

## “REVERSING THE SECULARIST DRIFT”: JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY AND THE TELOS OF CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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*The author explores John Courtney Murray’s thought on the telos of Catholic higher education. Although best known for his political writings on church and state and for his advocacy of religious freedom within a pluralistic society, Murray has also written extensively on Catholic higher education. After reviewing some of the core principles that guided his thinking on the nature of Catholic education and the relation of theology to other academic disciplines, the article offers some practical suggestions for realizing Murray’s vision in today’s context.*

GIVEN JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY’S STANDING among Catholic theologians and the importance of ongoing debates about the nature and mission of Catholic universities, it is surprising that his thought on higher education has not been more influential. Murray is best known for his pioneering and sometimes controversial work on both religious freedom and the relation between church and state in a pluralistic democracy. His *We Hold These Truths* is a classic in American religion and politics.<sup>1</sup> Less well known are his writings on Catholic higher education, some of which are gathered in Leon Hooper’s edited volume, *Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*.<sup>2</sup>

In these writings Murray articulates a vision of the telos of the Catholic university that provides a theological foundation for a Catholic intellectual

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<sup>1</sup> John Courtney Murray, S.J., *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> J. Leon Hooper, S.J., ed., *Bridging the Sacred and the Secular: Selected Writings of John Courtney Murray, S.J.* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1994).

and spiritual renewal. They contain valuable insight for us still today as we continue to grapple with the nature and mission of the Catholic university and the relationship between religious ways of knowing and knowledge in nontheological disciplines. Murray attempted to integrate spiritual and intellectual knowledge into a coherent whole, drawing on Catholic authors throughout the tradition. He also took sharp positions against both Catholic educators who refused to engage modern thought and secularists who rejected any form of knowledge that moved beyond the finite realm of phenomena. Yet his theology of higher education is seldom discussed.

One reason Murray's thought has not influenced discussions over the past four decades may be that many of his writings on higher education are relatively unknown and have never been gathered together in one volume.<sup>3</sup> Another reason is that some scholars have misapplied his political principles on church and state to his thought on the Catholic university. In *We Hold These Truths* Murray says that religious freedom and expression must apply to all faiths, arguing that religious freedom is a practical necessity in a pluralistic society because it allows diverse peoples with different religious beliefs and no beliefs to live peaceably and civilly in a governmental system that provides a neutral forum for their clashing political visions. Constitutional principles and religious freedom comprise what Murray calls "articles of peace" in that they promote civility under circumstances that would otherwise lead to conflict and violence. Likewise, academic freedom benefits both church and society by allowing differing and clashing perspectives to have a neutral forum for being aired civilly. Charles Curran applies this idea in a way analogous to Murray's justification for religious freedom.<sup>4</sup> Curran concludes that academic freedom is essential, but assumes that the secular understanding of academic freedom developed by the American Association of University Professors should apply to Catholic universities. The problem with Curran's view is that Murray did not himself adopt a *secular* principle of academic freedom; in fact, he rejected it. Murray did apply his political principle of providing a neutral and civil forum for all viewpoints to the *public* university, where he insists that theological perspectives, which emerge from major sectors of America's pluralistic society, must be represented among the many competing perspectives considered and debated in the university.<sup>5</sup> But he argued for a more theological approach to inquiry and for a privileged place for the Catholic tradition within Catholic colleges and universities.

<sup>3</sup> Hooper's collection gathers some of these writings, but not all.

<sup>4</sup> On Curran's attempt to apply Murray's political thought to Catholic university education, see Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Higher Education, Theology, and Academic Freedom* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1990) 160–62.

<sup>5</sup> Murray, *We Hold These Truths* 125–39.

David Schindler attempts to refute the implications of Murray's political thought (the "article of peace") for Catholic universities,<sup>6</sup> but did so unnecessarily because, as noted, Murray did not apply his political principles to the operation of the Catholic university. Both Curran and Schindler apparently misunderstood Murray, perhaps because they drew predominantly on his church-state writings rather than on some of his less well-known writings on Catholic higher education. His writings on the nature and mission of the Catholic university reveal that he was solidly rooted in the Catholic spiritual and theological tradition, and there is nothing in his writings that could be taken to support a secularist version of academic freedom. The Catholic university, he said, while necessarily open to all ideas, must be grounded in traditional principles of Catholic thought and spiritual life. These principles include the following: theology is the architectonic science that gives the various subject matters their direction and goals; the telos of Catholic education is to bring students to intellectual and spiritual wholeness; and Catholic higher education is to be based on the doctrine of the Incarnation.<sup>7</sup>

In his essay "On Christian Humanism," Murray points out that the Incarnation sanctified human nature in its entirety by elevating it toward the divine. This elevation implies that any purely temporal end of education is a profanation of the spiritual dignity of each student.<sup>8</sup> The Incarnation means that human nature is not enclosed in itself, defined by its purely natural and human possibilities, as both secularism and the older Scholastic theory of a "pure nature" would hold. Through the Incarnation human nature is directly related to the divine because Christ, both human and divine, has assumed humanity into his nature. Christian educators, therefore, must cooperate with the Holy Spirit to fashion an integral person who is intellectually, morally, and spiritually whole. The development of "the whole man"—a term Murray considered synonymous with Christian and Catholic—requires an integration of social, intellectual, moral, and spiritual life. The purpose of higher education, then, is to form the fully developed Christian.<sup>9</sup> The Christian educator is the "midwife" who helps bring to birth the full humanity of the students. The faculty member should, therefore, view his or her work as a cooperation with the Spirit of God in building society and the world.<sup>10</sup>

Murray's insistence on intellectual and spiritual wholeness was integral to his incarnational thinking. The Logos, the Word of God, came as the

<sup>6</sup> David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996) 155–59.

