possible to move in that direction, of course, beginning with a faculty chair. (The University of Illinois at Chicago appears to be moving in that general direction.) More needs to be researched and written on this model, which is developing slowly but is likely to emerge as the most commonly implemented model.

The "consortium" approach is somewhat more creative, and may only be feasible in urban communities or in highly unusual situations where a smaller non-Catholic college comes to recognize the need to add Catholic studies to its curriculum but lacks the resources to do so effectively. General consortia of colleges and universities exist today in large urban areas, and often both Catholic and non-Catholic institutions participate; however, no consortium of colleges and universities comes to mind that facilitates a program of Catholic studies as such.

Certainly the most innovative and arguably the approach best suited to the more challenging circumstances is that of an "independent Catholic institute." An initiative of this type would be built on the design and development of an independently funded, fully accredited institute for Catholic studies, housed in an easily accessible off-campus location that ideally would include adequate classroom space, administrative offices, library, faculty and student lounge and reading areas, possibly a refectory to promote faculty-student discourse outside the classroom, and an explicitly and exclusively Catholic chapel where services are offered daily to students. The ideal Catholic institute would retain its own faculty and staff, and would offer fully accredited courses (initially, at least) through a contractual arrangement with a like-minded Catholic college or university as its sponsor. The accreditation might work as a variation on the distance education and web-based learning practices for which regional accreditation is becoming increasingly commonplace.⁴⁹ In all cases in which an off-campus institute or consortium model is utilized, appropriate articulation agreements would have been reached between the Catholic studies program (possibly through its sponsoring Catholic college) and the adjacent or nearby non-Catholic college or university, so that students enrolled at both places could easily transfer credits that can be counted toward requirements for graduation. Likewise, arrangements would have to be made concerning financial aid. The successful institute would ensure that the entire process

⁴⁹ As of this writing, repeated requests for clarification on some important points concerning the "independent Catholic institute" model have not yet received an appropriate response from a regional accrediting agency.

of taking courses in Catholic studies and receiving appropriate credit for them should be made as streamlined and seamless as possible. The total concept of an independent institute for Catholic studies would be to offer students from the adjacent non-Catholic college options ranging from a single course in Catholic studies, to a "second major" in Catholic studies, to a fully "formational" experience of living the religious and moral life associated with the best of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Admittedly in some instances a means of last resort, this Catholic institute model ostensibly may be well suited for situations in which influential members of the faculty at the targeted non-Catholic college or university either have effectively resisted or rebuffed all initiatives to implement the first three approaches listed above, or appear likely to interfere with or sabotage the process of effectively growing an on-campus Catholic studies program.

The development of alternative models such as these would be greatly facilitated through proactive cooperation on the part of registrars, bursars, financial aid officers and academic administrators both at the involved Catholic "sponsoring" and non-Catholic "recipient" institutions. Although it may be possible in some situations to develop a successful off-campus program even in a quasi-hostile environment, provided sufficient student support is forthcoming, the importance of first "taking the high road" by making every effort to garner faculty and administrative support from the non-Catholic college or university cannot be overemphasized.

Returning briefly to Hinsdale's paper, three words of caution are offered to anyone interested in promoting Catholic studies at a Catholic college—and, again, these insights also apply to non-Catholic institutions: 1) There is no "cookie cutter" formula that fits all situations; in fact, each set of circumstances is unique. Every institution has its own academic culture and must be approached individually—there can be no McDonald's or Burger King of Catholic studies programs suitable for all student populations, campus sizes and geographical locations, and college traditions. 2) Student interest should be measured before time and expense is thrown into a program. 3) Multiple funding sources should be sought to avoid the potential danger of accepting support from a single donor who then seeks to impose on the program an inappropriate or untenable agenda.⁵⁰

Next to the purpose and mission of the program, funding may be the most important concern, at least initially. Preliminary evidence suggests, however, that the current climate is favorable toward individuals and institutions that seek investment for Catholic studies. Thomas J. Donnelly, a Catholic

