# EDITORIAL SYMPOSIUM

## CATHOLICISM 101: CHALLENGES TO A THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

**Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J.**
**Fordham University**

Education in the Catholic faith takes place on three levels—primary evangelization, catechesis, and theology. Presupposing that the student has become a believer through evangelization and has learned the principal teachings of the Church through catechesis, theology engages in a systematic search for deeper understanding.

In his 1998 encyclical on faith and reason—*Fides et Ratio*—Pope John Paul II defined theology as a "reflective and scientific elaboration of the understanding of God's word in the light of faith." The pope went on to say that to understand revelation and the content of faith, one must analyze carefully the texts of Scripture and the texts "which express the Church's living tradition."

Theology has traditionally had a home in Catholic universities, though today some deny that theology belongs in the university at all on the grounds that it is dogmatic and uncritical. In the 19th century, Cardinal John Henry Newman, among others, brilliantly made the case for giving the discipline a prominent place in the university because it deals with a significant body of truth that has a bearing on practically every other branch of knowledge.

Pope John Paul II, in his 1990 Apostolic Constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, taught that theology together with philosophy enables university scholars to overcome the fragmentation of disciplines and synthesize their specific contribution in the light of Christ, the *Logos*, the center of creation and of human history. "Because of its specific importance among the academic disciplines," he wrote, "every Catholic university should have a faculty, or at least a chair, of theology." Later, in an allocution to the most recent general congregation of the Society of Jesus, the same pope declared that the teaching of theology in Jesuit universities "must strive to provide students with a clear, solid, and organic knowledge of Catholic doctrine, focused on knowing how to

*Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J. is the Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University.* *This essay, reprinted from the* Boston College Magazine *(Winter 2006), is drawn from a talk delivered on October 12, 2005, at Boston College entitled "The Faith that the Church Hands On," sponsored by Boston College's Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry.*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

distinguish those affirmations that must be upheld from those open to free discussion and those that cannot be accepted."

Within universities, this ideal is difficult to realize in practice. For a number of reasons, teachers of religion and theology in American universities are inclined to avoid focusing on the content of Catholic faith. One reason might be the American preoccupation with technique and method. As a pragmatic people, we are inclined to look for what William James called the "cash value" of theory. We specialize in know-how rather than know-what. And in some ways, it is easier to talk about method than about content. By concentrating on how to proceed rather than what ought to be held, we can avoid some bitter controversies.

A second reason for the doctrinal decline in Catholic theology is that Catholic theology has traditionally relied heavily on metaphysics. Natural theology enabled theologians to identify the anthropomorphisms and metaphors in the Bible and to formulate a coherent concept of God. The doctrine of God as personal, infinite, and utterly simple was basic to the Trinitarian theology of the Catholic tradition. It provided clues for understanding how there could be three divine persons and still only one God.

In the past two centuries, natural theology has fallen into disrepute. In the academic world, it is almost taken for granted that this branch of philosophy was demolished by the critiques of David Hume and Immanuel Kant. Hume's skepticism and Kant's assault on metaphysics, whatever their weaknesses, have made a deep impression on many intellectuals. As a result, it takes a person of great courage to base anything today on the metaphysics that undergirded classical theology.

A third factor, equally deleterious to doctrinal theology, is the reigning suspicion of authority. Kant himself proclaimed as the first principle of the Enlightenment the slogan *sápĕre aude*—have the courage to use your own intelligence. While acknowledging that the clergyman may be required to follow the doctrine of his Church, Kant insisted that the scholar in the university has the freedom and, in fact, the obligation to use his own reason, without deference to authority. In matters of religion, Kant believed, immaturity is especially unfitting.

The fact is, however, that the doctrines of the Catholic faith are received on the basis of authority. They come from revelation, which is transmitted by those who speak and write as inspired and assisted by God. The mysteries of the Christian religion are truths so hidden in God that they are incapable of being discovered by purely rational inquiry. If we reject authority as a matter of principle, we cannot find a secure basis for holding the doctrines of the Church. There is plenty of room

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for critical reasoning in theology, but unless people accept the authority of accredited witnesses, they cannot be believers or theologians.

In the years following Vatican II, which ended in 1965, many universities converted their departments of theology into departments of religious studies. This shift was motivated by the desire to avoid having to assume a posture of faith. In the discipline of religious studies, Christianity or any other religion can be approached from a nonconfessional point of view with the tools of history, sociology, and psychology. Unlike theology, religious studies makes no claim to settle questions of religious truth.

A fourth source of difficulty is the pervasiveness of the critical spirit. Since the time of René Descartes in the 17th century, the critical program has been dominant in academic circles. Research begins with a bias toward doubt rather than belief. The fiducial component in knowledge is rejected or ignored. The Church, on the contrary, insists that faith is the key. Theology itself has been defined as *fides quaerens intellectum*—faith seeking understanding. Yet in the United States today, it is rare for a university professor to enter the classroom and declare that adherence to the faith is the true path to understanding.

A fifth source of difficulty is the contemporary distaste for propositional truth in matters of religion. Some maintain that faith consists in an existential surrender to sheer transcendence, an encounter with the ineffable. In such existential theology, the term belief is redefined. Traditionally viewed as an acceptance of revealed truth on the authority of God the Revealer, religious belief is instead taken to mean a human effort to express the experience of faith in human language: The statements are symbolic and should not be taken literally. Religious belief in this sense runs no risk of coming into conflict with science or history, but it gains immunity at the cost of being unable to say anything literally true about the things of God.

The Catholic Church, however, is firmly committed to the view that the dogmas of the Church, propositional though they be, are revealed truths to be accepted on the authority of God. They do yield information—for instance, the facts that God is everlasting and that Jesus Christ literally rose from the dead. The statements may be analogous, but they are not mere metaphors.

A sixth factor that makes it difficult to transmit the doctrines of the Church in the classroom is the currency of historicism, or cultural relativism—the conviction that all human truth-claims are historically and culturally conditioned. In this view, past statements may have been true in the sense of being relatively adequate for their own day, but they can no longer be accepted at face value.

Although this kind of historicism contains a modicum of truth, it

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

cannot be defended in the radical form espoused by modernists a century ago or as further radicalized by some postmodernists of our day. Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical on faith and reason, warned against the errors of historicism and postmodernity insofar as they deny "the enduring validity of truth."