<sup>7</sup> John Courtney Murray, S.J., "Towards a Christian Humanism: Aspects of the Theology of Education," in *Bridging the Sacred and the Secular* 124–32, at 124.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 127.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 125.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 128.

light of the world. That light is the same light that illuminates the philosophical and scientific intelligence. Christ is the one truth in which all truths are ultimately one. The Catholic university, therefore, must encompass universal knowledge founded on a broad range of sciences and learning and integrated into a philosophic view that, in turn, is then related to a coherent body of Christian truth. In the empirical methods and aims of the sciences, we recognize an impulse that is both human and holy, an impulse that, "if it does not stop halfway can bring man to the Word of God."<sup>11</sup> Yet scholars in most academic disciplines stop well short of this end.

The Catholic scholar, though rooted in the Catholic tradition, must be open to all streams of thought in the modern world, with the same freedom to explore his or her subject matter as any other scholar. This openness was at variance with much Catholic education of Murray's time. During the first half of the 20th century, some prominent Catholic educators in the United States routinely condemned modern thought and culture as antithetical to Christianity. There were many complex forces that contributed to this negative reaction against modernity, but the negativity did have an adverse effect on Catholic intellectual life. Pope Pius X's 1907 condemnation of Modernism with his encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* had a chilling effect on scholars in Catholic colleges and universities.<sup>12</sup> Catholic college libraries were either purged of Modernist books or had them locked up, available only to those who had special permission to use them. Books were to be censored by bishops and not allowed to be published unless they met strict standards of orthodoxy.<sup>13</sup> If they were already published, they were to be suppressed and kept away from Catholic students.<sup>14</sup> Catholic priests were forbidden to be editors of journals or periodicals without prior written permission of their bishop;<sup>15</sup> and they were not allowed to attend academic conferences at which any hint of a Modernist topic might be discussed.<sup>16</sup>

The encyclical was criticized by many as authoritarian and repressive of freedom of thought. Philip Gleason believes the condemnation had long-term, damaging effects on Catholic intellectual life, creating what some

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 127–28.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Pius X, *On the Doctrine of the Modernists = Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (Boston: Pauline [1990s]).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. no. 52.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. no. 51. This kind of censorship was not new in Catholic universities. The Jesuit *Ratio studiorum* also forbade the use of questionable (especially modern) material and prohibited any criticism of the thought of Thomas Aquinas. See Jesuits, *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum of 1599*, trans. Allan P. Farrell, S.J. (Washington: Conference of Major Superiors of Jesuits, 1970) 26, 30–37, 66, 80.

<sup>15</sup> *Pascendi* no. 53.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. no. 54.

have called an “intellectual reign of terror.”<sup>17</sup> That may be an exaggeration, and the suspicion of and hostility toward modern thought and academic freedom did not characterize all scholars in Catholic universities. It did, however, find frequent echo in the writings of some American Catholic educators during the first half of the 20th century. For example, Hunter Guthrie, S.J., inaugurated president of Georgetown University in 1949, derides modern concepts of academic freedom, calling them a false liberty leading to license. Intertwined with Guthrie’s criticism is a rejection of much of modern thought in favor of an emphasis on classical learning. With the exception of science, Guthrie opined, modern thought has little to offer.<sup>18</sup> Edward Rooney, S.J., wrote that “the Catholic educational institution may not tolerate in its classrooms or in its publications advocacy of doctrines or practices that are in contradiction to its own fundamental tenets.”<sup>19</sup> By “advocacy” he clearly means to include even “consideration” and “discussion” of problematic ideas. Father John O’Hara, Prefect of Religion at the University of Notre Dame during the 1920s, believed that “error whether doctrinal or moral simply had no rights, and the godlessness of the secular campus and the libertinage that was fostered by modern American literature could be banished from Notre Dame without any great loss.”<sup>20</sup> This position was not uncommon in Catholic institutions.

Murray was well aware of the deficiencies of modern secular thought, and he did not hesitate to criticize them. Yet he held that the Catholic intellectual’s task was to analyze and understand that thought rather than merely denounce it. In his essay “Reversing the Secularist Drift” Murray said the Christian educator’s goal was “to seek and love and liberate the truth that is at the heart of every error.”<sup>21</sup> Many Catholic educators wanted to shut out the modern world and keep Catholic students enclosed in the protective embrace of the Catholic college, as if it were a fortress or a cloister. Murray protested this tendency:

Is the Catholic scholar a self-inclosed spiritual monad in a secularist world? And is the Catholic institution of learning simply a citadel, a fortress of defense, or an

<sup>17</sup> Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University, 1995) 16.

<sup>18</sup> Hunter Guthrie, *Tradition and Prospect: The Inauguration of the Very Reverend Hunter Guthrie, S.J., as Thirty-Fifth President of Georgetown University . . .* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1949) 73.

