

The Church, Higher Education and Global Concerns

Since the eternal Word of the Father has taken on a complete human nature, Jesus himself embodies the first and primordial sacrament of the encounter between God and man. Or, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states it: "The Word became flesh in order to save us by reconciling us with God" (456). St Thomas Aquinas insists on the importance of a union "in the person" for the integrity of Christian belief and practice, otherwise it would be "to abolish belief in the Incarnation and to undermine the entire Christian faith" (*Summa theologiae* IIIa q.2, a. 2). Furthermore, the faith-conviction that Christ "entered once for all into the Holy Place" (Heb 9: 11) compels the Church to communicate to every human being living truths about the person and work of the Savior. Thus by both divine design and mandate, the Apostles and their successors are charged to ensure that all the nations learn the truth about baptism and the remission of sins (see Mt 28: 19; Lk 24: 47). For no person stands excluded from the divine strategy for drawing human beings to a beatifying share in God's holiness. Indeed, as the *Catechism* again insists, God's plan in creating us reveals his goodness and his will that we share in his own blessed life (1).

The communication of truth within the context of Christian belief does not mean that the Church promotes an ideology or that her concern is merely an intellectual one. Rather as a doctrine of personal salvation, Christian belief involves the education of the whole person, the training of both heart and head. But because Jesus himself instructs the disciples to communicate divine truths to every living being, the Church has always encouraged Christian thinkers to engage aggressively

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in the work of intellectual outreach. In fact, the earliest theologians are known as apologists because they undertook the task of explaining Christian revelation using the categories of thought that formed the common culture of late antiquity. In every age of evangelization, the Church must look again for the human language that will communicate authentically divine truth, and because the Christian view rejects an inherently destructive conflict between faith and reason, the Church shows a willingness to acknowledge what the human mind can contribute to *fides quaerens intellectionem*—to faith seeking understanding.

The 3rd-century Christian theologian and writer Origen, whose eminence in Christian learning Hans Urs von Balthasar ranks along with that of St Augustine and Aquinas, lays down a norm that still remains valid. In his "Homily on Exodus," Origen counsels the Christian Church in the following way.

If we sometimes come across something which has been said wisely by the pagans, we should not immediately spurn what was said just because of the author's name; nor is it right for us, because we observe God's law, to spurn the words of prudent people. We should do as the Apostle says: 'Test everything; hold fast what is good' (1 Thes 5: 21).¹

The acknowledgment that Christian evangelization ought to capitalize on the learning of those who are not informed by Christian faith supplies one reason for promoting Catholic education throughout the world. For among the various objectives that the Catholic university must promote, Catholic institutions of higher learning provide the place where intellectual outreach can develop and flourish.

¹ Origen, "Homily on Exodus," no. 9 in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, vol. 6, p. 260, as cited in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spirit and Fire*, trans. Robert J. Daly, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1984), p. 207.

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In fulfilling this task, moreover, the Church not only continues the tradition that 2nd-century apologists such as Justin Martyr began but also responds to requirements that religious communities in North America recognize as pressing for their seminaries and schools of theology.

According to the "General Institutional Standards" issued by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (1990), each member institution seeking accreditation or its reaffirmation shall give evidence of appropriate attention to the issues and concerns related to global theological education.² The Association, moreover, calls for documentary evidence that the member schools are actively engaged in achieving this goal. Such firm insistence on the part of ATS (the major accrediting association of theological schools in North America) reflects an increasing awareness among the members of the theological education community that religious bodies hold an uniquely privileged place in fostering the common good of the global village.

But if globalization is to move beyond the reductionist level of a mere nominalist ideology, with its inflated rhetoric and ephemeral slogans, the effort must cultivate suitable structures in order to ensure that global concerns remain part of our common agenda. In my judgment, the Catholic Church, in many and diverse ways, is particularly well suited to develop the organization which a sustained effort at globalization requires. In this paper, then, I would like to explore one particular aspect of the Church's contribution to globalization, namely, higher education in the world community. Briefly, I will make three points: First, the theological reason for linking the nature of the Church's mission with the global advancement of both sacred and profane learning; next, the

² See the *ATS Bulletin* 39, Part 3 (June 1990), p. 31.

Church's historical involvement with encouraging advanced learning on a worldwide scale; and finally, the actual status of the Church's commitment to this project as witnessed in its current legislation.

I

First, the nature of the Church and its Christocentric mission to communicate a body of teaching. When the earliest Christian authorities applied the term "Catholic" to the Church, they distinguished two principal ways in which the Church exists as "catholic", or as the original Greek suggests, "according to the whole." First, the ancient Christian writers described the Catholic Church as spread geographically throughout the world, and, consequently, distinct from any particular church or sect. Secondly, they recognized the Church as possessing the totality or universality of orthodox teachings and true gifts from Christ and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, authors diverse as Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) in his *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate* (251) and Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) in his *Catechesis* intimated a causal link between the Church's geographical universality and the catholicity of its creed. Thus Cyril writes:

