

the “Gentleman” and the Christian

James L. Heft

MY TITLE SHOULD REMIND SOME OF YOU OF the distinction made by the famous nineteenth-century British Cardinal and educator John Henry Newman between the liberally educated man, that is the “gentleman,” and the committed Christian. I will retain Newman’s term “gentleman,” but I want to emphasize here at the outset that this term need not signify anything male. I will use it to refer to a kind of person, one who is ideally formed by the practices of culture and liberal education—and today this of course includes women as well (Newman’s nineteenth century Oxford was not open to women). Newman elaborates on this distinction between the gentleman and the Christian in five lectures that he gave in the spring of 1852. He had just been appointed the rector of a Catholic university to be established in Dublin. Later, he added other lectures and in 1873 published the collection as *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated*. Jaroslav Pelikan, the great historian of Christian doctrine (and, once upon a time, editor of this journal) writes that Newman’s *Idea* is “the most important treatise on the idea of a university ever written in any language.” That is very high praise from a judicious scholar who, by the way, knows many languages!

Newman’s central assertion is that the gentleman is not the Christian. To be a Christian requires something quite different from and more than a liberal education, thus more than a highly cultured mind. For Newman the difference between the two is considerable. Traditionally, the tendency among many Catholics has been to emphasize the continuities between the two. The tendency among some more conservative Protestants has been to emphasize their discontinuities and perhaps oppose them in a way that Newman would not. And the tendency among some liberal Protestants has been to conflate the two. I can see some merit in all three

ways of understanding the distinction. I can also see some problems.

So let us journey towards the potential and the problems of Newman’s distinction. First, I will spell out Newman’s understanding of the difference between the gentleman and the Christian. Then, I will comment on how very different higher education is today compared to Newman’s time. And finally, I ask what significance this distinction might have for us as Christian educators today. In particular, I will ask whether this distinction helps us with three contemporary challenges we all face as Christian educators: the need for moral education, the recovery of an intellectual dimension of the Christian faith, and the call to be distinctive as Christian institutions. So, in short, we will move from Newman to our own times.

Newman’s distinction

Newman makes his distinction between the gentleman and the Christian in a number of places, but let us concentrate on only two of them. In one, towards the end of his eighth lecture, “Knowledge Viewed in Relation to Religion,” Newman provides one of the fullest descriptions of the gentleman, the person of culture. In the other, the fifth lecture of the *Idea*, “Knowledge Its Own End,” Newman develops the argument that liberal education, which does make the gentleman, does not make him the Christian.

Newman’s liberally educated person, that is, the gentleman, is characterized by several qualities of moral import. First, he is sensitive to others for, in Newman’s words, “he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate; he is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome.” Besides being sensitive, he is a model of what today

we would call “civility.” By this Newman means that the gentleman “is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments, or insinuates evil which he dare not say out.” Being both refined and civil, the gentleman takes the long view of things, and exercises an almost stoical composure. Hence, Newman says that “he is patient, forbearing, and resigned, on philosophical principles; he submits to pain, because it is inevitable, to bereavement, because it is irreparable, and to death, because it is his destiny.” Concluding his description of the gentleman’s qualities, Newman says that “nowhere shall we find greater candour, consideration, indulgence. . . [the gentleman] knows the weakness of human reason as well as its strength, its province and its limits.”

FOR NEWMAN, THEREFORE, A LIBERAL EDUCATION is an excellent means by which society gets refined and civil gentlemen. What does Newman mean by a liberal education? We might begin by clarifying what he doesn’t mean. First of all, no particular core curriculum produces the gentleman. It is interesting to note that in *The Idea* Newman says nothing about curriculum. But he does warn against “distracting and enfeebling the mind by an unmeaning profusion of subjects,” pretending that “a smattering in a dozen branches of study is not shallowness, which it really is, but enlargement, which it is not.” All such quantitative accumulations cripple students intellectually, suffocating them beneath an oppressive weight of disconnected trivia. In Newman’s estimation, intellectual dilettantes were capable of only “viewiness,” people who are ready at a moment’s notice with views on nearly every subject. Finally, studying the humanities is not the same thing as acquiring a liberal education. Persons can acquire a liberal education through the study of the sciences, as long as they do so not primarily to prepare for a profession, but rather to develop their capacity to think and to reason.

