

STUDIES IN CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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Ex corde Ecclesiae: Echoes of Newman's The Idea of a University

by Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskias

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Executive Summary

In significant ways, the thought and writings of John Henry Cardinal Newman make direct and indirect contributions to Pope John Paul II's 1990 apostolic constitution on Catholic universities, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*. The Holy Father draws on Newman's understanding of the nature and mission of Catholic higher education, based upon the Church's "intimate conviction that truth is its real ally... and that knowledge and reason are sure ministers to faith." Also central to *Ex corde Ecclesiae* is the central place of theology and its relationship to other disciplines, a subject of great importance to Newman.

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About The Center

The Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education is the research division of The Cardinal Newman Society. Its mission is to promote the ongoing renewal of Catholic higher education by researching and analyzing critical issues facing Catholic colleges and universities, and sharing best practices. The Center's work is guided by the principles of *Ex corde Ecclesiae* and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

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Ex corde Ecclesiae: Echoes of Newman's The Idea of a University

Having taught courses in the philosophy of education in two of the largest Catholic universities of the country for twenty years, I have more than a passing interest in the field. When the invitation came to consider presenting a paper to a conference sponsored by The Cardinal Newman Society to commemorate the bicentennial of Cardinal Newman's birth¹, I immediately thought of his magisterial work, *The Idea of a University*, written exactly 150 years ago, referred to by Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua as "a work of great subtlety."² Fresh in my mind also was that United States episcopal conference had just completed a decade-long effort to bring Pope John Paul II's *Ex corde Ecclesiae* to life in our nation. Could there be a connection between the visions of Newman and Wojtyla?

Both men spent considerable portions of their lives as university professors and chaplains. Both wrote only one major work on the nature of a Catholic university: Newman to prepare for the opening of the Catholic University of Ireland; John Paul II to prevent the collapse of Catholic higher education worldwide. Both struggled to see their vision implemented: Newman failed; the jury is still out on Wojtyla.

Many have noted that Cardinal Newman was the "unseen father" at Vatican II, and I don't think that is much of an exaggeration. The late Holy Father, like every single one of his predecessors from the nineteenth century forward, and now also his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, made no secret of his esteem for the Venerable convert on numerous occasions. One could highlight the fact, for instance, that aside from popes, councils, and the beatified or canonized, Newman is the only person cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*—and on three occasions, no less. Of course, the Pope also concluded his homily at the latest consistory by evoking the memory of Cardinal Newman and by presenting him as a model for cardinals of the third millennium; interestingly, that was also the consistory at which the recently late Father Avery Dulles, S.J. entered the College of Cardinals—another theologian-cardinal and convert.

So, I don't think it far-fetched to suppose a Newmanian influence on the composition of *Ex corde*; in fact, a glance at the footnotes surfaces three direct quotes. I submit, however, that closer examination of the document reveals distinct and loud echoes of Newman's voice, as well as a tone which is unmistakably suffused with the thought and spirit of John Henry Newman. Permit me to serve as your guide through this investigation by moving back and forth between the Cardinal and Pope John Paul II, asking not too irreverently, "Was Newman the ghostwriter for *Ex corde Ecclesiae*?"

1. What Is a Catholic University?

Newman launches into this matter with all deliberateness: ". . . when the Church founds a University," he says, "she is not cherishing talent, genius or knowledge, for their own sake, but for the sake of her children, with a view to their spiritual welfare and their religious influence and usefulness, with the object of training them to fill their respective posts in life better, and of making them more intelligent, capable, active members of society."³

The title of Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation is carefully chosen; in fact, he has been referring to Catholic schools as "the very heart of the Church" at least since 1981, if my track-

1. This paper is revised and adapted from a presentation at the National Conference of The Cardinal Newman Society in November 2001 at The Catholic University of America.

2. "Ecclesia—Magistra Veritatis, Mater Universitatis," *The Nature of Catholic Higher Education* (Steubenville, Ohio: The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, 1995), p. 9.