A seventh challenge to the presentation of dogma in educational institutions is the fear of offending the conscientious convictions of some students. In Catholic universities today, it can by no means be taken for granted that all students are committed Catholics. A given classroom may well include marginal Catholics, Protestants, Jews, agnostics, atheists, and possibly some Muslims, Buddhists, or Hindus. For such a mixed audience, it seems tactful not to present ideas that are specific to Catholic Christianity.

Historians of the Catholic religious curriculum have documented the shift from faith-centered courses to offerings that make no reference to any specific sacred order. Before 1965, Catholic universities in the United States usually offered courses on the Trinity, Christology, sin, grace, redemption, the sacraments, and the like. Then they introduced courses dealing with ecumenism and comparative religion, in which Catholic doctrine was presented as one point of view among others. And finally, after 1975, they began to teach courses that made no reference to the specific beliefs of any religious community. Their catalogues contained titles such as "Affirmation and Doubt in Modern Thinkers," or "Global Ethics," or "Death and Dying." If consistently applied, this move toward neutrality would deprive the theology department of its reason for existence and would severely limit the power of the university to hand on the faith.

An eighth and final difficulty is that relatively few Catholic students today have the necessary background for theological study. Many do not firmly believe the Catholic faith. Those who do believe may not have been adequately catechized. Theology, as a deeper reflection on faith, presupposes that the student is prepared to accept the principal articles of the faith as the framework in which theological reflection is conducted. For unprepared students, the discussion of complex theological questions can lead only to frustration and confusion.

The principal article of faith and revelation, according to Catholic teaching, is God Himself. The catechism of the Catholic Church quotes as still valid the following words from the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215: "We firmly believe and confess without reservation that there is only one true God, eternal, immeasurable, and unchangeable, incomprehensible, almighty, and ineffable, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons indeed, but one essence, substance, or nature, entirely simple." More than six centuries later, Cardinal Newman

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

wrote this excellent summary of the classical concept of God in his *The Idea of a University*: "God is an individual, self-dependent, all-perfect, unchangeable being, intelligent, living, personal, and present, almighty, all-seeing, all-remembering, between whom and His creatures there is an infinite gulf, and who has no origin, who is all-sufficient for Himself, who created and upholds the universe, who will judge every one of us sooner or later according to that law of right or wrong which He has written into our hearts." Newman's concept agrees with that set forth in 1870 by the First Vatican Council.

If the conception of God, which the Supreme Magisterium of the Church sets forth as a matter of faith, is questioned or denied in the teaching, the whole edifice of Catholic theology becomes vague and unsteady. New concepts of God imported from pantheism, panentheism, pragmatism, or process philosophy are unacceptable and cannot sustain the system of Catholic dogma.

Teachers of theology who deny the traditional concept of God or place it in brackets, as many are wont to do, seriously undercut all other branches of theology. When assigned to teach Christology, for example, they are strongly tempted to avoid the dogma of the Incarnation, which involves the divine nature of Christ, and focus by preference on the humanity of Jesus. Under the rubric of theology, they discuss the historical Jesus—a product of historical method unaffected by revealed truth. Attempting to get at the Jesus of history, they decide to discount the testimony of John and Paul who, they consider, speak too dogmatically. They look only at the synoptic Gospels and do so very selectively, judging that any claim for the divinity of Jesus cannot belong to the original tradition, but must be an insert of the post-resurrection community. As a result of this approach, their courses inevitably come up with a portrait of Jesus as a rabbi hailed as a prophet and regarded by some as the promised messiah. This minimalist approach more often than not serves to weaken the faith of students. A Catholic education should do better.

Courses in ecclesiology are likewise emptied of theological content if they do not presume that Jesus, the founder and lord of the Church, was the Son of God, and that God is the eternal triune being. Dogmatically, the Church is to be seen as the mystical body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, commissioned by Christ to be the teacher of all nations until the end of the age.

It has become common in many places to study the Church by preference from below, that is to say, as though it were a purely human and historical community, which of course, it is not. From this perspective, it becomes impossible to understand why the Church should be necessary for salvation. The claim that the Church should evangelize

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

all nations can no longer be defended. The teachings of the Church cannot be presented as having divine authority. It becomes senseless to speak of the heavenly Church, or to look forward to the final eschatological fulfillment for which Christians pray.

On the college level, courses in the basic doctrines of the Church should be offered and highly recommended for Catholic students. Such courses should be taught from a Catholic point of view—the sacraments explained as divinely instituted means of grace, the sacrificial character of the Mass and the real and substantial presence of Christ in the Eucharist—in spite of the many objections I have mentioned. Measures should be taken to ensure that Catholic college students are familiarized with the essential teachings of Catholic faith and morals and that they gain some idea of why the Church teaches what she does. Students should be equipped to answer common objections to the faith, perhaps through courses in apologetics. They should take introductory courses in holy Scripture and Church history, so as not to be ignorant of Christian origins and development. The philosophy department should offer courses, preferably required, that convey a realist theory of knowledge and a sound metaphysics. In this way, our graduates could be somewhat prepared to stand up against the agnosticism and relativism of the day.

Catholic universities have a unique role to play in the culture wars now being waged. They are privileged places in which the Church can mobilize her resources to hand on the faith, as she must, and foster the intellectual revolution that Pope John Paul II envisaged in *Fides et Ratio*. Only when faith and reason embrace in harmony can the human spirit rise to the full heights for which God has destined it.

## Six Perspectives

### I

It is my honor to comment on Avery Cardinal Dulles' remarks on contemporary challenges to theological education at Catholic universities. Cardinal Dulles has been an important presence on the theological scene since my student days. His own development over the past forty years recapitulates, in many ways, that of the discipline. The theological ideal that Dulles finds articulated in *Fides et Ratio* and *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* is most congenial to me. He goes on to enumerate eight challenges that make this theological ideal difficult to realize in our day. Though I would wish to flesh out, with different accents perhaps,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

some of the history of theological education for lay people in U.S. Catholic universities, I find Dulles' eight challenges to be ones I face.