What then is true liberal education? For Newman, it forms the mind. It teaches a person to “do philosophy,” if you will, which means putting things in order and relating them as they should be related. In other words, liberal education makes connections. In Newman’s own words:

The result [of a liberal education] is a formation of mind, that is, a habit of order and system, a habit of referring every accession of knowledge to what we already know, and of adjusting the one with the other; and, moreover, as such a habit implies, the actual acceptance and use of certain principles as centers of thought, around which our knowledge grows and is located. Where this critical faculty exists, history is no longer a mere story-book, or biography a romance; orators and publications of the day are no longer infallible authorities; eloquent diction is no longer a substitute for matter, nor bold statements, or lively descriptions, substitute for proof.

At the very heart of Newman’s understanding of the liberally educated person stands an ideal not unlike that which the ancients held when they educated persons in the art of rhetoric. Rhetoricians spot immediately a false argument and are skilled in presenting their own ideas in a compelling way. Again, Newman:

[A liberal education] gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It teaches him to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant. It prepares him to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility.

Having heard Newman’s description of a liberal education and of the “gentleman” whom it forms and shapes, we may ask ourselves: what college or university would not want such a person as a graduate or indeed as a member of its faculty? Persons capable of such civility, committed to such careful intellectual work, and possessed of such skill in speaking and writing—would they not be a credit to any educational institution? Even granting that no one, not even Newman himself, could embody all the qualities he attributes to the “gentleman,” would not someone with only half

the qualities listed by Newman elevate the tone of any departmental meeting?

But it is precisely at this moment, as we admire the qualities of the gentleman, that Newman asserts that even the most excellent liberal education by itself falls short of making the Christian. According to Newman, the gentleman's ethical sensitivity and intellectual training can be achieved completely apart from any religious belief or formation. Let us return to Newman's description of the gentleman precisely at that point where he makes it clear that the gentleman is not the Christian. After listing the gentleman's qualities, Newman goes on to say that if he is a non-believer, he nonetheless remains too refined to ridicule religion. He respects acts of piety and the ministers of religion but still does not perform such acts or believe what the ministers preach. He is tolerant and open and does his best to remain objective. In other words, the liberally educated person may turn out to be a St. Francis de Sales, a person of liberal learning but also of deep piety and religious commitment, or an Edward Gibbon, a sophisticated and worldly skeptic. Newman, the patristics scholar, reminds us that "Basil and Julian were fellow-students at the schools of Athens; and one became the Saint and Doctor of the Church, the other her scoffing and relentless foe." What is the distinction Newman draws between the gentleman and the Christian? At another place in *The Idea*, Newman explains that

Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another; good sense is not conscience, refinement is not humility, nor is largeness and justness of view faith. Philosophy, however enlightened, however profound, gives no command over the passions, no influential motives, no vivifying principles. Liberal education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman.

As desirable as it is to possess the qualities of a gentleman, and as necessary as liberal education is to become a gentleman, those qualities and that education provide no assurance that the gentleman will be holy or virtuous. It plainly takes something much more than a liberal education to produce the Christian virtues and to ensure holiness. By itself, a liberal education is simply not able to help a person counter the temptations of life. In fact, "knowledge puffeth up" and may be nothing more than a "substitution of pride for sensuality." Why is this so? Because, according to Newman, "knowledge, viewed as knowledge, exerts a subtle influence in throwing us back on ourselves, and making us our own center, and our minds, the measure of all things." Persons who make themselves the center

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are hardly capable of transcending themselves, or, after the example of Jesus, of laying down their lives for others. In Newman's often quoted words, "Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and the pride of man."

But several questions remain about the way Newman draws the distinction

between the gentleman and the Christian. First, why does Newman distinguish them so sharply? And if he places so much value on being not just a gentleman but also a Christian, why does he say that the business of a university education is not moral but intellectual formation? Finally, given his critique of what liberal learning can produce, why does he so stress liberal education, as opposed to professional and "useful" education?

WE HAVE TIME ONLY TO OUTLINE A RESPONSE TO these questions. Put most succinctly, the answer lies in the fact that Newman was simultaneously fighting opponents on three rather different fronts. First, he emphasized liberal education over against

the growing intellectual and educational movement of his day called utilitarianism, which advocated what we might call strictly technical and professional education. A national debate had broken out in England during the first decade of the nineteenth century, sparked by politically left wing proponents of a “useful” education. They argued that education should prepare students for jobs in commerce and industry. Thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham, William Paley, and later John Stuart Mill argued forcefully that the “good” was the same thing as the “useful.” Newman, however, was convinced that the “useful” would be the enemy of the “good,” though he fully realized that there were, in fact, uses for a liberal education, not the least of which that it fit a person for making a contribution to the good of the larger society.