3. *The Idea of a University* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), p. xii. [Hereafter cited as *Idea*.]

ing has been accurate.⁴ The Holy Father sets the stage by locating the university as having been “born from the heart of the Church.” Indeed, he makes a point which most commentators, Catholic and secular alike, fail to recall: that it was the Catholic Church which created not *Catholic* universities but the entire concept and system of university education. So much for George Bernard Shaw’s snide remark that speaking of “a Catholic university is a contradiction in terms.”

“It is the honor and responsibility of a Catholic university to consecrate itself without reserve to *the cause of truth*,” teaches the Pope.⁵ And then, directly quoting Cardinal Newman, he speaks of the Church’s “intimate conviction that truth is its real ally . . . and that knowledge and reason are sure ministers to faith.”⁶

One cannot gainsay the centrality of truth in the educational process, and here the Pope’s admiration for Newman knows no bounds, having referred to him as an “ardent disciple of truth.”⁷ Indeed, Newman made the battle for truth the *cause célèbre* of his life, fighting against “liberalism” in religion, which he defined as the belief that “there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another.”⁸ Quite movingly does Cardinal Bevilacqua describe Newman’s commitment to this cause:

Cardinal Newman’s life is a testimony to the liberating power of the truth and a warning about the slavery awaiting those who exalt freedom above all. Unless our freedom is built on the rock of truth, our poor wills will be, as the Apostle says, “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles” [Eph 4:14]. Without the kindly light of truth, human freedom gets lost amid the encircling gloom.⁹

The Holy Father goes on to identify four “*essential characteristics*,” to use his terminology, qualities that must be present in any university which wishes to be known as Catholic; they are worth citing in full:

1. A Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such;
2. A continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic Faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;
3. Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church;
4. An institutional commitment to the service of the People of God and of the human

4. “Pope: Schools Are Heart of Church,” *Catholic Standard and Times* (November 26, 1981), p. 12.

5. *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, no. 4 (emphasis in original). This is what St. Augustine in his *Confessions* calls the *gaudium de veritate* (X, xxiii, 33). Indeed, a Catholic university is uniquely situated for this task, since the Church is “the place of truth,” as Walter Cardinal Kasper has put it in his contribution to *Theology and Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 129–147.

6. *Idea*, p. xi.

7. *L’Osservatore Romano* (1990), no. 18, p. 11.

8. His “*Biglietto Speech*” in W. P. Neville, ed., *Addresses to Cardinal Newman with His Replies, etc.* (New York, 1905), p. 64.

9. Bevilacqua, p. 6. This was the keynote address given to the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars in 1995, meeting in Minneapolis on the nature of Catholic higher education; interestingly, 13 of Cardinal Bevilacqua’s 55 citations are to Newman.

family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life.¹⁰

Then follows counsel for all who make up the university community, which community must be, he says, “animated by the Spirit of Christ.” The Pope further argues that no true community can exist without “a common dedication to the truth, a common vision of the dignity of the human person and, ultimately, the person and message of Christ.” This last element, he maintains, is precisely what “gives the institution its distinctive character” (no. 21). University teachers are thus not merely providers of academic formation; they are called to be “witnesses and educators of authentic Christian life.” Most importantly, the Holy Father says, it should be evident that these men and women have achieved an “integration between faith and life and between professional competence and Christian wisdom” (no. 22). Nor should one expect that because many of them are members of the laity that this dimension would be less apparent or even totally lacking (no. 25).

Students, having been introduced to the meaning of Christian wisdom and having seen clear, consistent, and living examples of it in their professors, will logically be able to assume their roles as “the trained ‘leaders’ of tomorrow, of being witnesses to Christ in whatever place they may exercise their profession” (no. 24).