My first comment is contextual. Dulles contrasts contemporary "doctrinal decline," "the desire to avoid having to assume a posture of faith," and ignoring or rejecting "the fiduciary component of knowledge" with an earlier and more robust form of theological education. If pre-1965 undergraduates did indeed take courses on the "Trinity, Christology, sin, grace, redemption, the sacraments," such courses inhered in a thick subculture whose practices helped to form Catholics in the faith. Another way of looking at the challenges Dulles enumerates is to see them as parts of a larger challenge facing American Catholics, namely, how to form Catholics in the United States without a subculture. While the U.S. Catholic subculture was primarily an immigrant one, it participated in a broader Catholic alternative culture that arose in the nineteenth century. It was this strategy of all-out Catholic resistance to European secular states that the World War II generation of theologians brought to an end at the second Vatican Council. Among their number were the last two popes. The implementation of the Council in the United States coincided with the dissolution of the immigrant American Catholic subculture, the point at which American Catholics became statistically indistinguishable from other Americans in terms of such measures as income and level of education. It is helpful to recall this shift as the context for moves from content to method, from theology to religious studies, and from the "fiduciary component of knowledge" to professional neutrality. Contemporary Catholics inherit Catholic universities from their immigrant forebears, sometimes with required courses in philosophy and theology still intact. Dulles' challenges have to do with figuring out how to be intentional about those universities and courses in a pluralist and voluntary post-subcultural situation that might well be styled "evangelical." A truly momentous shift in this larger transition from subculture to pluralism is that soon most of the people teaching theology in Catholic universities will no longer be priests or religious or those whose education and formation were geared to the priesthood or religious life. Rather, they will be lay women and men whose very real ecclesial locations are more voluntary than canonical. In spite of such real challenges, I see signs of hope. I shall mention two and end with another challenge and a comment.

In his remarks, Dulles insists on the need for doctrinal content as well as method and for a return to metaphysics and natural theology. One of the most hopeful signs I see is a growing interest in recovering St. Thomas Aquinas as a theologian whose metaphysics and natural theology do not stand alone in the manner of *philosophie séparée*. As one example, I cite Nicholas Healy's recent book on Aquinas as a "theo-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

logian of the Christian life." I used it with great profit last year in a course on the Trinity. Dulles' own published comments relating *Fides et Ratio* to the early twentieth-century French controversy over "Christian philosophy" are extremely helpful in this regard. A second sign of hope is the increasing epistemological sophistication of younger colleagues in theology who refuse to ignore or reject Dulles' "fiducial component of knowledge." Instead, they ride it home. I am thinking of works such as Gavin D'Costa's recent book on theology and religious studies in a Catholic university and the essays in the collection *New Wine, New Wineskins*. The authors of these essays are rigorously trained in our best universities but they clearly see their roles as theologians having ecclesial and pastoral dimensions. They exhibit concern for their own spiritual formation and ecclesial location as well as the religious needs of their students. They situate theology in the undergraduate classroom rather than in seminaries. Such epistemological sophistication puts more pressure on theology professors than professional neutrality. They must be rigorous and well-trained theologians to be sure. But due to our confusion about how to form Catholics and the resulting classroom conditions Dulles describes, they must also be apologists, and sometimes even catechists. And they must do all this with intellectual integrity and real pastoral concern for the faith of their students. As one who has sat on a lot of searches in recent years, I know there is a growing pool of Catholic theologians out there who fit this profile. I call them "evangelical Catholics." The future of theological education is about hiring. Dulles uses the word courage with reference to metaphysics. We could use it as well with reference to hiring.

Let me add a word on philosophy and theology. If philosophy is required of all students, it must surely not be separate philosophy. Rather, it must be philosophy done from the posture of the *iusta et recta autonomia* described in *Gaudium et spes* and *Fides et Ratio*. There are "evangelical Catholic" philosophers out there too.

Finally, Dulles suggests that courses in basic doctrine should be available and "highly recommended" for Catholic students. Presumably, he would not require them. My own view is that a case could be made for requiring courses in Catholic theology of all students. Whether this would be a good thing would depend heavily on history and local custom—and on how good the required courses are. Such a question is a reminder that this discussion is taking place after the subculture and at a time when the vast majority of Catholic students are not in Catholic universities. Forming Catholics is our greatest challenge.

*University of Dayton* WILLIAM L. PORTIER

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

## II

It is a very complex matter to discern what went on in theology at the college level prior to 1965 but one thing is clear: students in those days got very little theology if they got any at all. Most Catholic schools, influenced by the Ignatian *ratio studiorum,* gave students a heavy dose of the Western classics and a lot of scholastic philosophy. If they got any "religion" courses it was, at least at my current university, some traditional apologetics and a course on sacraments mainly oriented towards matrimony and *de sexto*. Theology was a matter to be covered in the seminary. Cardinal Dulles looks back to when, prior to 1965, students got a fuller and more classical grounding in theology. I contest that assertion.

The rise of real departments of theology in Catholic universities is a post-1965 phenomenon and if one were to make it a major it did not always have room for the earlier parts of the *ratio* so that, first, classics, and, inevitably, the study of philosophy became somewhat attenuated. There was a further issue that caused a sea change in the way theology was taught: theology moved from seminaries to universities. Moral theology is a case in point. Until the radical rethinking of moral theology was undertaken by people like the late Bernard Häring, moral theology was designed, in the main, to train confessors. When I read *The Law of Christ* in French translation in Rome around 1960, an American moralist said to me, "Kid, it's mysticism; it ain't moral theology." As moral theology developed and continues to develop as more lay people took up the subject, not only did the focus of the questions change but the experience of people who asked the questions and reflected upon them changed as well. What was happening in moral theology was equally happening in systematics and other fields; it was (borrowing Bernard Lonergan's famous distinction) the shift from the classical to historical (not historicist) consciousness.

Such sea changes also made it inevitable that the undergraduate curriculum (and I am speaking here only of undergraduates) would also change. Our curriculum reflects only lingering shadows of the seminary curriculum, but those who major in the field (currently 230 students are declared majors at Notre Dame) get a good theological education grounded in scripture, historical studies, and systematics. One evidence of how good that education is, anecdotally speaking, is that those who go on to seminary education, and a small but steady stream of them do, yawn their way through most of their "advanced" seminary theological courses. That is especially true of those who do our double major in philosophy and theology which has a further requirement of at least one full year of either Greek or Latin.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Those students who take only required courses in theology to fulfill their university requirements reflect some of the problems Dulles mentions but, given that they have imbibed a good deal of relativism in the very cultural air that they breathe and no metaphysics, the far larger problem is that more than a few come to us without much in the way of catechetical background or with a head full of half-baked notions picked up in the general culture. Eighty five per cent of our undergraduates come from Catholic backgrounds but it is not uncommon to find students who have never opened a Bible in their lives or had no formal religious education since only half of our students come to us from Catholic schools. A few are hostile to their required courses but, in the main most are interested and many intrigued. We teach explicitly from the standpoint of "faith seeking understanding" with the assumption that we have their faith as a presupposition upon which to work—an assumption not always a fact.