⁵⁰ Hinsdale, "Catholic Studies: Models and Motives," p. 15.

philanthropist and board member of FADICA,⁵¹ recently called for increased Catholic diocesan support to programs aimed at Catholic students in state sponsored and secular universities and not just to Catholic institutions of higher learning. He urged local churches to "move beyond strictly institutional interests and to go where the majority of Catholic, college-age students can be found." Donnelly, echoing the sentiments of Harvard professor J. Bryan Hehir, said Catholic students need more than simply a substantial prayer life and a generous spirit—they also need to ground those virtues in an intellectual understanding of the faith.⁵²

Another serious point of discussion that is likely to surface in the near future is what criteria and procedures will determine whether the character and content of particular Catholic studies initiatives are sufficiently "authentic" to be called "Catholic." Until now, debates concerning the "Catholicity" of particular American colleges, programs and faculty in the wake of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* have been directed by the Vatican *only* at Catholic higher education institutions and theologians whom they employ. At present one of the more controversial aspects of the apostolic letter is the judgment that Catholic theologians on the faculty of American Catholic colleges and universities should possess a canonical *mandatum*. This "license" or certification, which beginning May 3, 2001, must be requested by all Catholics who teach theology at Catholic colleges and is to be either conferred or withheld by the local bishop, requires teachers to declare their role and responsibility "within the full communion of the [Catholic] Church," that they are "committed to teach authentic Catholic doctrine and to refrain from putting forth as Catholic teaching anything contrary to the Church's magisterium."⁵³

A discussion of the relative merits of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and the *mandatum* are beyond the limits of this paper, insofar as these pertain only to Catholic colleges and universities. However, their impact on Catholic studies programs elsewhere has yet to be realized. The emergence of "Catholic consortium" and "independent Catholic institute" models of Catholic studies initiatives at non-Catholic colleges, regardless of their charters or missions,

⁵¹ FADICA is an acronym for Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities, Inc., a non-profit organization located in Washington, D.C.

⁵² A press release describing Donnelly's remarks to a group of more than one hundred Catholic campus ministers at Allenspark, Colorado, on June 14, 1999, was retrieved from the FADICA web site, www.fadica.org/direct.html on January 3, 2000.

⁵³ Excerpts from a sample "Attestation" included in the *Draft Guidelines concerning the Academic 'Mandatum' in Catholic Universities* (canon 812), presented by the ad hoc committee chaired by Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk to the NCCB, November 2000.

will eventually trigger some degree of concern for Rome, the American bishops, Catholic educators, and other groups and individuals whose perceived interests may be affected in various ways. As the number and variety of Catholic studies initiatives at non-Catholic colleges increases, it is entirely possible that some conservative groups within the Catholic Church may attempt in some manner to extend the certification process to these faculty. Whether a Catholic scholar who teaches in a theological discipline for a Catholic studies program at a non-Catholic college could, or should, seek a canonical *mandatum*, poses very serious questions for the teacher, the program and the host college.

The notion of extending the reach of *Ex Corde* and the *mandatum* to “certify” Catholic studies programs or their faculty at non-Catholic colleges may seem preposterous, but it has already been suggested by at least one conservative Catholic priest.⁵⁴ Such a stance, if sanctioned either by the American bishops or the Vatican, could play into the hands of detractors by giving them additional grounds for resisting new Catholic studies initiatives and for refusing support to existing programs. They could be joined by regional accrediting agencies and faculty rights organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in denouncing Catholic studies initiatives that require a canonical *mandatum* on the grounds that such programs effectively deny the academic freedom of their faculty. Such circumstances could make it more difficult or impractical to inaugurate Catholic studies programs by exacerbating those centers of resistance that already exist toward the idea of Catholic studies among a substantial number of secular and other non-Catholic faculty and administrators and even among some Catholic scholars. Ideally some middle ground should be negotiated that would ensure fidelity to the Catholic tradition as well as the academic freedom of Catholic studies faculty situated in non-Catholic environments—not that this acceptable middle ground would be easy to achieve. Avery Cardinal Dulles, noting that theologians of the