2. Why a Catholic University?

Cardinal Newman explains it thus: “. . . it is a matter of deep solicitude to Catholic prelates that their people should be taught a wisdom, safe from the excesses and vagaries of individuals, embodied in institutions which have stood the trial and received the sanction of ages. . . .”¹¹

Ex corde puts it this way: “In the world today, characterized by such rapid developments in science and technology, the tasks of a Catholic university assume an ever greater importance and urgency. . . . Its Christian inspiration enables it to include the moral, spiritual and religious dimension in its research and to evaluate the attainments of science and technology in the perspective of the totality of the human person” (no. 7). John Paul II continues:

. . . I turn to the whole Church, convinced that Catholic universities are essential to her growth and to the development of Christian culture and human progress. For this reason, the entire ecclesial community is invited to give its support to [them] and to assist them in their process of development and renewal. It is invited in a special way to guard the rights and freedoms of these institutions in civil society . . . (no. 11).

Along similar lines, it has been noted that Newman “urges the priority of literature over science in education,” lest the Church’s educational institutions produce little more than a generation of “technocrats”.¹² That does not mean that Newman was opposed to science; by no means. In fact, following in the mentality of his fellow-Oratorian of the sixteenth century, Cardinal Baronius, Newman—like Wojtyla today—had a profound respect for science and its autonomy and even contended that “many scientists have been hostile to religion because theologians have often overstepped their mark.”¹³

The Pope goes on with very practical applications of these general principles, talking about the “integration of knowledge” (no. 16) and the need to promote “dialogue between faith and reason” (no. 17). He underscores the critical necessity for all research to be grounded in ethical

10. The Pontiff has actually made his own criteria, found in the final document of the Second International Congress of Delegates of Catholic Universities, which had met in Rome during November 1972.

11. *Idea*, p. xxii.

12. Frank Turner, ed., *The Idea of a University* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. xvi.

13. Turner, p. xvii.

and moral standards, both in “its methods and discoveries” (no. 18) because of the requirement to safeguard the dignity of the human person in all circumstances.

3. Does a Catholic University Have a Distinctive Curriculum?

John Paul II would seem to think so, and it is what we might call “the *humanum*.” Sounding an awful lot like the old pagan Roman poet Terence, with his “*nihil humanum mihi alienum est*,” the Holy Father argues that “there is only one culture: that of man, by man and for man.” He goes on: “And thanks to her Catholic universities and their humanistic and scientific inheritance, the Church, expert in humanity, . . . explores the mysteries of humanity and of the world, clarifying them in the light of Revelation” (no. 3). Even more boldly, he declares: “By means of a kind of universal humanism, a Catholic university is completely dedicated to the research of all aspects of truth in their essential connection with the supreme Truth, Who is God” (no. 4), with the result that Catholic institutions of higher learning “are called to explore courageously the riches of Revelation and of nature, so that the united endeavor of intelligence and faith will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity” (no. 5). And here the Pope sounds a great deal like Irenæus, with his “*gloria Dei vivens homo*.”

Having mentioned Irenæus, one is immediately led to consider Newman. What does he envision for a Catholic university curriculum? The Cardinal observes that, although Pope St. Gregory the Great was not particularly fond of the literature of the pagan Greeks and Romans (although he knew it all very well), he was said by his biographer “to have supported the hall of the Apostolic See upon the columns of the Seven Liberal Arts.”¹⁴

As Newman presented his ideas for the founding of the Catholic University of Ireland, he applied this generic concept to a model for a curriculum:

. . . Civilization too has its common principles, and views, and teaching, and especially its books, which have more or less been given from the earliest of times. . . . In a word, the classics, and the subjects of thought and the studies to which they give rise, or, to use the term most dear to our present purpose, the Arts, have ever, on the whole, been the instruments of education which the civilized *orbis terrarum* has adopted; just as inspired works, and the lives of the saints, and the articles of faith, and the catechism, have ever been the instrument of education in the case of Christianity. And this consideration, you see, . . . invests [our project] with a solemnity and moment of a peculiar kind, for we are but reiterating an old tradition, and carrying on those august methods of enlarging the mind, and cultivating the intellect, and refining the feelings, in which the process of civilization has ever consisted.¹⁵