Second, Newman was also fighting, on the opposite side of the spectrum, an Irish Roman Catholic hierarchy that did not really want a true university—rather, they wanted something more akin to a seminary, a place where young Irish Catholic men might get an education without losing their faith. The bishops were defensive and concerned about preserving the faith. Consequently, he stressed throughout his lectures the need for thorough intellectual training as the first object of a university.

THE THIRD FRONT, SO TO SPEAK, WAS HIS BATTLE with what then were called “non-sectarian” colleges that the British government, under the leadership of Sir Robert Peel, decided in 1845 to establish in Belfast, Cork, and Galway. No theology would be taught. Newman argued that without theology, a university, which is to teach universal knowledge, could not be a university.

In summary, Newman argued for liberal education against utilitarians, for a university and not a seminary against bishops, and for the importance of theological education against “secularists.” But it still is not clear why he so sharply dis-

tinguished between the “gentleman” and the Christian, and why he did not stress moral formation as the Catholic university’s antidote to “mere” liberal learning.

The fact is that Newman did stress moral formation, but he did not locate it in the university with its focus on academic education. For moral education, Newman looked first not to the university but to small residential colleges in which the close relationship between students and tutors would provide the necessary moral formation. In a well-known passage, Newman explains that it is through the close personal contact between student and teacher that great truths are passed from one generation to the next. “Those truths have been. . . upheld in the world not as a system, not by books, not by arguments, nor by temporal power,

but by the personal influence of such men as have already been described, who are at once the teachers and the patterns of it.”

Newman emphasizes the same point in other writings, for example in his *Historical Sketches*, when he distinguishes between the “professorial system” and the “college system.” The latter builds a relationship of genuine friendship between students and their college mentor. Again, in Newman’s own words,

At best, the gentleman is only a “cultural Christian,” one who may enjoy watching the performance of the Christian mysteries but denies their truth and authority. The gentleman does not accept the “dogmatic principle” which, for Newman, clearly affirms the difference between truth and error. Unlike the gentleman, Christians stand below the truth, not above it, and know that in the profession of that truth is their salvation.

“the College is for the formation of character, intellectual and moral, for the cultivation of the mind, for the improvement of the individual.” Within this rich interpersonal context of the college, students rightly speak of their *Alma Mater*, their “Nurturing Mother,” who knows “her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill.”

But there is another and more fundamental reason for Newman’s sharp distinction between the gentleman and the Christian. All his life, he opposed what he called liberalism, by which he meant not political liberalism but rather the conviction that the truly educated person is unfettered in his or her thinking, someone who is open-minded and tolerant. The gentleman, though liber-

ally educated, could easily embrace that kind of liberalism as the doctrine that subverts dogma or the great Christian tradition (something Newman described in his *Apologia*, written about a decade after the *Idea*)

In Newman's terms, liberalism teaches a form of relativism. It holds that there is no truth or falsity in matters of religion, only opinions. Consequently one doctrine is as good as another, and what we believe is not as important as our sincerity in believing whatever we decide is worthy of belief. Finally, we should seek to increase our understanding rather than presume that we can possess the truth. The gentleman who embraces liberalism believes in tolerance, since intolerance is simply not civil. Taste replaces conscience, and aesthetics trumps truth. At best, the gentleman is only a "cultural Christian," one who may enjoy watching the performance of the Christian mysteries but denies their truth and authority. The gentleman does not accept the "dogmatic principle" which, for Newman, clearly affirms the difference between truth and error. Unlike the gentleman, Christians stand below the truth, not above it, and know that in the profession of that truth is their salvation.

If one returns now to Newman's description of the gentleman quoted at the beginning, it becomes clearer, in the light of his defense of the dogmatic principle and his opposition to liberalism of the sort he identified and saw all around him, why a liberal education, in and of itself, does not make the Christian. Liberally educated persons can easily become enamored of their knowledge and their skill in communicating their knowledge, rather than be humbled before the mystery of God, who is always beyond what can be fully understood and adequately communicated.