<sup>19</sup> Edward B. Rooney, S.J., “The Philosophy of Academic Freedom,” in *A Philosophical Symposium on American Catholic Education*, ed. Hunter Guthrie, S.J., and Gerald G. Walsh, S.J. (New York: Fordham University, 1941) 126.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas T. McAvoy, *Father O’Hara of Notre Dame: The Cardinal Archbishop of Philadelphia* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1967) 102.

<sup>21</sup> John Courtney Murray, “Reversing the Secularist Drift,” *Thought* 24 (1949) 36–46, at 36.

asylum of escape? Does it exist on the periphery or at the center of the present cultural crisis? Has it an orientation rather sectarian than Catholic in the adequate sense? Is it the focus of purely centripetal movements, all its currents incoming, none out-going?<sup>22</sup>

Unfortunately, the answers to these questions at many Catholic colleges during the early 20th century were affirmative. Against this centripetal tendency, Murray held that the Catholic college “ought to be the point of departure for a missionary effort out into the thickening secularist milieu. . . . It is not enough to stand firm against the [secularist] drift; for after one has stood firm, the drift itself still continues to sweep other minds and souls off into the shallows and on to the rocks.”<sup>23</sup> Rather than defensiveness, the Catholic college needs to develop an “intellectual apostolate” that would nurture both mind and soul, producing spiritually mature, committed young scholars who would be a leaven to the world they entered upon graduation.<sup>24</sup> This apostolate requires a sincere engagement of Catholic thought with modern developments in science, literature, history, philosophy, and the social sciences.

Murray’s thought may have run counter to some elements of the dominant Catholic educational emphases of his time, but he was in full agreement with a broader Christian tradition of reflection on higher studies. Murray drew on John Henry Newman regarding the necessity of engaging the thought of the times, but he drew equally on Clement of Alexandria and Origen. The schools of Alexandria, he claimed, still represent the Christian ideal of higher learning.<sup>25</sup> Great Catholic thinkers have always engaged contemporary currents of thought and attempted to appropriate what was true and good in non-Christian sources, even while rejecting, after long analysis and discernment, what is pernicious. Some Catholic thinkers have always been reluctant to engage knowledge from such sources, but the overall thrust in Catholicism has been to incorporate new forms of knowledge into a comprehensive, overarching theological framework.

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215), for example, ridiculed those Christians who were afraid of Greek philosophy as if it were a siren, afraid of hearing it lest they be seduced and led astray.<sup>26</sup> Philosophy, understood in a broad sense to include scientific investigation, provided an education preliminary to a deeper learning in the faith. “Philosophy was to the Greeks what the [Mosaic] Law was to the Hebrews: a tutor escorting them

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 40–41.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 40–46.

<sup>25</sup> John Courtney Murray, S.J., “The Christian Idea of Education,” in *Bridging the Sacred and Secular* 133–41, at 141.

<sup>26</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 6.89; cited in Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1998) 30, 189 n. 10.

to Christ.”<sup>27</sup> There is but one way of truth, but “different paths from different places join it, just like tributaries flowing into a perennial river.”<sup>28</sup> A Christian should cull whatever is useful from all intellectual disciplines, including mathematics, the fine arts, literary studies, and philosophy.<sup>29</sup>

Origen (ca. 185–254) placed philosophy at the core of his educational program—not philosophy as we understand it today, but as *philo-sophia*, love of wisdom. The philosophical life is one oriented toward the intellectual and spiritual search for wisdom and lived virtuously according to the dictates of wisdom. God is evidenced everywhere in the universe, so the study and observation of the natural world is essential to our training and journey back to God. Origen’s educational program, therefore, included the study of physics, geometry, astronomy, and philosophy, as well as Holy Scripture. Each human mind is created in the image of God—as a participation in the Logos—and there is, therefore, a dynamism in the movement of the mind that orients and guides us toward the divine. For Origen, the study of the natural world is not an endeavor separate from moral and spiritual effort; they are unified as integral dimensions in the search for truth.

Drawing on the Alexandrians, Murray concluded that we must engage non-Christian currents of thought in the modern world and incorporate what is good in them. However, he also insisted that the educational process must move inexorably beyond disciplinary knowledge and place all knowledge within a broader theological context. All knowledge moves dynamically toward an ultimate horizon, and educators must foster that movement, not truncate it, when they reach the limits of disciplinary knowledge. The integration and ordering of knowledge is key. Murray would not have theology and philosophy merely sitting alongside, yet unconnected to, other academic disciplines. Knowledge must be both deep and broad. “A knowledge is deep when it is integrated. One sees deeply into a truth when one sees it in relationship to other truths, in all its premises and conclusions, in all its applications to life. A deep knowledge, therefore, is of its nature wide, well nourished by fact, well structured into a system of knowledge.”<sup>30</sup>

Academic freedom implies the freedom to pursue truth beyond disciplinary boundaries, to order knowledge, and to seek its integration. In this, Murray’s idea of academic freedom differed substantively from that of his secular peers, and from the common understanding of academic freedom as it developed in America. Murray’s correspondence with Columbia

<sup>27</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, I – III, trans. John Ferguson (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1991) 42.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

<sup>30</sup> John Courtney Murray, S.J., “Woodstock’s Wisdom,” *Woodstock Letters* 73 (1944) 280–88, at 281.