The venerable Cardinal also spoke specifically about “Catholic literature,” for which he offers a definition: “. . . by ‘Catholic literature’ is not to be understood a literature which treats exclusively or even primarily of Catholic matters, of Catholic doctrine, controversy, history, persons, or politics; but it includes all subjects of literature whatever, treated as a Catholic would treat them, and as he only can treat them.”¹⁶

Newman is advocating an approach to education grounded in the classics. How does one determine whether an author fits the bill? “A great author,” he says, “is not one who merely has a *copia verborum*, whether in prose or verse, and can, as it were, turn on at his will any number of splendid phrases and swelling sentences; but he is one who has something to say and knows how to say it.”¹⁷ He gets even more specific and even lyrical in expounding his vision:

14. *Idea*, p. 61.

15. *Idea*, p. 256.

16. *Idea*, p. 296.

17. *Idea*, p. 291.

. . . if by means of words the secrets of the heart are brought to light, pain of soul is relieved, hidden grief is carried off, sympathy conveyed, counsel imparted, experience recorded, and wisdom perpetuated, —if by great authors the many are drawn up into unity, national character is fixed, a people speaks, the past and the future, the East and the West are brought into communication with each other, —if such men are, in a word, the spokesmen and prophets of the human family, —it will not answer to make light of literature or to neglect its study; rather we may be sure that, in proportion as we master in whatever language, and imbibe its spirit, we shall ourselves become in our own measure ministers of like benefits to others, be they many or few, be they in the obscurer or the more distinguished walks of life, — who are united to us by social ties, and are within the sphere of our personal influence.¹⁸

Few commentators have missed how Newman was most impressed by the role “personal influence” played in the lives of people, as is the Pope, who stresses the critical importance of having faculty and administrators provide appropriate role models for the student population. John Paul II also underscores the “irreplaceable lay vocation” in the university apostolate (no. 25). Yet again, the Holy Father relies on Newman’s apprehension here: “Cardinal Newman describes the ideal to be sought in this way: ‘A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom.’ ”¹⁹ “The *humanum*” comes across loud and clear again.

4. What Is the Place of Theology Within the Curriculum?

Is there a place? Cardinal Newman framed it as a syllogism:

A university, I should lay down, by its very name professes to teach universal knowledge. Theology is surely a branch of knowledge: how then is it possible to profess all branches of knowledge, and yet to exclude from the subjects of its teaching one which, to say the least, is as important and as large as any of them? I do not see that either premiss of this argument is open to exception.²⁰

He presses the point the point even further: “Religious doctrine is knowledge, in as full a sense as Newton’s doctrine is knowledge. University teaching without theology is simply unphilosophical. Theology has at least as good a right to claim a place there as astronomy.”²¹

When Newman tries to understand and explain why theology found itself being slowly but surely driven to the margins of academia, he offers a fascinating insight. He suggests the reason was rather simple, namely, that theology had become classified as little more than “taste and sentiment,”²² with everything reduced to subjectivity. In other words, the great irony is that theology’s Enlightenment-influenced movement away from objective truth has been its own undoing.

Cardinal Newman also realized the possibility for excessive claims on the part of theology, and so he warned theologians and other scholars as well: “. . . according as we are only physi-

18. *Idea*, pp. 293f.

19. *Ex corde*, note 23 (*Idea*, pp. 101f.).

20. *Idea*, pp. 18f.

21. *Idea*, p. 42. Way back in 1929, Pope Pius XI saw it all most lucidly when he wrote in *Divini illius Magistri* that “the so-called neutral school from which religion is excluded is contrary to the fundamental principles of education. Such a school moreover cannot exist in practice; it is bound to become irreligious.” Even Thomas Jefferson, in founding the University of Virginia, recognized the necessity of including theology in the curriculum.