The Church is called "Catholic" because it extends through all the world, from one end of the earth to another. [But] also because it teaches universally and without omission of doctrines which ought to come to the knowledge of human persons, about things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; and because it brings under the sway of true religion all human classes, rulers and subjects, learned and ignorant, and because it universally treats and cures every type of sin committed by means of soul and body, and possesses in itself every kind of virtue which can be named, in deeds and words, and spiritual gifts of every kind.³

³ *Catechesis* 18, 23 (PG 33, 1044). I am indebted to Walter H. Principe, C.S.B., "Catholicity, Inculturation, and liberation Theology: Do They Mix," *Franciscan Studies* 47 (1987): 24-43, for this analysis, though I modify some of his conclusions about the relationship between geographical

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Because the source of all unity in the Church remains the Risen Christ, these patristic authors correctly maintain that there exists an intrinsic relationship between the Church's ability for expansion to every part of the world (its intrinsic elan for globalization, if you will) and its capacity for teaching every sort of person a true doctrine about a virtuous life. Moreover, as the theologians of *praxis* have recently brought to our attention, this communication of truth and bestowal of goodness does not remain at a sheerly intellectual level, for, as a properly divine endowment, the grace of Christ not only informs our minds, but also transforms our lives.

The best illustration of the universal Church's participative share in a saving doctrine is that which stands at the summit of the human vocation, namely, the beatific vision. Here the formal influence of the divine Essence itself combines with what the theological tradition calls the *lumen gloriae* so that the higher "doctrina"—what God and the blessed know—can redound to the lower orders of instruction. From God and the blessed to the angels to the prophets to Christ and his apostles to the *prelati* and teachers and preachers of the Church, there exists one universal causal order of principal to instrumental, or to use a better expression, of ministerial teachers. Of course from the perspective of salvation history, Christ alone stands at the historical center of this entire revelatory process; for it is he who both teaches the angels and remains the source of every authentic truth that the Church delivers over to the world. Moreover, because God communicates through Christ a single holy teaching—what Aquinas calls the "sacra doctrina"—to every intelligent creature, we recognize a formal community in the *docta*, that is, among those who are taught. In its "Decree

universality and orthodox catholicity.

on Ecumenism," the Second Vatican Council explicitly associates Christ's purposes in founding the apostolic college (with Peter at their head) with the divine intention to perfect the fellowship of charity in the world. "In order to establish this his holy Church everywhere in the world till the end of time, Christ entrusted to the college of the twelve the task of teaching, ruling and sanctifying."⁴

Because the incarnate Word stands at the center of the Church's mission to instruct the nations, this ministry represents a service to divine truth. In 1889, the Russian theologian Vladimir Solovieff (1853-1900) expressly linked the hypostatic union of human and divine in Christ to the Church's being a real instrument and visible image of divine power. And from this he concluded that "in the Christian Church, there exists a materially fixed point, an external and visible center of action: the apostolic See of Rome, that miraculous icon of universal Christianity."⁵ 75 years later, the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, refers to the Roman Pontiff as the "visible source and foundation of unity and communion"⁶ for the whole Church. Thus, "according to [God's] purpose which he set forth in Christ" (Eph 1: 9), the Roman See, "that miraculous icon of universal Christianity," is charged with the propagation of divine truth throughout the world.

II

⁴ *Unitatis redintegratio*, chap. 1, no. 3.

⁵ Vladimir Solovieff, *Russia and the Universal Church*, trans. H. Rees (London, 1948). Because of his appreciation for the role of the Petrine Office in sustaining the universality of the Church, the author is sometimes known as the "Russian Newman." Furthermore, shortly before the end of his life, he joined the Roman Catholic communion.

⁶ *Lumen gentium*, chapter 3.

The Italian Franciscan Felice Peretti, Pope Sixtus V from 1585-1590, offers an interesting example of how the Roman Pontiffs recognized the importance of official Church involvement in higher education.⁷ Falling at the end of the 16th century, the pontificate of Sixtus V represents a certain convergence and culmination of the energies generated both by the Catholic Reform, for which the Council of Trent is largely responsible, and by the Italian Renaissance, to which the schools of humanist learning contributed much. In addition, to the establishment of what today we know as the Vatican Polyglot Press and the institution of the Vatican Library, Sixtus effected the first substantial post-Tridentine curial reorganization.⁸ On 22 January 1588, his apostolic constitution *Immensa* inaugurated the *Congregatio de universitate studii romani*, which was dedicated exclusively to providing for the requirements of higher learning both in Rome and in other major centers of learning which maintained connections with the Holy See. On his own initiative, moreover, Sixtus V personally promoted the establishment of new universities in Fermo (Italy), Graz (Austria), and Quito (Ecuador). As a result of these and other activities, scholars correctly assign the beginning of the Church's formal engagement with higher education in the modern period to the pontificate of Sixtus V.

⁷ Born in 1521 at Anconia of poor parents, Felice first entered the Conventual Franciscan Friars through the good services of his priest-uncle. From the middle of the 16th century, the future Pope was actively involved in teaching and educational administration, and in 1556 he was named chief executive officer, *viz.*, Regent of Studies, for the Conventual Franciscans. His principal patron at Rome was the saintly Dominican Pope Pius V, who relied much on the highly capable administrative talents of Cardinal Montalto, as Peretti came to be known.