University historian Robert MacIver, who headed up the “American Academic Freedom Project” (AAFP) in the early 1950s (with Murray as a participant), illustrates his reservations about the secular notion of academic freedom. The aim of the AAFP was to defend academic freedom against threats from political and economic interests following the Second World War. MacIver, in consultation with numerous leading scholars around the country, produced a major book entitled *Academic Freedom in Our Time*<sup>31</sup> justifying the necessity of academic freedom in American universities. Academic freedom for MacIver meant that the scholar and the student are free to learn for their own sake, to seek truth. But truth for MacIver, as for many scholars, is narrow. A statement is true when it is “in accord with the facts,” with the way things can be shown, using methods of scientific and rational inquiry, actually to be. The scholar observes the phenomena, gathers data, and applies the “logic of evidence” using his or her own ingenuity and reason.<sup>32</sup> For MacIver, truth derived from revelation or faith does not constitute this kind of knowledge and therefore is to be discounted in the academy. Truth “is relevant only to knowledge that depends on investigation, that can always be questioned and retested, and that is never accepted on the ground that it is the deliverance of any authority, human or divine.”<sup>33</sup> Faith then becomes an “invasion” of this realm of scientific investigation. Faith is always understood as something accepted blindly, without critical thinking, without assessment of facts and experience. MacIver’s concept of faith was that of belief based on acceptance of an extrinsic authority, not an intrinsic divine illumination of the mind:

Academic freedom is . . . a right claimed by the accredited educator, as teacher and as investigator, to interpret his findings and to communicate his conclusions without being subjected to any interference, molestation, or penalization because these conclusions are unacceptable to some constituted authority within or beyond the institution.<sup>34</sup>

This definition rightly sought to exclude heteronomous interference from ecclesiastical, governmental, or economic interests. The alternative it presents, however, is that only truth derived through autonomous reason counts. There is no consideration of an alternative to both an absolute autonomy and external heteronomy. MacIver’s notion of truth as only that which is attained through scientific investigation was itself the offspring of a philosophical position that limits the human mind to a small island of the real.

<sup>31</sup> Robert M. MacIver, *Academic Freedom in Our Time* (New York: Columbia University, 1955).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 285.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 6.



MacIver even claims that the academy must exclude any conclusions that “lie apart from or beyond the test of investigation” because it is “at odds with the scientific spirit.”<sup>35</sup> Only empirical investigation into phenomena is valid. In fact, MacIver states that no area of reality must be fenced off from scientific investigation. He argues that religion usually contains a cosmology and teaches that there are social consequences to the violation of moral codes, or that there is a divine force at work in the world with efficacious action on natural processes and human history. These teachings are ascertainable or falsifiable through investigation, MacIver asserts, so they are proper subjects of academic study.

The divine is here treated and understood as something tangible and objective in the phenomenal world, not as an intangible spiritual reality. MacIver rejects the idea that religious consciousness may legitimately be brought to bear on science. Science may study and criticize religion as a phenomenon, but religious ways of knowing may not be brought to bear on or criticize “secular” inquiry.

Murray vigorously, though irenically, criticized MacIver’s views. He supported academic freedom *rightly understood*, but he rejected the *secular* understanding of it—as the free pursuit of only that truth that can be subjected to and verified by the scientific method—because it failed to guarantee the mind’s movement beyond empirical knowledge to a knowledge integrated with philosophy and theology. MacIver’s view, quite simply, lacked philosophical respectability.<sup>36</sup> Scientific naturalism and relativism, then dominant in secular universities, are as apt to squelch the academic freedom of those who do not hold to them as any religious obscurantism. In correspondence, Murray asked MacIver:

Granted that revealed truth and rational truth are distinct, what should be the status of the former within the university? If revealed truth is truth, and if the university is in pursuit of truth . . . on what grounds does the university decline the pursuit of revealed truth? Why should it refuse to involve its students in the great, and highly intellectual debates that have historically revolved around this concept? It seems that these questions ought to be touched [on] in a discussion of academic freedom, defined as the right and responsibility to pursue “the truth.” Only some hidden assumption would warrant the narrowing [of] the concept of “truth” to rationally-arrived-at truth.<sup>37</sup>

Murray rejected the notion that Catholic colleges and universities were any less “universities” because of their commitment to a tradition, as

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 135.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from John Courtney Murray to Robert MacIver, February 4, 1954, John Courtney Murray Collection, Woodstock Theological Research Center, Georgetown University (II F 305. 3 L).

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Murray to MacIver, (undated), *ibid.* (II F 305. 3 0) 3.

MacIver claimed. The basis of Christian colleges, says Murray, “is a commitment to some overarching view or value, be it Catholic, Protestant, Quaker, or whatever. The commitment is freely made and commonly shared. And is it to be said that those colleges, as intellectual communities, are not ‘free’ because they are committed?”<sup>38</sup> Murray would have none of it.