⁵⁴ Monsignor John J. Strykowski asks, “An authentically Catholic theologian teaching at a secular institution . . . why can’t s/he get an ecclesiastical certification equivalent to the *mandatum*?” (Fr. Strykowski, www.mandata.org, February 20, 2001). This site *ranks* Catholic colleges, seminaries and universities in the U.S. from zero to five stars according to their “MQ” or “*mandatum* quotient”—calculated as a percentage of theologians employed by a particular Catholic college or university who have received a canonical *mandatum*. It is entirely conceivable that significant numbers of Catholics, prospective students and their parents, will use such means to select schools based on their MQ which, in the popular mind, may be perceived as a valid indicator of “Catholicity.”

stature of Rahner and Lonergan regularly taught with a canonical mission or its equivalent, suggests that it is possible to have both ecclesiastical control and a high level of theological research, and offers some useful clues as to how a balanced approach might be achieved that is fair and just toward Catholic higher education in the United States:

[T]he prevailing secular model of academic freedom, as described by standard authorities, requires some modification before being applied to Catholic or other church-related institutions. The model shows signs of having been constructed as a laudable but one-sided purpose of protecting university professors from incompetent outside authorities, who might unjustly seek to impose their own ideas. This model overlooks the responsibility of theology to the community of faith and the mandate of the ecclesiastical magisterium to assure the doctrinal soundness of theology.

The secular model, moreover, is somewhat narrowly based on a theory of knowledge more suited to the empirical sciences than to theology, which rests primarily on divine revelation. The dogmas of faith do not have the same status in theology as currently accepted theories have for secular science. Those who practice theology with the conviction that revealed truth exists and is reliably translated by authoritative sources will see the need to work out a properly theological concept of academic freedom. Such an adapted version will protect authentic theology but will not separate theologians from the body of the Church; it will not set them in opposition to the community of faith or its pastoral leadership. Theologians and bishops, in spite of their different roles in the Church, are fundamentally allies because they are alike committed to maintain and explore the unfathomable riches of Christ, in whom alone is given the truth that makes us free.⁵⁵

There is no simple solution. However, it is fair to caution scholars who may be contemplating Catholic studies initiatives at non-Catholic colleges to avoid the tendency of some Catholics and evangelical Christians who absolutize the culturally relative, even in the name of Christ.⁵⁶ Highly charged polemics are not only historically suspect and often promote less than the best scholarship, they also contribute unnecessarily to the natural tension that already exists between Christian scholarship and other voices within the academic community. It is also incumbent upon Catholic Church officials to be careful not to stifle the Catholic intellectual tradition by placing excessive oversight and controls on initiatives, which, by their very nature, should be

⁵⁵ Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), pp. 176–77.

⁵⁶ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, p. 100.

vibrant, dynamic, and in some sense evolutionary.⁵⁷ It is equally essential, however, that Catholic studies programs continually seek to maintain and preserve that middle ground which seeks to avoid the sort of collegial breakdown and programmatic atrophy that one often associates with extreme forms of conservatism, radical liberalism, or confusing agendas that attempt to incorporate a wide spectrum of views under one faculty umbrella. While such formulas may succeed in the selection of faculty for other disciplines, the nature of Catholic studies requires a faculty that at least shares a faith commitment to the tradition they teach, research and serve.⁵⁸

Although the shape of Catholic studies at non-Catholic colleges and universities already seems to conjure up an inexhaustible variety of possible approaches, there are several strategies for its study and implementation that appear especially promising:

1) Organizations such as FADICA that promote or support Catholic eleemosynary activities are already urging foundations and individuals to invest in endowed chairs in Catholic studies (presumably at non-Catholic as well as Catholic colleges), and are looking closely at Catholic students who attend non-Catholic colleges as an under-served population. According to Marsden, endowing chairs is a proactive way to counter the prevailing trend in the academic culture today, in which faculty tend to hire people like themselves, a practice that could eventually obliterate loyalties to any distinctive religious heritage. "Instead of encouraging pious donors to finance a new steeple for the chapel, administrators might encourage the endowment of such a chair." Judging by the dozen or so endowed chairs in Catholic studies at non-Catholic institutions, this seems an appropriate means in some instance of "testing the waters" to estimate student interest prior to making a major investment in a full-bodied Catholic studies program or institute.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Consider how Catholic philosophy and theology might have been diminished, perhaps irreparably, if Bishop of Paris Étienne Tempier's Condemnation of 1277 had not been overturned, since it directly though posthumously affected the work of Thomas Aquinas (who drew heavily upon Averroës' commentaries on Aristotle). Bishops and their curial assistants, especially since *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* gives the Church more "muscle" over the Catholic sector of American higher education, would do well to resist the urge to move in haste against any Catholic theologian on the basis of technical matters in which they may not be fully competent. See Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*, pp. 174–75.

⁵⁸ In addition to teaching and research functions, Catholic studies faculty serve as role models and mentors to students. There is also debate about whether a theologian must be a believer—an important question since nearly every aspect of Catholic studies involves theology to some extent. See Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, p. 168.

⁵⁹ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, p. 106.

2) Existing scholarly institutes that support the concept of Catholic studies, e.g., *Collegium* at Fairfield University, Fairfield, Connecticut,⁶⁰ and the Institute of Catholic Studies at John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio,⁶¹ which until now understandably have been mainly concerned with the creation and development of Catholic Studies programs of various models for students enrolled at Catholic colleges and universities, may enlarge their vision to proactively encourage Catholic studies initiatives at non-Catholic schools, and especially to share with potential leaders of such initiatives the practical wisdom resulting from their experiences with Catholic studies at Catholic colleges.

3) New academic organizations such as the recently proposed Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies⁶² may assist Catholic intellectuals in sorting out their differences and helping to clarify the need for Catholic studies initiatives at non-Catholic colleges and universities.

4) Scholarly studies are needed that focus on recent and current initiatives to endow chairs and promote programs in Catholic studies at non-Catholic colleges and universities. Especially useful would be studies that provide insights into successful efforts to develop a suitable philosophy of education and mission statement, setting goals, recognizing the true sources of support and resistance, and finding successful ways of breaking down barriers to Catholic studies, organizational development, and curriculum concerns. To engage in research along these and similar lines would be an appropriate activity for communities of scholars such as faculty associated with the Higher Education Program at Boston College, or with secular institutes such as Penn State University's Center for the Study of Higher Education.

5) Another area where research could produce useful findings is to explore successful approaches to higher education organization outside the United States, especially in cases where Catholic studies are pursued within larger institutional contexts that are state supported. One example that comes to mind as a stellar example of successful symbiosis between explicitly Catholic

⁶⁰ The *Collegium* program, located at Fairfield University, Fairfield, Connecticut includes an annual colloquy and is self-described as "a joint effort by over 50 Catholic colleges and universities to recruit and develop faculty who can articulate and enrich the spiritual and intellectual life of their institutions" (www.fairfield.edu/collegiu).

⁶¹ Directed by Francesco C. Cesareo, the Institute of Catholic Studies hosted a national conference on Catholic studies in March 2000. In its magazine, *Prism*, the Institute describes its mission, in part, as follows: ". . . to promote serious reflection on the Catholic intellectual tradition and its place within the academic mission of the university. . . ." (*Prism*, no. 5 [Summer 2000], p. 33).