22. *Idea*, p. 26.

ologists, or only politicians, or only moralists, so is our idea of man more or less unreal.”²³ Tunnel vision is bad for everyone, which is why he went on to say that what would make him a poor academic would be if “I carried out my science irrespectively of other sciences.”²⁴ Why? Because “all knowledge forms one whole, because its subject-matter is one.”²⁵ Without fear of contradiction, Newman maintains “that the systematic omission of any one science from the catalogue prejudices the accuracy and completeness of our knowledge altogether.”²⁶ And were we to make such an omission, we should see without a doubt how theology is “the soul of the university.” Here he waxes eloquent:

In a word, religious truth is not only a portion, but a condition of general knowledge. To blot it out is nothing short, if I may so speak, of unravelling the web of university teaching. It is, according to the Greek proverb, to take the Spring from out of the year; it is to imitate the preposterous proceeding of those tragedians who represented a drama with the omission of its principal part.²⁷

Ex corde notes the central place for theology in a Catholic institution of higher learning and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to the various subjects, such that the unity of all truth is acknowledged and becomes apparent. Therefore, we read that theology “serves all other disciplines in their search for meaning, not only by helping them to investigate how their discoveries will affect individuals and society but also by bringing a perspective and an orientation not contained within their own methodologies.” However, this is not a one-way street, for the “interaction with these other disciplines and their discoveries enriches theology, offering it a better understanding of the world today, and making theological research more relevant to current needs” (no. 19). Hence, the need for every Catholic university to “have a faculty, or at least a chair, of theology.” Needless to say, the Pope observes that Catholic theology must be “taught in a manner faithful to Scripture, Tradition and the Church’s Magisterium” (no. 20).

5. What Is the Relationship Between the Catholic University and the Church?

The Pope tackles this core problem of the past few decades, begun with the Land o’ Lakes Statement in 1967.²⁸ In the most unequivocal terms possible, he asserts that such a relationship “is essential to [the university’s] institutional identity.” Furthermore, he declares that non-Catholic members of the university community “are required to respect the Catholic character” of the institution, even as the university “respects their religious liberty” (no. 27). Bishops have an indispensable role to play in Catholic colleges, engaging in “close and consistent cooperation and continuing dialogue” with the university authorities. Because of the nature of this relationship, bishops cannot under any circumstances be regarded “as external agents” to the life of a university which wishes to be Catholic; in truth, they are active “participants in [its] life” (no. 28). John Paul II also reminds us that Catholic theologians have a right to academic freedom, like all other professors. A critical part of that right, however, is also concerned with being faithful to the principles and methods proper to the discipline of theology, which is to say, fidelity to the Church’s Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium (no. 29).

23. *Idea*, p. 43.

24. *Idea*, p. 45.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Idea*, p. 46.

27. *Idea*, p. 62.

28. In 1967, representative officials of nearly every major Catholic institution of higher learning in the United States met to discuss the future course of their endeavors. Their vision was enshrined in their now-famous Land o’ Lakes Statement, in which we find the clarion call: “To perform its teaching and research functions effectively, the Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself.”

Rightly, then, does the Code of Canon Law stipulate: “In Catholic universities it is the duty of the competent statutory authority to ensure that there be appointed teachers who are not only qualified in scientific and pedagogical expertise, but are also outstanding in their integrity of doctrine and uprightness of life” (can. 810). The Code goes on to require of presidents and those entrusted with teaching in areas related to faith and morals a profession of faith, which has been drawn up by the Apostolic See (see can. 833).

But more than a century before the present Holy Father, Cardinal Newman—that great advocate of academic freedom—was capable of stating in the strongest language: “Hence a direct and active jurisdiction of the Church over [a Catholic university] and in it is necessary, lest it should become the rival of the Church with the community at large in those theological matters which to the Church are exclusively committed.”²⁹ And there is more: “It is no sufficient security for the Catholicity of a university, even that the whole of Catholic theology should be professed in it, unless the Church breathes her own pure and unearthly spirit into it, and fashions and molds its organization, and watches over its teaching, and knits together its pupils, and superintends its action.”³⁰ Interestingly, Newman brings forth as an example of an institution which ran amok, precisely because of the lack of a direct link to the institutional Church, the Spanish Inquisition.³¹

A theology of *communio*³² underlies *Ex corde*’s notions of how everything fits together in a Catholic university. In this regard, the Pope once more cites Newman directly as he writes: “Cardinal Newman observes that a university ‘professes to assign to each study which it receives its proper place and its just boundaries; to define the rights, to establish the mutual relations and to effect the intercommunion of one and all.’”³³ Was it Cardinal George of Chicago who suggested that the issue was not the place of the *Church* in the university but the place of the *university* in the Church?