Like Newman, Murray believed that truth emerges from both the collaboration of mind with mind and the clash of mind upon mind. The collaboration and clashes occur between not only student and teacher but also Catholic theology and modern forms of thought, all of which must be freely explored and aired, with the goal of integration always in mind. We must know and understand sympathetically the tumultuous life and temper of our particular time, discern its positive and negative elements, then attempt to direct and transform minds with God’s grace. The dynamic eros of the mind requires it. The Catholic university must be open to all forms of knowledge and methods in the modern world, but theology has a privileged place; it is not just one discipline alongside others. Theology and philosophy help structure knowledge from the various disciplines into an overarching viewpoint.

Murray’s simultaneous openness to modern thought and his deep rootedness in the entire Catholic tradition remains useful in the 21st century. One can argue that the movement from the various academic disciplines to theological considerations is seldom pursued today, even in Catholic colleges and universities. The discipline of theology usually exists in isolation from other academic disciplines. Melanie Morey and John Piderit have shown how anemic is the connection between disciplinary knowledge and Catholic theology, and how poorly versed are scholars and administrators in Catholic universities in connecting them.<sup>39</sup> Murray would have viewed this isolation of a theological foundation from academic studies as a grave flaw. To fail to envision a humanity beyond our merely natural lives, he said, is to refuse to be totally human, and to limit our knowledge to the finite world is to betray the full spiritual nature of our humanity. It is a refusal of the call to be divinized, indeed, to be fully human.

Murray’s writings on Catholic higher education can help us think about the direction study in Catholic colleges and universities should take. I now offer some practical suggestions that could help us move in that direction in our current academic setting.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Melanie M. Morey and John Piderit, S.J., *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* (New York: Oxford University, 2006) 108–9.

### FULFILLING MURRAY'S VISION TODAY

Murray's view on Catholic higher education has much in common with the theological epistemology of more recent theologians such as Michael Buckley and John Haughey.<sup>40</sup> They all draw on patristic, medieval, and modern theology, so it is no surprise that they end up with similar concepts regarding the dynamism of the mind and the telos of the Catholic university. Yet challenges remain for Catholic educators today: (1) how do we translate these concepts into a general framework for the curriculum, and (2) how do we recruit and develop a faculty capable of furthering this telos? These are tasks that Murray did not have to worry about in quite the same way as we do—after all, he lived in a time when a more robust (if more stringent and narrow) Catholic culture held sway in Catholic universities. Although academic disciplines had already begun to fragment prior to his time, a Catholic ethos still prevailed in these institutions. Faculty and students held shared beliefs about the truth of Christianity. All knowledge would have been assumed to fit within a broader Christian worldview. Teachers would have conveyed Christian thought and principles in numerous ways, so students would have absorbed them almost unconsciously. Those common assumptions and worldviews no longer exist in 21st-century America, or in the West generally.

We can no longer assume that faculty and students in Catholic institutions will be able to connect knowledge in the various academic fields to a broader Christian framework. It must be made explicit for them, and to do so, Christian theological insight must be inculcated across the disciplines. Peter Steinfels writes that the Catholic tradition “must be something that pervades the work and life of a college or university and is not limited to the theology department.” Two courses in theology, he says, will not guarantee “any significant grappling with the Catholic heritage if [Catholic theology] is not present elsewhere in the curriculum.”<sup>41</sup> Morey and Piderit point out that “the Catholic intellectual tradition does not reside solely in the theology and philosophy departments, and its vibrancy in any Catholic college or university is dependent on the eagerness of faculty to pursue related academic and intellectual issues that arise within

<sup>40</sup> Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1998); John C. Haughey, S.J., *Where Is Knowing Going?: The Horizons of the Knowing Subject* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2009). See also Kenneth N. Garcia, *Academic Freedom and the Telos of the Catholic University* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012) for a discussion of how the principle of academic freedom must be redefined in light of a Christian understanding of the mind's eros for God.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Steinfels, “Catholic Identity: Emerging Consensus,” *Origins* 25 (1995) 173–77, at 175.

their academic disciplines.”<sup>42</sup> This calls for a broader engagement with the Catholic tradition than is currently the case. Murray contended that theology must be integrated with philosophy, literature, history, and the social sciences, no matter how difficult the task, and he acknowledged that theology’s vitality “will always depend both on what it can borrow from these disciplines and on what it can give to them.”<sup>43</sup>

The mission of the Catholic university is to ensure that the entire continuum of reality is explored in both its full, finite extension and its full spiritual depth, not as separate orders of knowledge. Knowledge of the finite world should be viewed in relation to knowledge of the Infinite, and there should be as clear an articulation between them as possible—moving from conceptually separate domains within the continuum of reality to the divine ground of the entire continuum. Not all scholars must follow this directionality, but Catholic universities should ensure that there are *some* faculty members in each academic department who want to not only pursue knowledge beyond their disciplines but also actively explore its relation to Christian philosophy and theology, even while respecting their distinctive methods and subject matters. I here offer some general principles that should guide this process.<sup>44</sup>

First, the Catholic theological and spiritual tradition cannot be learned and absorbed in a short time. Years of study and formation are required. Scholars with the intellectual and spiritual desire to undertake this study must be supported and rewarded, especially since current secular academic standards tend to favor those who remain on disciplinary islands. If the university is unable to recruit scholars with dual expertise in the Catholic tradition and their own specialized discipline (and there are few today who possess it),<sup>45</sup> then it must dedicate the resources to train and further develop existing faculty who have a desire to expand beyond their disciplines toward the theological. Comprehensive faculty development programs should be established to help faculty gain this expertise. Below are some concrete steps Catholic colleges and universities could take to foster such faculty development. These steps are meant to be suggestive, not prescriptive.