A WORD OF CAUTION IS NEEDED BEFORE WE move on. Newman's criticism of liberalism, true as I believe it is, could be understood in such a way as to lead people to overlook some of the real benefits of a liberal education. Moreover, modernity forced Christians to deal more honestly with pluralism, not only outside the Church but also within it. Modernity also confronted Christians with a historically-conditioned understanding of the Bible and defended forms of academic freedom that the Christian academy has been slow to embrace. Not

many Christians followed Newman's example and worked out ways to meet the challenges of modernity. I do not think we would be helped today by distinguishing as sharply as he did between the gentleman and the Christian. Granted, Newman was dealing with certain historical constraints. We have our own as well, and our own educational challenges to face, and we will turn to them in a moment.

the revolution in higher education

But before that, we should note how extensively higher education has changed since the time of Newman. It is fair to say that Newman's vision of the University presupposed a largely pre-industrial setting. Moreover, Newman's university admitted only men (and here I do mean only males) of the upper-class, men who could afford to take courses in history and the classics, fairly certain that their families would see to their employment once they graduated. He did not have to deal with highly specialized faculty (the expectation, already embraced in the leading German universities at that time, that professors acquire research-oriented Ph.D's in narrow subjects had not yet taken hold in England). Nor did he have to deal with a board of trustees (though several bishops constantly second-guessed him). He had no government regulations to obey, no large and powerful alumni group to deal with, and no athletic program to contend with. No one complained to him about a bad football season or demanded that the coach be fired.

Nor did Newman have to compete with the great variety of other educational institutions that populate the current educational scene in the United States. The diversification of educational institutions in our country, beginning in 1862 with the establishment of land-grant institutions, followed by the development of the modern research university, and then more recently by community colleges and the for-profit institutions like the University of Phoenix—has been nothing less than extraordinary. The monopoly that the old universities had on education in Newman's time has effectively been deregulated.

Consider also the huge increase in the number of students who, especially since World War II, now enter some form of higher education—and more recently, not just the numbers, but the different kinds of students: more and more women and more people of color, and more people of different

ages and conditions of life. Diverse ways of making education available—weekend colleges and distance education—have allowed place-bound students to acquire an education that otherwise would have been inaccessible.

We are speaking of an immense amount of social and institutional change in the last 150 years. And I have not even touched upon the changes in the way knowledge is understood: for example, the growth of historical thinking in Western culture of a historical sense, the dominance of the scientific and pragmatic ways of thinking, and most recently, the arrival of many forms of what has been called post-modernism. Given all these changes, it is not surprising that the historian J.M. Roberts, who served as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Southampton and then the Warden of Merton College at Oxford, Newman's old university, wrote a little more than a decade ago that "again and again. . . Newman's assumptions reveal themselves to be so different from ours, the background against which he writes is so utterly removed from our own, the universities of his day are so unlike ours, either in their business or their ethos, that we cannot expect him to speak to our specific needs."

In terms of specifics, that may be so. While the diverse institutions of today offer education of varying degrees of quality and rigor, and while genuine appreciation of the importance of liberal education has declined, I consider the immensely expanded access to higher education by diverse populations to be, on the whole, a very good thing. And those changes require certain practical adjustments in our understandings of education. Nevertheless, despite the enormous amount of change that has marked higher education since he gave his lectures in the 1850s, I do believe that Newman still has something to say to us today.

three contemporary challenges

Let us return now to Newman and to the three contemporary challenges I singled out in my introduction, namely, moral formation, the intellectual dimension of Christian faith, and the need for distinctive institutions. I turn first to the need for moral formation. I believe that Newman actually

understates the degree of moral formation that can take place simply through an excellent liberal education. In fact, many of the qualities he identified as characterizing the gentleman would come under the heading of what we would today call virtues or character. A good student is dedicated to the discovery of truth, to virtues of honesty and integrity, to not cooking the corporate books or skipping the scholarly footnotes. There are, after all, the intellectual virtues of attentiveness, honesty, and personal discipline—virtues that carelessness, drunkenness, and promiscuity diminish if not destroy. Such intellectual virtues constitute a form of morality; they shape the way we do our intellectual work. And here is one area where the academy not only should, but also must, stress moral formation—in a sphere of its clear competence. In view of these widely shared aims of higher education, I believe that even Newman would have to admit that his idea of a liberal education helps form in a person at least some intellectual virtues.