6. Some Concluding Considerations

The Holy Father has much more to say on other significant issues, but time does not permit adequate attention to be given to such things as how the Catholic university serves both the Church and society; what kind of pastoral ministry should be exercised on campus; the unique contribution which should be made to contemporary culture by Catholic colleges; and the central place of evangelization in university priorities, goals, and objectives. In this context, it is worth looking to Newman’s thoughts on university preaching, for they are reflective of his overall approach to pastoral ministry for university students.

Allow me now to highlight a few of the more salient points of *Ex corde Ecclesiae* and *The Idea of a University*.

29. *Idea*, p. 215.

30. *Idea*, pp. 214f.

31. See *Idea*, pp. 215f.

32. Particularly *ad rem* is the observation of the Reverend Joseph Komonchak: Both the Pope and the Church look at the Catholic university as being *in* the Church; the relationship, then, is internal and not adversarial: see “The Catholic University in the Church,” in John P. Langan, ed., *Catholic Universities in Church and Society: A Dialogue on Ex corde Ecclesiae* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1993). The Most Reverend James Malone likewise identifies this notion as part of the Church’s theology of *communio* (see “Sharing Responsibility: University and Bishop,” *Origins*, [February 16, 1995], p. 582). The Reverend J. A. DiNoia, O.P., handles the same topic in “Communion and Magisterium: Teaching Authority and the Culture of Grace,” *Modern Theology* (October 1993), pp. 403–418. Also instructive in this regard is Edward J. Miller’s “How Cardinal Newman Might Understand *Ex corde*’s *Communio*,” *The Newman Newsletter* (August 2001), pp. 2f.

33. *Ex corde*, note 19 (*Idea*, p. 457).

1. Notice that Pope John Paul II, like Newman a century earlier, stresses the existence of the Catholic university for the advancement of truth. That should be the case for any institution of higher learning, but in this post-Enlightenment period in which we find ourselves, academia has lost its moorings in its abandonment of belief in truth. Truth has been replaced by opinion and/or ideology—at least as far as religious matters are concerned, although we note with fascination that in math class two plus two still equals four, regardless of personal opinion or fancy and regardless of anyone’s suggestion that such a position might be “authoritarian.”
2. I hope you did not miss the Pope’s appeal to an interdisciplinary approach to learning—another “Newmanian” echo. Indeed, the Catholic philosophy of education is rooted in our belief that all truth is one, causing us to operate from a unified vision of reality. No unhealthy compartmentalization for us! For we recall that the word “university” itself means that the various disciplines are presented and studied in such a manner as to “turn toward the one,” converging in what the Pope calls “a single reality,”³⁴ that is, bringing all the little truths of the several sciences into unity in the one great Truth, Who is the Inspiration and Source of all academic inquiry. Therefore, what is learned in one department of a university should eventually mesh in a holistic way with what is gained in another. And while there is no such thing as a Catholic brand of math or a Catholic take on science, our ethical and moral reflection must necessarily undergird it all. Therefore, we should be able to say with confidence that in a truly Catholic university the truths of the Catholic Faith will never be contradicted in any forum, if for no other reason than the simple fact that all truth is one and mutually reinforcing. Way back in the third century, Tertullian asked what he thought was a rhetorical question: “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” By which he meant to imply that theology and humanistic sciences had little or nothing to do with each other. The Church disagreed in a definitive fashion, and, in the midst of the Age of Faith, she began the university system.
3. Both Newman and Wojtyla place in clear relief the fact that in a Catholic university the local bishop and the teaching authority of the Church can never be perceived as extrinsic, let alone oppressive, realities. Since the Catholic educational institution comes into existence because of faith, is sustained because of faith, and has its only valid rationale because of faith, it is patently absurd to regard matters of faith as foreign or alien to its life.
4. The Pope obviously expects great things from Catholic colleges, something besides mere cosmetic changes, in many instances. More than crucifixes on classroom walls and collars on the clergy is being sought—although these two are certainly steps in the right direction. What the Pontiff has in mind is an educational establishment which breathes Catholic air, and that can come from nothing less than a total permeation of the curriculum and every other program with a fully Catholic spirit. And this philosophy of education jumps off every page of Cardinal Newman’s *The Idea of a University*.