Dulles makes some very broad assertions about what some theologians are doing today but those assertions are just that—assertions. It may very well be the case that some "deny the traditional concept of God or place it in brackets" but I suspect that Dulles has had very little actual recent experience teaching undergraduates for, if he did, what he would soon learn is that students come with very inadequate understandings of God in general and Christology in particular. Many of my students are tacit docetists; it is the humanity of Jesus and not his divinity that is the problem. They have been taught somewhere that Jesus is divine and, as a consequence, consider him, as one of my best students put it memorably, as "God walking around in a Jesus suit." One of the great problems in teaching undergraduates is not that they come with a priori hostility to the fundamental data of faith or resistance to it but that they come with lots of very bad ideas. One of the useful things that we can do for students is to disabuse them of the bad ideas that they bring with them (a kind of *via negativa*) in order to get them to purify their faith. To do this well one cannot assert; one must teach in a way that is not entirely dissimilar to spiritual direction. To pull that off is perhaps to reach—by indirection—that metaphysics which, Dulles says, undergirds classical theology.

Dulles envisions, if I understand his prescription correctly, at least five courses for students (apologetics, basic doctrines, sacraments, church history and scripture) which would be ideal but simply not realistic given the demands of the contemporary curriculum. In some disciplines (engineering in a perfect example; pre-medical studies is another) the pressure is strong to pare down required courses in order not to add another year to undergraduate education. To add more

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

courses is just not possible given the realities of university instruction today.

We have two required courses in Theology at Notre Dame but many students elect to take more than two. Recently, we have offered basic one credit courses under the general rubric "Know Your Catholic Faith" which take up a specific topic and are taught on a volunteer basis as an instructional overload. Those courses are quite popular. The one I teach each semester on Catholic Prayer is almost always fully subscribed. We understand that this is a mere finger in the dike but, in tandem with the work of campus ministry, allied courses in other departments, the many opportunities for volunteer programs we are trying our best to deal with not only the problems mentioned by Dulles but with the many other social realities (turbulent family histories come immediately to mind) that have already shaped the experiences of our incoming students.

Finally, the shaping of the Catholics of the future is a fundamental *telos* of all Catholic higher education. That task cannot fall on the shoulders of a theology department alone. It is, or, better, should be, the common task of the entire university. To get the contemporary Catholic university to embrace that common task and make it their own is a challenge of olympian difficulty which some universities understand better than others. Alas, too often the task is left to the work of the founding community, the theology department, and campus ministry as many have pointed out. Theology is central to Catholic education but it is part, albeit a critical part, of that education and not its whole.

*University of Notre Dame* LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM

## III

Let me begin with what I believe Cardinal Dulles and I share in common regarding our vocation as Catholic theologians. We do what we do as an expression of our commitment to the God of Jesus Christ as participants in a faith community, which is to say, that our motivation for teaching theology arises from faith itself and from the treasury of a rich Catholic heritage that in addition to theology includes philosophy and many literary, artistic, musical and ritual expressions of Catholic life. Despite our common vocation, I do have reservations regarding Dulles' assessment of and proposals for teaching theology to undergraduates at American Catholic universities and colleges. My major reservation concerns the generalized assumptions that underlie his assessment that undergraduate theology is in decline, having capitulated to "sources of difficulty."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In the interest of avoiding generalization, Duquesne University will be the locus of my response. Believing that Dulles' third source of difficulty, which builds on the first two, gets at the "heart of the matter," I will first address the issue of Catholic universities and colleges adopting an anti-church authority move away from Catholic theology to religious studies. At Duquesne University this criticism does not apply. Duquesne has a theology department with an unapologetic focus on the Roman Catholic faith tradition. In courses entitled "Catholicism," "Jesus the Christ, "The Church," and "Theology of Sacraments," Catholic doctrine is taught. In addition, Duquesne is implementing a new general education curriculum that requires every undergraduate to take a course in faith and reason (see *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, paragraphs 15, 17).

A curriculum, however, is only as good as its teachers. Having been privileged to observe the classroom teaching of many of my theology colleagues, I believe that my colleagues do subscribe to our department's Catholic focus by teaching students in ways that reflect the call in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* to "[f]idelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the church" (paragraph 13, #3).

In keeping with its Spiritan identity, Duquesne University's focus on Catholic theology is accompanied by commitment to purposeful dialogue with other faith traditions and contemporary culture. It is in that spirit that Duquesne's theology department offers some religious studies courses, such as "Judaism, Christianity and Islam." The motivation for such courses is in no way "to avoid having to assume a posture of faith." Rather, in these courses we assist our students to become knowledgeable about and responsive to religious diversity in a heterogeneous culture. Where the creation of "Religious Studies" departments at some Catholic universities and colleges is concerned, I have good reasons to believe (based on numerous conversations with colleagues at professional conferences, particularly those of the College Theology Society), that these schools share Duquesne's motivation. Further, I also know that at schools that have "Religious Studies" departments, Catholic theology is taught.

Without abandoning its Catholic identity, Duquesne's mission advocates for ecumenical openness. Duquesne is not and does not envision itself to be an institution of Catholic religious exclusivism. My university is not unique in this regard. Statistics on undergraduates at Catholic universities and colleges compiled by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities indicate that about 65% of them are Catholic.[1] My sense is that the percentage of non-Catholics

[1]Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, "Membership Statistics," accessed on July 4, 2006, at http://www.accunet.org/display.asp?Category=6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

is actually higher than 35% at Duquesne. If Duquesne were to lose its undergraduates who are not Catholic, as a tuition driven school, it would likely have to close its doors, leaving its Catholic mission unfulfilled.