- (a) *Summer Seminars.* Universities should organize summer seminars, modeled on National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminars,

<sup>42</sup> Morey and Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education* 105.

<sup>43</sup> John Courtney Murray, S.J., “On the Idea of a College Religion Course,” in *Jesuit Educational Quarterly* 12 (1949) 79–86, at 80.

<sup>44</sup> The discussion that follows is a highly abbreviated and modified version of chapter 8 of my *Academic Freedom and the Telos of the Catholic University* (see n. 40 above).

<sup>45</sup> See Morey and Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education* 107.

for 15 to 20 faculty members interested in learning about how aspects of the Catholic tradition can inform their own disciplines. The seminars would last from four to six weeks each, aimed at introducing faculty to the basic literature and issues at the interface of theology and other academic disciplines. Seminar topics could cover areas such as: (1) theology and evolution; (2) Catholic social thought and the social sciences; (3) theological and social science perspectives on personhood; (4) theology and modern literature; (5) Catholic theology, feminism, and postmodern thought; and (6) the Catholic ideal of an integrated education. The goal of the seminars would be to present models of how Catholic thought can both inform contemporary issues and fruitfully relate to particular academic disciplines. Senior scholars should, ideally, direct the seminars, and curricular plans aimed at integrating the material into courses should be developed toward the end of the seminars.

In the case of smaller liberal arts colleges where there might not be enough faculty members to constitute a seminar on a given topic, scholars from nearby institutions should be invited to participate.

- (b) *Sabbatical fellowships*. During the academic year, some faculty members should receive sabbatical leaves dedicated to exploring in depth how the Catholic intellectual tradition can broaden, deepen, and inform their own disciplinary work. For example, a political scientist or economist who studies poverty and third-world development might study basic texts of the Catholic social tradition. A developmental psychologist could focus on narratives of conversion and spiritual development in the Hebrew prophets and in the writings of mystics such as Augustine, Edith Stein, and Thomas Merton, then compare those narratives to models of psychological and moral development expounded by authors such as Erik Erikson, James Fowler, and Lawrence Kohlberg. In some cases, it might be optimal to have several scholars from different departments study a common theme, such as a theologian, a biologist, and a physicist studying and discussing recent literature at the interface of theology and the natural sciences. The literature in this area is growing rapidly and there would be no shortage of stimulating texts to discuss and ideas to debate. Sabbaticals would enable faculty to dedicate substantial time to their focused study. Because the Catholic tradition is so rich and extensive, these sabbatical fellowships should be the core of all faculty development efforts.
- (c) *Course Development*. Faculty should be expected to incorporate what they learn during the seminars and sabbaticals into some of their courses. This will ensure that students have the opportunity to explore reality beyond disciplinary subject matter, move toward an ultimate

horizon,<sup>46</sup> and experience knowledge that is deep because integrated, as Murray points out. There are a number of means to do this. The first is for disciplinary scholars to develop introductory and capstone courses in their departments, based on the knowledge gained during seminars and sabbaticals. Another means is to encourage theologians to develop expertise in one of various specialized disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, political science, biology, physics, or literature, and then have students in the majors take courses in the interface between theology and their discipline from them. Yet another alternative is to develop team-taught courses involving theologians and disciplinary experts. Each university must determine which alternative works best for their unique circumstances. Educators must always foster a sincere and respectful dialogue between theology and the disciplines, seek integration where possible, but never seek to impose theological perspectives.<sup>47</sup>

- (d) *Spiritual Retreats*. Scholars are, by disposition and training, analytical, critical, argumentative, and skeptical. Yet there is another dimension to them that must be developed: their spiritual depth. Spiritual growth is a life-long process, so a spiritual sense must be evoked, cultivated, and allowed to mature. Catholic universities can aid this process by sponsoring occasional spiritual retreats at a monastery or retreat house for participating faculty members. Chairs of theology departments or directors of campus ministry can work out special arrangements with suitable retreat masters familiar with the academic life. In addition to prayer and silent contemplation, retreats might include talks (by the retreat master) on the spiritual lives and writings of great theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, John Henry Newman, Simone Weil, or Edith Stein—academics who successfully integrated spiritual and intellectual life.

Second, while all faculty members—Catholic and non-Catholic—should be encouraged to learn more about the tradition, especially its classic theological and spiritual texts, those who experience this work as a spiritual

<sup>46</sup> A scholar at the beginning stages of course development would do well to read John J. Piderit, S.J., and Melanie M. Morey, eds., *Teaching the Tradition: Catholic Themes in Academic Disciplines* (New York: Oxford University, 2012). The essays collected here are aimed at assisting faculty to more fully integrate Catholic themes in their course work. The volume features articles by disciplinary specialists from the natural sciences, mathematics, the social sciences, and the humanities.