To meet the need for moral formation, some academics rely on courses that teach about morality and ethics. Such courses typically compare several moral systems

and emphasize the importance of personal choice, responsibility, and autonomy; sometimes they also emphasize processes for discerning right and wrong. But that is not enough. The first concern of the ancients, and particularly Aristotle and those influenced by his approach, is not the discernment nor even less the choice, but rather the development of the ability, the habit, and the discipline to do what is right. The development of good habits will likely do more to help students perceive moral truths than teaching moral truths will lead to the development of good habits. We need to think more about the development of good habits as a key component for doing thoughtful discernment and making right decisions.

For Newman, the residential character of the British college as distinguished from the non-residential continental European university provided the best context for moral formation. The quality of the personal contact between the students and their teachers provided much of the moral formation. Surely, that continues to be the case, and a

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challenge that Christian colleges, especially those with large student residential populations, should meet with special resources.

FINALLY, WE SHOULD FOCUS NOT ONLY ON STUDENTS when we speak of moral formation. We also need to focus on ourselves, members of the faculty and administration. We would do well to take seriously, for example, the suggestions of the late James McClendon who, following the lead of John Yoder, recommends five university practices that flow from being followers of Jesus: 1) skills in conflict resolution; 2) the practice of social inclusion; 3) the practice of economic leveling, or making sure that the Humanities faculty is not the lowest paid faculty of the college; 4) the acknowledgment of different vocations; and 5) making sure that everyone has a voice. Again, it was Newman who underscored the importance of the behaviors of the faculty in communicating a moral sensibility to students. If we ourselves do not give evidence of good habits, it is unlikely that merely teaching morality as an academic subject will provide any real moral formation for our students.

Secondly, we are challenged to recover the intellectual dimensions of Christian faith. For almost one hundred years most academics have separated knowledge from religion. And one of the reasons academics separated the two was that Christians did not do a very good job of meeting the challenges posed by liberalism and its intellectual variants. Newman saw the problem clearly, but few followed his efforts to solve it. In the United States, this separation of faith and knowledge, potentially fatal to Christianity, began to take shape after the Civil War, and became more prevalent in the 1880s and 1890s in the universities that were founded as (or grew into) our major research universities. Several presidents of the newly developing research universities dismissed the academic worth of the smaller Christian colleges. For example, President Andrew White of Cornell spoke of them as "a regime of petty sectarian colleges," as pietistic institutions that would in time disappear. And President David Starr Jordan of Stanford confidently predicted that a few of the best of them would surely someday become universities. In other words, to become a worthwhile educational institution, religion would have to be left

behind, and the research model of the university would have to be pursued.

Beneath this dismissal of the Church-related college was the separation of faith from knowledge. The story is too complicated to pursue here. Two examples of this separation must suffice. The first example takes us back over a century ago when Henry Horace Williams of the University of North Carolina, once a student for the ministry at Yale but later a philosopher, determined to show his students "how a man can be perfectly modern and yet a good Christian." The trick, Williams argued, was to divide knowledge and religion. Religion concerns, he taught, only the "inner life," and is deeper than and significantly independent of knowledge. Religion is about our conduct, not about metaphysics. Williams, thus, "saved" religion by actually severing its roots from the soil that gives it life: a belief that Christianity is a true religion with true teaching that is to be accepted as true by the believer. Remember, Newman's "dogmatic principle" essentially affirms that Christianity has a cognitive dimension. His assertion of the limits of learning by itself is in no way meant to diminish the importance of knowledge and learning to the Christian faith. And even if theologians rightly affirm that at the core of Christian revelation is the communication of a person, indeed three persons, a mystery never adequately put into language, we can nonetheless *know* something of this saving mystery.

FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES TO HAVE A FUTURE, WE need to have Christian intellectuals on our faculties. If knowledge and religion are separated, it is impossible for a Christian to be an intellectual. And indeed, there are those in the academy who do believe that not only is a Christian university an oxymoron, but so also is a Christian intellectual. But without Christian intellectuals, we will have no Christian colleges and universities. Christian intellectuals are guided by certain habits of thought. For example, they know that the more deeply one gets into what it means to be human, the more inescapable are ethical and religious questions; the more deeply one gets into any form of knowledge, the more necessary it is to make connections with other areas of knowledge; the more intellectually vibrant a religious culture is, the more it will learn from and shape the wider culture. The

Christian intellectual is a believer, one who is nourished by the Word and the Sacrament. Without Christian intellectuals, we have no distinctive academic depth to offer in our institutions.