The religious diversity of our undergraduate population does pose a major challenge to teaching Catholic theology. In almost every theology class, one finds divergent religious pluralism, which makes the classroom a microcosm of America. Because any given course will have not only baptized Catholics (some of whom are convinced fideists, while others are virtually "unchurched;" see Dulles' eighth difficulty), but also a variety of Protestants (including biblical literalists), Jews, Muslims and occasionally Hindus and Buddhists, sitting along side the a-religious and the self-proclaimed post-Catholic atheist, it is not possible for me to be a teacher of Catholic doctrine only. While Catholic theology is the primary focus, I must necessarily address Catholic doctrines without ignoring religious and cultural diversity. In doing so, I am not abandoning Catholic magisterial doctrine "in fear of offending the conscientious convictions of my students" (Dulles' seventh difficulty), nor am I capitulating to "historicism" and "cultural relativism." Experience has taught me that if I am to interest eighteen to twenty-three year olds in the Catholic tradition, I must address it not only with attention to its Jewish and Hellenistic roots, but also in relation to its past and current connections with other religions, especially the monotheistic religions with which the history of Christianity is so intimately intertwined. Teaching Catholic theology requires attention not only to Protestant similarities and differences, but also to relevant teachings of Judaism and Islam. Attention paid to the diverse religious currents shaping their world, will hopefully provide students with an understanding of the religious other and an impetus to imagine together a more just and humane world.

Experience has taught me that teaching undergraduates is about far more than methodology and content. It requires real-life connectedness—my life with the students and theirs with mine. I may prefer that my students were not "knee-jerk skeptics" about all social institutions, including religious ones. However, I know that for many (if not most), personal religious experience (more private than communal) trumps institutional religion. Therefore, a "top-down" approach to authoritative doctrines founded on metaphysics that seem arcane to them is an exercise in futility. They may memorize what is presented for a test, but most will not engage the material. If many of them are to give any positive attention to the Catholic Church, I must provide them with an opportunity to examine evidence that the Catholic Church can be and often is an agent of God's healing and reconciling grace in the world.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Because developmentally most undergraduates are searching for personal identity and in many cases a meaningful spirituality, a "personalist" approach is necessary for teaching Catholic doctrine that helps students, especially Christians, to discern ways to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. As Dulles rightly points out, our era is marked by distaste for propositional truths (his fifth difficulty). For many students, propositional truth claims are "objects of knowledge" that reside "out there" in conceptual space, with no credible connection to their lives. However, students can be attracted to learning Catholic beliefs, especially about the human person, when these beliefs provide them with self-understanding and guidance for living. When I have engaged students in learning Catholic theological anthropology, many are able to recognize that sin and redemption are not abstract doctrines, but individual and communal realities that matter. Furthermore they see that engagement of theology is not only *not* passé, but that it can be a blessing for their lives.

*Duquesne University* ANNE M. CLIFFORD

## IV

I am honored to respond to Cardinal Dulles' "Challenges to a Theological Education." Since he has covered the "challenges" very well, I would like to spend some time reflecting on these, but even more reflecting on the promise of theological education. Along with the challenges noted in his excellent article, there is the further challenge that we tend to forget the gifts, benefits and indeed the pleasures afforded by theological education, and so can be tempted to leave it behind. Finally, I have a modest proposal.

Our American intellectual landscape is increasingly polarized. There is a powerful secular academic establishment which views faith essentially as baggage, an impediment to rigorous inquiry. There is also an increasingly powerful religious awakening which presents a stark mirror image of the secular academy, viewing inquiry as hostile to religion because faith directly provides all answers necessary. In response, the secular academy digs in its heels even more; the anti-intellectual, fideist camp responds by even more militant witness. A good example is the unedifying contemporary controversy pitting evolution against creationism.

The promise of theology is that it offers a mediating position that can break the polarity created by the co-dependence of aggressive secularism on the one hand, and adamant fideism on the other. Taking a cue, as does Dulles, from *Fides et Ratio*: I would claim that the Catholic

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

theological tradition is a Wisdom tradition, a thick intellectual culture woven from the strands of faith and reason, proceeding from faith in revealed truth and developing in response to questions posed by believers and non-believers alike. Our culture is badly in need of a witness that could provide a third option, almost as a healing intellectual balm, a sign of hope, a renewal of the horizons of the mind. Theology can provide this, in fact, is charged, as a Wisdom tradition, with providing this. Theology mediates between religion and its ambient culture (Lonergan).

If our culture is badly in need of a mediating option, our students, *a fortiori*, are in need of training in a style of thinking that enjoys rather than eschews the benefits of commitment to revealed truth—as opposed to a training that, without even noticing it, inducts them into the stark dichotomy defining contemporary intellectual culture. It is not good education to form students unwittingly into this stale and dangerous dichotomy. The American university embraces an ideal of academic "excellence" that is almost defined by its prescinding from religious and other commitments, as though "excellence" were a self-evident absolute value, a kind of a value-free value, needing no further specification other than itself, disembodied from any teleology or roots. Many of the ingredients that go into forming this conception of academic "excellence" are found in the "challenges" enumerated by Dulles. "A Catholic education should do better," Dulles notes. Students deserve a more excellent excellence, an excellence beyond that "excellence" which has encoded into it the sterile dichotomy of secularism-vs.-fideism.

Coming from a school where courses on "the Trinity, Christology, sin, grace, redemption, the sacraments, and the like" are still our standard fare in theology, yet where colleagues in other departments, trained at excellent secular schools, are likely to worry that these courses are not really hard core academic courses but instances of "softball" special pleading coming from an enterprise only marginally academic, I feel under pressure sometimes to justify the benefits of these kinds of courses, not only for non-Catholics but for Catholics. My first (though not only) answer is that they teach students that rigorous thinking is possible within a faith commitment, as that faith "seeks understanding." I find that this is the most powerful apologetic moment for students, creating a sympathy for the Tradition where they may not have had one before, when they see that the same faith that some of their less educated friends and relatives have relied upon for both challenge and consolation can speak with a voice as sophisticated as any at the university but remaining just itself, even as the "understanding" it promotes grows into a beautiful and rich intellectual gar-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

den, like the mustard seed, as Origen says, whose branches afford the birds of the sky—the wise of this world in Origen's allegory—many places to rest and to think.

Here is my modest proposal: that we not accept the challenges as insurmountable, but that we realize people need help in understanding the benefit, say, of accepting authoritative, revealed truth on faith, and of avoiding an absolutely positivist historicism. Here we can take a cue from the current pope, whose first encyclical, *God is Love*, invites us to reflect on the most basic element of Christian revelation.