⁸ For further information on this aspect of Sixtus V's papacy, see P. Graziani, *Sisto V e la Riorganizzazione della Santa Sede* (Rome, 1910).

The official commitment of the Church's administrative structures to the service of higher education in the 16th century continued a long history of active association by the Church with higher education. Of the 52 universities founded before 1400, at least 29 were created by papal rescripts and 10 others as a result of joint cooperation between the Holy See and the local civil authority. The establishment and development of universities at Bologna, Paris, Oxford, Salamanca, Toulouse, Prague, Cologne, Heidelberg, Leipzig, Louvain, Basil, Cracow, Vilnius, Mexico, Manila, Quito, Lima, Guatemala and Warsaw provide the best testimony to the active way in which the Roman See committed itself to the cause of global education. By focusing only on the initiatives of the Holy See, I do not wish to overlook the other truly gargantuan efforts, especially by the Jesuits, but also by the Oratorians, the Ursuline sisters, and the Christian Brothers of St John Baptist de la Salle, which the Church expended in the field of education during the 16th century.⁹ These and other educational endeavors, especially at the time of the industrial revolution in Europe, represent true and notable moments in the globalization of education.

III

Other curial reforms designed to facilitate the development of a world educational system followed the initiatives of Sixtus V, *viz.*, Leo XII in 1824, Pius X in 1908, Benedict XV in 1915, and, more recently, Paul VI in 1967. In its present configuration, the Congregation for Catholic

⁹ The religious upheavals which accompanied the Catholic Reform in the 16th century impacted on the way of life; the children of Europe found themselves drawn out of the intimacy of the family and into the public life of a school where, as a result, they constituted for the first time a distinct social category.

Education¹⁰ includes three departments or sections which deal with all Catholic seminaries,¹¹ Catholic universities and other institutions of post-secondary education and higher studies, and Catholic elementary and secondary schools. "Catholic" in this context refers to those educational institutions which come under or depend upon some form of ecclesiastical authority.

In addition to the organization of what effectively serves as a ministry for global education, the Popes have also influenced the course of Catholic education through documentation.¹² For instance, sections of Pius X's *Pascendi* (1907) stipulated about educational matters as part of the reaction to the Modernist crisis.¹³ But three documents exclusively concern global education. Of these, two apostolic constitutions apply only to the special ecclesiastical faculties set up for the sacred sciences. First, the apostolic constitution *Deus scientiarum Dominus* (1931) marked the first time that the Holy See issued the practical equivalent of accreditation guidelines.¹⁴ In it, Pope Pius XI acknowledged that the Church's need for excellence in scholarship demanded specific legislation

¹⁰ The Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1988) gives the Congregation its present name; formerly it was known as *S. Congregatio pro Institutione Catholica*.

¹¹ For technical reasons, seminaries which serve the Eastern Churches and seminaries in mission areas come under the respective congregations for those areas, *viz.*, Congregation for the Oriental Church and for the Evangelization of Peoples.

¹² The Third Book of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* is devoted exclusively to the Church's office of teaching (nos. 747-833).

¹³ For further information on the relationship of Modernist Reaction to Catholic intellectual life in America, see Gerald P. Fogarty, S.J., *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1870-1965, Päpste und Papsttum*, Band 21, (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1982), pp. 190-194.

¹⁴ See J. de Ghellinck, "La Nouvelle constitution sur les études," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 58 (1931): 769-785.

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with regard to standards for the administration of those pontifical universities, faculties, and institutes which provide instruction in theology and related disciplines.¹⁵ Second in 1979, John Paul II's *Sapientia Christiana* superseded *Deus scientiarum Dominus*. In the Foreword to this constitution, Pope John Paul II recognizes obstacles, such as, the "passage of time" and the "diversity of place," which seem to make the promulgation of general norms a futile endeavor, but he affirms that the right balance between universal norms and the freedom to adapt to varying local conditions can nonetheless be achieved. As a result, "together with the legitimate differentiation of the Faculties, the unity of the Catholic Church in these centers of education will also be clear to everyone."¹⁶ As I have said, these two documents concern only those faculties which depend directly on the Holy See. But in 1990, by the apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, John Paul II endeavors to augment the visible unity of the Catholic Church in every Catholic university. In his opening remarks, the Pope reminds us of the profound theological truth which underlies the communication of divine truth on a global scale. He cites St Augustine: "In fact, the blessed life consists in the joy that comes from the truth, since this joy comes from you who are Truth, God my light, salvation of my face, my God."¹⁷ An authentically Catholic concern for globalization, I submit, will surely consider geographical universality, but above all it will aim to ensure that every woman

¹⁵ On May 20, 1968, the Congregation issued *Normae quaedam* which adapted some of the elements of Pius XI's document to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.

¹⁶ *Sapientia Christiana*, Foreword, no. IV.

¹⁷ *Confessions* Bk. 10, chap. 23, 33 (PL 32: 793-795).

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and man attains to a personal encounter with the God who is the First Truth, and by whose Word no one is ever deceived.

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