My second example of the separation of knowledge and faith is a contemporary one. I have been privileged to work with the Lilly Foundation on one of their latest initiatives. Lilly wants highly talented students to think theologically about their lives as vocations and is giving millions of dollars to help Christian colleges and universities do this. The response from the colleges and universities has been enthusiastic. But a number of the participating institutions tend to do three things that reflect a separation of religion and knowledge. First, they put great emphasis on service programs. Second, they tend to locate the administration of the grant in campus ministry and student development, not sufficiently in the academic sector. And third, they shy away from focusing on "highly talented" students and theological reflection. Could it be that we assume that "highly talented" students study science and engineering and that "theological reflection" will attract only less talented students? Is it the case that most faculty think that theological reflection is too personal, too subjective, or even too ideological to qualify as an appropriate form of academic activity? It seems clear to me that we have as yet to overcome the split between knowledge and faith.

FINALLY, MOST BRIEFLY BUT NOT LEAST IMPORTANTLY, we need to be distinctively Christian institutions. I believe that to meet this need we will need to be prophetic. Prophets suffer. The educational mainstream dismisses them, puts them on the margins of society. I noted earlier that some presidents of the first modern research universities dismissed Christian colleges as second-rate and doomed to extinction; today, some may continue to think that an intellectual community is better off if it does not also try to be a religious community. It takes both courage and competence to respond appropriately to such criticism. It takes courage, because the majority of the academic world in the United States, unlike the larger society that surrounds it, is by and large secular. It takes competence because the serious academic work to which the Christian intellectual is called remains largely unaccomplished. And unless our academic work is serious,

whether or not it is so recognized by the larger academy, we really cannot take pride in what we are doing as faculty and administrators of Christian colleges and universities. Here, too, Newman has much to teach us.

As I go around the country, I sometimes get the impression that some of the people at Christian colleges who complain the most about being dismissed by the secular academy fail to realize that their dismissal often has less to do with their being Christian than it has to do with the mediocre character of their academic work. I do not doubt that simple prejudice against religion motivates some forms of dismissal. Our best response, however, is not to complain but to produce better work. Newman would remind us, the gentleman does not complain. And as Newman would also remind us, the Christian has every reason to be confident.

WE HAVE EXPLORED SOME OF THE CONTEMPORARY implications and relevance of Newman's distinction between the gentleman and the Christian. And I offered a few explanations why that distinction, important as it is, was overdrawn by Newman. If it is not possible to overcome the split between knowledge and faith in our educational institutions, then we need to ask ourselves why in the first place we undertake the huge and expensive task of running colleges and universities. If we accept this split, we can offer no institutional reasons why it is better for a student to attend one of our institutions rather than to attend a fine secular institution that provides, apart from its academic offerings, various forms of campus ministry.

Like Newman, we need to be fighting on several fronts at once. If we do so, we will likely get in trouble on both ends of the political spectrum. If we talk about the importance of the moral dimension of education, we worry the left. But if the moral formation we impart includes opposing unjust social structures, we worry the right. If we find ways to bring together knowledge and faith, we raise the specter of indoctrination for the left. But if we take postmodernism and company seriously, we will upset the right. Upsetting both ends of the political spectrum seems to me to be what a distinctively Christian college or university ought to be doing. Therefore, I believe that an educational institution that takes its Christianity seri-

ously will have to fight on several fronts. The need for balance is perennial, and the difficulty in maintaining it has been recognized ever since Tertullian asked what Athens had to do with Jerusalem.

Finally, to work for that balance, we need courage—the courage to believe that our Christian colleges and universities have a distinctive mission that transcends typical left-right polarizations. We also need to have competence—the competence to overcome in compelling intellectual ways the separation of faith and knowledge. Whatever way we choose to express what is at the heart of the Christian faith, let us at least be sure that our understanding of that expression, the heart of the Christian faith, carries within it saving truth

and healing power—deep and strong enough that we can spend our lives exploring it intellectually and confident that that very exploration bears within it a moral formation. †

James L. Heft, SM, chancellor and professor of faith and culture at the University of Dayton, gave this address at the Lilly Fellows National Conference on October 18, 2002. He would like to add that "in the development of this paper, I am indebted to several people: Mary Brown, Una Cadegan, Patrick Elliott and Thomas Lasley of the University of Dayton; William Portier of Mount Saint Mary's in Emmitsburg Maryland, and Mel Piehl of Valparaiso University."

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