I take this as an invitation to develop a kind of "apologetics of love," one which takes as its mandate the challenge of articulating Christian doctrine as stemming from, indicating, and attempting to hand down, the mystery of God's love as revealed in Scripture and Tradition. Most students agree we should love the neighbor. But why should we? Loving the neighbor is not always convenient, the neighbor is not always likeable, speaking the truth in defense of the neighbor's rights is often costly in a world where speaking the truth can get you killed and betraying your neighbor's rights can get you paid. But at the heart of the Christian faith is that, as Augustine puts it, God became our neighbor in Christ. An apologetics of love can show how Catholic social teaching takes as its presupposition the dignity of human life, something which cannot be observed or proven on empirical grounds but must be taken on faith, to wit, in the doctrines of God's love in creation and redemption. Such an apologetics can help people understand what is at stake, for example, in proclaiming revealed truth based on authoritative witness or insisting that some truths are not relative. In teaching this way, we will be evolving a distinctive excellence which is *both* inquiry *and* a "handing on" of faith-based Wisdom. Both Catholics and non-Catholics can benefit from this exposure to a style of inquiry that does not bracket religious commitment, and yet has its own controls for rigorous reflection, for exactitude, for "excellence." All students can benefit from discovering that "excellence" is not dependent on leaving behind the idea of non-negotiable truths based on faith, but on learning rather to experience commitment to those truths as the beginning, not the end, of inquiry.

*University of Notre Dame* JOHN C. CAVADINI

## V

After hearing his presentation at Boston College in the fall of 2005, several of my students from "Exploring Catholicism," a two-semester core theology course comprised predominantly of first and second year

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

traditional-age undergraduates, surprised me by agreeing with Cardinal Dulles' assessment that they were not sufficiently catechized to be able to "do theology"—at least within the framework he had articulated. Since on this point I am inclined to agree with Dulles, in the brief space allotted here, I want to first, explore my own approach to this dilemma and then, within that context, focus on two claims with which I am at variance with him: 1) his claim that the "reigning suspicion of authority" causes doctrinal decline; and 2) his remarks about "historicism" and "the pervasiveness of 'the critical spirit.'"

The under-preparedness of Catholic undergraduates is not a new problem.[2] Some years ago, I quipped to a journalist who interviewed me about the then, relatively new phenomenon of Catholic Studies programs at Catholic colleges, that, "I hadn't realized that when I began teaching undergraduate theology that I would be doing *missionary work*!" Although I did then (and still do) lament the religious illiteracy of today's undergraduates, I had in mind what I had learned from intercultural communication and contextual theologies: that "listening to a culture" was what one needed to do if one was seeking to do theology that truly addresses a people's *reality*. Of course, I do not think "inculturation" or "relevance" is the *sole* criterion of what constitutes authentic theology, but culture cannot be ignored as an important factor in the communicative dimension of faith, doctrine, or theology.

During the many protracted discussions in connection with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and the U.S. bishops' requirement of a *mandatum* for teachers of Catholic theology, one often heard the complaint that "they" (bishops, parents, alumni, college presidents, etc.) "think what we are doing is teaching Sunday school!" But, what *is* one supposed to do when the students who arrive in a course called "Exploring Catholicism" are very bright, but have never read a Gospel, do not know the Ten Commandments, and cannot name the major beliefs contained in the Nicene Creed?

The answer, as any good teacher knows, is that you begin where they are. Nevertheless, I think there are ways to do this without resorting to "teaching Sunday school" or dissolving the college-level theology curriculum into catechesis and defensive apologetics against "cultural relativism." Rather, I believe that one goal of "Catholicism 101"

[2]In 2004, at the fiftieth anniversary meeting of the College Theology Society, a panel addressed many issues related to college-level theology, given the demise of the Euro-American Catholic subculture, but from a quite different perspective, and reaching quite different conclusions than Avery Dulles. See the essays by Sandra Yocum Mize, Miguel Diaz, Mary Ann Hinsdale, and James A. Donahue in Terrence W. Tilley, ed., *New Horizons in Theology*, College Theology Society Annual Volume 50 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 217-53.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

should be to get students (Catholic students, at least[3]) to appreciate that *they* are the future of their church, and if they are willing to accept that responsibility, they have an obligation as educated Catholics, to become knowledgeable about their faith tradition and to find ways to engage and "make sense" of this tradition in light of the serious realities facing them and the world we live in every day. In short, they need to learn how to reflect theologically.

I agree with Dulles (and with *Fides et Ratio*) that to reflect theologically one must analyze carefully the texts of Scripture and the texts which express the church's living tradition. These texts are essential. But this also means that even undergraduates need to be seen as and come to see themselves as belonging to this "living tradition." Their questions, concerns, and yes, even their occasional "heresies," need to be heard and responded to. Teaching students to reflect theologically need not mean one is only preoccupied with process, with "method over content." I guess what I most miss in Dulles' version of "Catholicism 101" is any sense of how he actually conducts an undergraduate theology class. I find that once students can believe they are being taken seriously, and begin to think of themselves as the adults who will one day be "the ones in charge," they become very curious about Catholic doctrines, how they came to be, how they might be reconceptualized for a new millennium and how they relate to the beliefs of other religious traditions. Dulles' conclusion that today's theology classes are contributing to "doctrinal decline" may be related to his own view of education, which in this essay seems to regard students as merely passive learners.

In terms of specific difficulties that Dulles has with the way theology is taught in Catholic universities today, my first objection is that I do not find that most students (or professors of theology, for that matter) reject authority "as a matter of principle." Dulles' essay, however, seems to imply that the episcopal *magisterium* is the *only* locus of authority. What about the "theological *magisterium*" (a term Dulles himself once espoused, but later abandoned), not to mention the believing community as a whole, the *sensus fidelium*? Questions of the "authority" (not only the "vocation") of theologians and how the *sen-*

[3]I realize that not all students in such courses may be Catholic, which makes for an added challenge; however, I believe it is possible to entertain this question even in a religiously plural classroom. And I think it is important to do so, particularly in the West, when fewer young people identify with mainstream religion ("I'm spiritual, but not religious"; "I was raised Catholic, but . . . "; or "I am a recovering . . . "). I have found that non-Catholic students are some of the best interlocutors in such discussions, especially since for many more of them, decisions about religious rites of passage (baptism, confirmation, Bar or Bat Mitzvah) have been matters of personal choice, rather than familial expectation.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