⁶² The Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies is temporarily located in Greensburg, Pennsylvania (www.ifacs.com).

and public higher education is the combination of St. Michael's College, St. Augustine's Seminary, the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, and the Christianity and Culture Programme, each of which is a component of (or has close ties with) the University of Toronto, Canada's premier public research university. As Avery Dulles notes, "[I]n many other religiously pluralistic countries, such as Germany, Holland, Australia, and Canada, there seems to be no difficulty about teaching Catholic and Protestant theology in publicly funded state universities."⁶³

6) Research from a legal perspective could be useful in exposing the facts and the best legal opinions concerning church-state relations and the implications, if any, of various types of charters and organizational structures upon the successful implementation of Catholic studies in American higher education situated within larger private or public non-Catholic environments.

7) Finally, definitive statements from regional accrediting authorities would go far toward clarifying the processes necessary for various organizational models of Catholic studies initiatives to acquire full accreditation. Sample curricula and articulation agreements would also be helpful to administrators who are attempting to piece together Catholic studies initiatives in unusual or unique circumstances.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

According to Neuhaus and others, American Catholics have reached a moment in history that may determine whether the future of the Catholic intellectual tradition will be to play a vital and effective role in mainstream American political and intellectual life, or whether its influence will fade as has the Protestant leadership of America's past. The single most crucial factor in determining the outcome of the "Catholic moment" will be the health of Catholic scholarship (i.e., higher education research, teaching and service). As Marsden suggests, Christian scholarship will only realize its potential if it can establish a strong institutional base.⁶⁴ Without in any way denigrating or compromising the outstanding contribution made by Catholic colleges and universities and by theological, philosophical, and historical studies at those schools, it is absolutely essential that Catholic scholarship build a broader base—if only to reach the vast majority of college-age Catholic Americans. And while one can only speculate about

⁶³ Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, p. 162.

⁶⁴ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, p. 101.

the longevity of the crucial "moment" it can be stated without hesitation that the need is urgent.⁶⁵

Regardless of how Catholic intellectuals may construe the "Catholic moment," a compelling argument can be made for inaugurating Catholic studies in American non-Catholic colleges and universities. In brief, the argument can be stated as follows:

Assuming Catholics can agree that American Catholicism has something to say to American individual and political life, and/or to the perception of reality (or formation) of the next generation of Americans;

And further assuming the centrality of higher learning as the focal point of any effort to inform the consciences of young people and lead them to the virtuous life, however it may be defined or understood;

Then, some form of Catholic studies is needed to carry out the task;

And since more than 86% of all traditional-age college students who identify themselves as Catholics nevertheless attend state-supported or private non-Catholic colleges or universities;

Therefore, the best opportunity to seize the "Catholic moment" is for Catholic leaders to provide opportunity and access for all young Catholics and lifelong learners to study their intellectual heritage—even as Catholic intellectuals may among themselves continue to debate the context and meaning of "Catholic" studies.

The vast majority of America's 220 Catholic colleges and universities were founded to provide access to a distinctively "Catholic" education for effectively marginalized Catholics. Today Catholic life, insofar as it stands in contrast with the dominant American culture, must be made accessible through additional means. Certainly there is a place for Catholic colleges and universities. But there needs to be something more. And this "more" is to inaugurate Catholic studies at non-Catholic colleges and universities, thereby preserving and sustaining the "Catholic moment"—the potential for Catholics *as* Catholics, through greater and more effective participation in American higher learning, to profoundly influence the future course of America's intellectual and cultural life.

⁶⁵ A shortage of excellent teachers would alone be sufficient to bring to a rapid stop any movement for Catholic studies in public universities, yet this may occur within a decade unless the current trend is reversed. Notably, a fall 1998 survey of philosophy department heads at U.S. Catholic colleges and universities warns of a near-term shortage of Catholic scholars in this core discipline for Catholic studies programs. See Paul J. Weithman, "Philosophy at Catholic Colleges and Universities in the United States: The Results of the ACPA-Notre Dame Survey," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 73 (2000), p. 312.