<sup>47</sup> Murray said that if theology was to be the “queen of the sciences,” it must be allowed to be imperious. Murray, “On the Idea of a College Religion Course” 80. For a discussion of why the terms “servant” and “leaven” are more appropriate than “queen” in describing the relation between theology and other disciplines, see Garcia, *Academic Freedom* chap. 7.

calling and are willing to undergo lengthy study and spiritual transformation should be especially encouraged. During Murray's time, most faculty would have held firm Catholic convictions. That is no longer the case. Therefore, while reading classic texts of the tradition is important, it is not enough in itself. Alasdair MacIntyre points out that these texts can be read and interpreted in radically different ways, depending on the particular philosophical and ideological lenses through which a scholar views his or her study, be that lens Marxist, Freudian, feminist, or postmodern.<sup>48</sup> Interpreting the Catholic tradition through some of these ideological lenses will serve (and has served) to deconstruct and distort the tradition. This is inevitable to some extent, and we must not censor or ignore these philosophical positions. We must engage them to discover the seeds of truth within them—and who would argue that these positions have not brought some needed correction to distortions within the Catholic tradition?—to discern their errors, and to insist that their critiques of Catholicism be based on a fair understanding of it, and not on current academic stereotypes.

Scholars who share the faith will be best suited to present the riches of the tradition, its complex and difficult history, and apply its teachings for today. They will also be the ones most willing to undergo the kind of continuous intellectual and spiritual renewal required to be Christian mentors to students, to help them cultivate a “Catholic mind”—in a term common during the early 20th century.<sup>49</sup>

Murray says that the teacher must be the midwife of the student's soul. This emphasis on the personal influence of the teacher requires a spirituality that goes beyond the purely cognitive dimension of academic life to the deeply personal. It requires conversion of heart and mind. Teachers who desire to undertake the work of personal transformation are the primary individuals whom the university should encourage. Of course, anyone who wishes to learn more about the tradition should be encouraged, but given the reality of limited resources, those inclining already to full participation in the life of the Word should be afforded highest priority for faculty development resources.

Third, we must build intellectual-spiritual communities of scholars across the disciplines because the modern university is composed not of a single community of scholar-seekers pursuing Truth in its wholeness, but of a multiplicity of disciplinary and subdisciplinary communities pursuing an understanding of ever-narrower realms of reality. This is both a blessing

<sup>48</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1990) 228–36.

<sup>49</sup> Gerald A. McCool, “Spirituality and Philosophy: The Ideal of the Catholic Mind,” in *Examining the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*, 2 vols., ed. Anthony J. Cernera and Oliver J. Morgan (Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University, 2000) 1:35–53, at 49.



and a curse—a blessing in that we have experienced a welcome explosion of knowledge in all realms of study; a curse in that knowledge has become fragmented and often untethered to a moral or theological framework.

Mark Edwards has shown that disciplinary communities have tremendous power to form and capture the loyalty of faculty members, who undergo many years of intensive formation into their disciplinary cultures.<sup>50</sup> Those cultures have their own standards, methods, and internal expectations. Their gatekeepers—in the form of academic departments, promotion and tenure committees, editors of journals, organizers of conferences, book reviewers, and reviewers of grant applications—play a key role in determining who is admitted into the community. Those who conform to the discipline's standards have a reasonable chance of gaining full membership, while nonconformists do not.<sup>51</sup> Those who do not meet the expectations of those in the discipline are not likely to receive tenure. After years of formation into these disciplinary cultures, a faculty member's loyalties to the community of scholars in the field are often stronger than loyalty to one's home institution (including its Catholic mission) and to colleagues in other departments.

Many scholars, of course, come to the realization that disciplinary cultures and perspectives are too confining. They attempt to expand into the precincts of other disciplines where they may develop new, hybrid forms of community. The young, untenured faculty is well advised, however, not to roam too far afield before gaining tenure because those extradisciplinary communities seldom have a say in promotion decisions. To an even greater extent, if scholars with a spiritual eros roam into the realm of the theological, they may encounter stiff opposition from disciplinary colleagues. Even if they are tenured, they may find themselves somewhat ostracized among their peers and isolated, without collegial support and encouragement (sadly, even at Catholic universities). Therefore, while Catholic institutions must hire disciplinary experts with spiritual desire and then provide them time and resources to learn the Catholic intellectual tradition in depth, these are just the first steps in building a strong Catholic culture of scholarship.

The university must also help foster intellectual-spiritual communities of scholars across the academic disciplines—communities through which these scholars will find reciprocal encouragement, guidance, and support. These communities must not, of course, become intellectual ghettos—scholars must remain active participants in their own disciplinary communities—but

<sup>50</sup> Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Religion on Our Campuses: A Professor's Guide to Communities, Conflicts, and Promising Conversations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 103–4.

rather extradisciplinary communities providing its members mutual support. Indeed, the Catholic university should consider ways to use these alternative scholarly communities in assessing the work of scholars seeking to stretch themselves beyond disciplinary boundaries, especially for purposes of promotion. Disciplinary excellence must be a requirement in tenure and promotion, but movement toward the whole of knowledge should be another important criterion for those scholars who undertake the effort. Murray argued against a univocal understanding of academic freedom that applies to scholars in all universities, and even suggested that the understanding of academic freedom and the criteria for judging scholarly work might vary for different academic communities, depending on whether they are Christian or secular. These variants would flow out of the nature and finality of the academic institution being considered, and would be structured into its legal policies.<sup>52</sup>

The question of justice is relevant here. It would be a grave injustice to hire and develop a scholar with the expectation that he or she will integrate disciplinary and theological insights, only to have them be denied promotion by disciplinary committees with a strong bias against such endeavors. Catholic colleges and universities should, therefore, reassess their criteria for promotion and tenure, then develop institutional policies that ensure that such injustices do not occur.