*sus fidelium* is to be taken into account in doctrinal development remain disputed questions. And I agree that students should have a thorough understanding of church teaching and of the role of the *magisterium.* But it is also important to know about such things as "theological notes," the difference between defined and undefined dogma, and how dissent has functioned as a constructive reality in the history of the church.[4]

Secondly, I believe Dulles' concern about "historicism" and the "pervasiveness of the critical spirit" is an overreaction. While holding that "there is room for critical reasoning in theology," Dulles maintains that "unless people accept the authority of accredited witnesses, they cannot be believers or theologians." Actually, I find students, like so many of the Catholic faithful today, are hungering for *credible* witnesses. Their faith, too, has been shaken by the clerical sexual abuse scandal, not just by the actions of some priests, but especially by the cover-up of this abuse by bishops. The "basic doctrines" Dulles wishes taught (i.e., the divine institution of the sacraments, the sacrificial character of the Mass and the real and substantial presence of Christ in the Eucharist) can and should be taught, but do they need to be presented by means of the dull, dry prose of the *Universal Catechism* (surely, an important reference tool, but deadly as a course textbook. I speak from experience!)?

Dulles lambastes "historicism" and "cultural relativism" as the enemies of the enduring reality of truth. I, too, would reject a radical "historicism" and eschew a totally deconstructive postmodernism, but why is there no mention of "historical consciousness"? This is a striking omission. I would not want to throw out the "baby" of historical consciousness with the "bath water" of historicism. Historical consciousness does not necessarily lead to "cultural relativism." By leaving out "historical consciousness," Dulles ironically jeopardizes an important contribution Vatican II made toward reconciling modern historical criticism with "the enduring truth" of the ongoing presence of the Incarnation and the action of the Holy Spirit within history (see *Dei Verbum*, #8). For me, it is precisely the belief that God's revelation is eschatological, constantly moving forward toward a fullness, perhaps sometimes even "interrupting" human history, and necessitating a theological recasting or recovery of "forgotten truths," that allows one to remain hopeful about the future, including the future of theology that will come from the present generation of young Catholics.

*Boston College* MARY ANN HINSDALE

[4]An extremely useful book for this purpose is Richard Gaillardetz, *By What Authority: A Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium and the Sense of the Faithful* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

## VI

Avery Cardinal Dulles' article proposes eight factors that hinder the teaching of Catholic theology in Catholic colleges and universities. As one who teaches undergraduates exclusively, over ninety-five percent of whom are fulfilling core requirements, I share his concerns, particularly for the challenges posed by the inadequate catechetical formation of most students and the suspicion of authority pervasive in both church and society.

His article has deepened my sense that perhaps the key question today facing teachers of Catholic theology—and the church itself—is this: Which is the greater problem, fundamentalism or indifference?

For many middle-aged and older Catholic theologians (and some younger ones, too), fundamentalism is the adversary, whether it be its harder, violent forms or, more commonly, its softer relatives: the Protestant brand of biblical fundamentalism and the Catholic brand of magisterial and papal fundamentalism.

These generations of Catholic theologians have been marked by two struggles: a quest for respect in the academy and a desire to implement what they take to be the vision of Vatican II in the face of hierarchical retrenchment. The two struggles cohere in what might be termed anti-fundamentalism. This anti-fundamentalist movement stresses, among other concerns, the historical contexts and limits of church doctrines, respect for diversity and ambiguity, the place of doubt in the life of faith, a willingness to learn from other churches and faiths, an awareness of the proper scope of authority and its abuses. Many of the problems outlined by Dulles are deformations or exaggerations of these legitimate concerns.

Put too simply, the anti-fundamentalist hopes for a theology in service to an inclusive, affirming church open to the world. The anti-fundamentalist fears a theology in service to an intolerant, legalistic sect shut off from other Christians and the world.

Both church and world have changed significantly since 1965 or 1968—or even over the last decade—but Catholic theology has too often remained a prisoner of its recent history. The various ghettos that many older Catholic theologians sought to overcome no longer exist in any substantial form. My students, in contrast, have been much more influenced by indifference than by fundamentalism. Anti-fundamentalism presupposes ecclesial commitment and doctrinal content that are no longer widespread. My students—and most of my peers—have little to react against, for they lack the bred-in-the-bone sense of ecclesial belonging that marks those who came of age before or during the council. Birth-control and collegiality, to name two neural-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

gic issues, are not front-burner issues for them; they have little exposure to a Catholic theology of sexuality and wonder why ordained ministry or even the church itself is necessary in the first place. In a cruel irony, Catholic anti-fundamentalism can be as introvertedly ecclesiocentric as the fundamentalism it seeks to overcome.

My sense, then, is that the most pressing task for Catholic theology and theologians is to become more genuinely and appropriately evangelical. The late Jean-Marie Tillard, a French Dominican who was the preeminent Catholic ecumenist of the post-conciliar era and a rumored drafter of *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II's encyclical on ecumenism, said that at present the Christian churches most need a deeper understanding—"with intelligence but from within the faith"—of Christ's identity and mission and that their "chief purpose" should be the proclamation of this Christ. These are matters, he was convinced, of "life or death."[5]

The classroom is not a chapel, of course, and our task is a properly intellectual one, but we must be more willing to call students to that decisive, comprehensive encounter with the person of Christ. Theology, at its deepest, seeks to know the One it loves. And love involves a risk of commitment that anti-fundamentalism can mute or even avoid through its "professional" or "critical" distancing. The hermeneutics of suspicion is fruitful only to the degree that it is rooted in the hermeneutics of trust. Dulles rightly argues that often "the fiducial component in knowledge is rejected or ignored."

Theology is therefore both similar to and different from other academic disciplines. It appeals to the head, certainly, but also to the heart as biblically conceived. It desires not merely greater knowledge, but also wisdom; I think here of Bernard Lonergan on the interrelation of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. My best students—whether believers or not—are seeking a way of life that transforms their minds and hearts. I wonder how well we are serving them.

Put too simply, again, the anti-indifferentist thus hopes for a theology in service to an evangelical church confident that an encounter with the person of Christ can transform church and world alike. The anti-indifferentist fears a diffuse, enervated theology that renders the church unable to attract new believers or retain its current ones.