In sum, could we argue, basing ourselves on Newman and Wojtyla, that the only *true* university is a *Catholic* university, *pace* George Bernard Shaw?

If we take our time-machine up to the present, we might ask what the current Pope has to

34. Cited by him in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* at note 20.

offer on this topic. It is interesting to note that in the massive corpus of Joseph Ratzinger, one finds very little on Catholic education. Since he changed his name to Benedict XVI, however, he has dealt with the topic extensively. Not surprisingly, all eyes and ears were focused on him as he was to meet with Catholic educators in Washington, D.C. on April 17, 2008. The encounter was originally billed as an address to the presidents of America's Catholic colleges and universities. Word has it that the interest-level of most of the intended audience was so low that the event was re-fashioned into a more generic grouping.

I am going to offer a decidedly minority opinion about the papal talk. First, it cannot be ignored that *Ex corde* was not mentioned even once—not even as a footnote. Secondly, of a four-page discourse, less than a quarter of the document could be considered as directed specifically to institutions of higher learning and actually, only one paragraph was uniquely suited to colleges and universities. Why did this turn of events occur?

I want to suggest that Pope Benedict has come to the conclusion that the vast majority of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States are beyond repair and sees no reason to expend time and energy on a lost cause. I think Pope John Paul had come to a similar judgment on American religious life and so just dropped the entire project, turning his attention to encouraging new religious communities, rather than focusing on the reform of existing ones. I suspect the present Holy Father has determined to adopt a like course in regard to American colleges and universities that once were rooted in a strong ecclesial identity and no longer are. Simply put: Don't waste effort on institutions that will die; support new ones that have a truly Catholic ethos and sensibility. Time will tell whether that is the precise course he is charting and, if so, how wise such a course might be.

Pope John Paul II issued *Ex corde* on the Solemnity of the Assumption in 1990. Throughout his pontificate, he consistently presented the *Sedes Sapientiae* as the model for Catholic scholars. Once more, we find a connection to Cardinal Newman here, for it was Newman who headed each of his University essays with the invocation "*Sedes Sapientiae, Ora pro nobis,*" and actually dedicated the University to Our Lady under this very title.³⁵ But why? Because, Newman asserted, the Seat of Wisdom was a model for simple believers and for theologians alike because she operates from faith and reason at one and the same time. The great convert wrote:

Thus, St. Mary is our pattern of faith, both in the reception and the study of Divine Truth. She does not think it enough to accept, she dwells upon it; not enough to submit to the Reason, she reasons upon it; and not indeed reasoning first, and believing afterwards, with Zacharias, yet first believing without reasoning, next from love and reverence, reasoning after believing. And thus she symbolizes to us, not only the faith of the unlearned, but of the doctors of the Church also, who have to investigate, and weigh, and define, as well as to profess the Gospel; to draw the line between truth and heresy; to anticipate or remedy the various aberrations of wrong reason; to combat pride and recklessness with their own arms; and thus to triumph over the sophist and the innovator.³⁶

May the Virgin who guided the steps of Cardinal Newman to the fullness of truth, as she guided Pope John Paul II and now guides Pope Benedict XVI, ensure for us a Catholic Academy of the third millennium which is wholly directed toward her Son, Who is Truth Incarnate.

35. See Mary Katherine Tillman, ed., *Rise and Progress of Universities and Benedictine Essays by John Henry Newman* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), p. xvi.

36. Sermon XV, "The Theory of Development in Religious Doctrine," *Oxford University Sermons* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909), pp. 313f.