Fourth, we must seek to form intellectually, morally, and spiritually mature students. Every student in the Catholic university must be able to take courses that connect knowledge in their majors to philosophy and theology in the Catholic tradition. Alasdair MacIntyre says that specialized academic work, though important, should be secondary to the broader goal of helping students place knowledge from their disciplines within an integrated understanding of the whole of reality. He further notes that students in a Catholic university should recognize that learning in the various specialized academic disciplines “remains incomplete until it is to some degree illuminated by philosophical inquiry,” which, in turn, is “incomplete until it is illuminated by theologically grounded insight.”<sup>53</sup>

Pursuing the deep truths of each discipline and connecting them to the whole is quite different from merely requiring students to take some courses in theology and philosophy (most Catholic colleges and universities require students to take two to three in each). Such requirements are important, but there is seldom a requirement that the courses in a student’s

<sup>52</sup> John Courtney Murray, S.J., review of *Academic Freedom and the Catholic University*, ed. Edward Manier and John W. Houck, in *AAUP Bulletin* 53 (1967) 339–42, at 341.

<sup>53</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, “Catholic Universities: Dangers, Hopes, Choices,” in *Higher Learning and Catholic Traditions*, ed. Robert E. Sullivan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2001) 8.

major be related to and informed by relevant aspects of the Catholic intellectual tradition.<sup>54</sup> To achieve the latter, there should be a seminar or capstone course of one or two semesters within each major that makes the connections. Introductory courses in each major should introduce students to some of the connections that will be dealt with in more detail in the capstone course. Then, in between the introductory and capstone courses, connections can be made where they naturally arise during the course of individual classes. This will expose students to the theological dimension of their chosen fields, or at least to how theology may be in dialogue with their majors.

Finally, there must be strong and principled administrative support to make sure that there are qualified faculty, with expertise in both the disciplines and the Catholic tradition, who can carry on a dialogue between them. Administrators must ensure that faculty have the support, time, and freedom to develop the required expertise. Academic freedom exercised in the Catholic university means that scholars must be allowed the freedom not only to pursue research unencumbered by external authorities, but also to pursue truth beyond disciplinary confines toward an ultimate horizon.<sup>55</sup>

Administrators should not be naïve about the extent to which many faculty will resist such efforts. Initiatives along the lines indicated will require strong leadership, vision, and commitment (not to mention backbone!) on their part. Further, senior administrators have an obligation to appoint provosts, academic vice presidents, deans, and department chairs who enthusiastically support these initiatives—not those who will look on them as merely more administrative mandates to endure half-heartedly, but those who experience the mission as a spiritual calling and who will use their influence, in a spirit of Christian generosity and understanding toward all, to make appropriate changes in departmental cultures. Administrators must exercise prudent, equable, and thoughtful—though firm—governance and guidance over a long period of time to gradually change attitudes in these cultures. Prudence dictates that radical changes not be forced on faculty abruptly and hastily, engendering strong resistance and diminishing morale. Instead, gradual changes, inspired not by heavy-handed impatience for change, but by the Holy Spirit, should guide leaders' decisions so as to inculturate Christian scholarship organically.<sup>56</sup> Administrators should be mindful that even Christ did not win disciples to his cause all at once—not even some who later became his ardent followers. Some

<sup>54</sup> See Piderit and Morey, eds., *Teaching the Tradition* 6.

<sup>55</sup> For an extended discussion of a properly theological definition of academic freedom, see Garcia, *Academic Freedom* chap. 7.

<sup>56</sup> For a discussion of inculturating theology theonomously and organically into other disciplines, see *ibid.*

followed him right away, while others were skeptical. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, some of the doubters began to ponder his message and eventually were able to absorb and accept his teachings. It will be no different for many scholars in Catholic colleges and universities. Some will eagerly undertake the effort; others will come around more slowly; some will resist and reject it entirely (and they must be free to do so). Respect must be shown to all, but faculty development must go forward.

Finally, administrators should allocate resources for these faculty development programs: for the senior scholars directing summer or academic-year seminars; for sabbatical salaries; for stipends for faculty participating in the summer seminars; for seminar books and materials; and for retreat expenses. These constitute serious financial commitments, but they are really no different from supporting sabbaticals for regular disciplinary research, honoraria for outside experts and consultants, and other academic expenses. It will, however, require some redirecting of existing priorities and a long-term commitment to secure endowments for new programs to develop faculty expertise in the theological dimension of their disciplines.

One of Murray's goals was to ensure that Catholic scholars fully engage knowledge in the various academic disciplines, learn from that knowledge, and incorporate what is good in it into a broader and more integrated Catholic vision. That remains our task today, but an even greater challenge faces us. The academic disciplines, even those in many Catholic colleges and universities, have drifted into secularity and have become resistant to religious thought. Murray cogently articulates a robust and vital vision for integrating theology across the curriculum of Catholic colleges and universities. We would do well to recover his thought and its relevance for the Catholic university of the 21st century.