I suspect that Dulles would agree with many of these points. One matter not raised in his article, however, is how the church's own failures have contributed to the present difficulties he has outlined. He mentions modernity's suspicion of authority, for instance, but assigns the church no responsibility for its existence. My colleagues and I have

[5]Jean-Marie Tillard, "Ecumenism: the Church's Costly Hope." *One in Christ* 35 (1999): 218-27, at 226.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to teach students quite willing to believe—however haphazardly—the worst about the church. *The DaVinci Code* and similar efforts can flourish partly because of ecclesial secrecy and scandal. "Believers," Vatican II noted in a different context, "can thus have more than a little to do with the rise of atheism" (*Gaudium et spes* #19). The same goes for problems of authority and the "pervasiveness of the critical spirit."

These moral failures, such as the clerical sexual-abuse crisis, are accompanied by intellectual ones. In the United States, at least, the bishops as a whole are not noted for their intellectual distinction or creativity. And, even among those known as "teaching" bishops, some settle for moralism and tedious *Catechism*-citations. Not every bishop can or should be a theologian or an intellectual, of course, but a critical mass of such thinkers is necessary and yet sadly lacking. The commonweal of church and society is paying dearly for that intellectual vacuum. The episcopal appointments of Pope Benedict XVI, an accomplished teacher of theology, will be telling in this regard.

The intellectual deficit in the episcopate is complemented by a similar deficit among theologians. One unfortunate consequence of the now overwhelmingly lay character of Catholic theology in colleges and universities, for instance, is that many, perhaps almost all, lay theologians of the post-conciliar generations lack the several years of philosophy that formerly preceded theological study. This philosophical erosion, as Dulles notes, has obvious consequences for the teaching of christology and trinitarian theology, among other subjects. In like manner, systematicians—myself included—often lack substantial exposure to pre-nineteenth-century theology, while exegetes, who are often well-formed in history and philology, can lack a properly theological background which leaves them ill-equipped to engage doctrinal and ecclesial concerns.

If Dulles' vision for a renewed Catholic theology in Catholic universities is to be realized, it must start with those who will be its future teachers and scholars. And, that intellectual conversion will bear its greatest fruit only to the extent that it is accompanied—at the heart of the academy—by the religious conversion of teachers and students.

*University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN* CHRISTOPHER RUDDY

## AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

I am grateful to Walter E. Conn, the esteemed editor of *Horizons,* and to my six respondents for having undertaken a critical analysis of my lecture at Boston College. Having rarely taught undergraduates in recent years, I was eager to have my ideas discussed by scholars who

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

have distinguished themselves in that area of teaching, and I am not disappointed by the results.

The aims of my lecture were very modest. I did not want to make any judgment about how the majority of Catholic universities, still less any one of them in particular, are performing. My principal concern was to call attention to some difficulties that must be faced in view of the dominant culture in the United States today.

By and large, the respondents seem to agree with me that the difficulties I mentioned are real. William Portier, for instance, says "I find Dulles' eight challenges to be the ones I face." Lawrence Cunningham says that at Notre Dame "we are trying our best to deal with" the problems mentioned by Dulles as well as many other social realities, such as turbulent family histories. Cunningham particularly emphasizes cultural relativism and the lack of a catechetical background. Anne Clifford does not deny the actuality of the difficulties I name, but she contends that the theology department at her university, Duquesne, has not surrendered to them. Although she acknowledges that our era is marked by a distaste for propositional truth, she defends some of the tendencies I mentioned as legitimate.

John Cavadini remarks that I have covered the challenges very well. While admitting that the challenges are widespread at his university, he seems to hold that the theology department is resisting the pressures successfully. Mary Ann Hinsdale agrees with me on the students' lack of catechetical preparation, but she would wish to qualify my observations on the reigning suspicion of authority and on historicism. Christopher Ruddy reports that he shares my concerns regarding all eight factors, especially the inadequate catechetical formation of students and the pervasive suspicion of authority in Church and society.

Perhaps I may now turn to the six essays in particular. William Portier's contribution is a helpful and constructive supplement to what I have said. He correctly describes the social setting, although perhaps he focuses too narrowly on the United States. In many European countries, where Catholicism has not been an immigrant subculture, many of the same theological trends are evident. Referring to his "signs of hope," I share his enthusiasm about the revival of Thomistic metaphysics and about the increasing recognition of the "fiducial" component in knowledge. In some cases, where metaphysics is lacking, the fiducial runs the risk of slipping into an irrational fideism. Most of all, I applaud his advocacy of a more evangelical style of Catholicism.

Portier also raises the question whether Catholic theology should be required for all students, including those who are not Catholic. If they attend a Catholic university, non-Catholics should not object to

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

receiving some exposure to Catholic doctrine, but they would lack the foundations ordinarily prerequired for theology as a speculative science.

Lawrence Cunningham proposes a series of objections to my theses. His objections are valid up to a point, but they could, I think, be met in a more ample presentation of my case. For example, he contests my alleged assertion that students before 1965 got a fuller and more classical grounding in theology. But I made no such assertion. I am aware that a limited amount of theology was taught outside the seminary in Catholic colleges before 1965, though a fair amount of theology was smuggled into philosophy courses over and above what was taught under the rubric of religion. For the titles of courses I relied on the research of Frank D. Schubert. He focuses on "undergraduate and graduate level courses leading to the Ph.D. degree, and not the professional degrees of the seminary."[6]

In 1953 the founders of what is now the College Theology Society called themselves "Catholic College Teachers of Sacred Doctrine." Before and after the name change (1967), members of the Society believed that the laity should be well grounded in Catholic doctrine. Since Vatican II efforts have been made to involve nonspecialists in theology, as occurs in the undergraduate classroom. But popularization was often achieved at the price of abandoning the technical language of the specialists.

Cunningham seems to think that the biblical doctrine of God as omnipotent Creator is uncontested. I can hardly believe that he is unaware of the incursions of process philosophy and panentheism into recent Catholic literature. As for docetism, some students probably do come to the university with such an attitude. The trouble is that their teachers, in curing students of this disease, infect them with Nestorianism if not Adoptionism. It requires great tact and dexterity to communicate the subtle christology of the councils and the Fathers to students who are innocent of metaphysics.

I make no effort to prescribe how many theology courses ought to be required. Nothing in my article implies that all undergraduates must take the five courses that Cunningham gleans from my article, although it would be desirable for theology majors to have at least this many — and perhaps they do at Notre Dame.

Cunningham ends with two good suggestions. One is a basic course on "Know Your Catholic Faith," which could, I suggest, be

[6]Frank D. Schubert, *A Sociological Study of Secularization Trends in the American Catholic University: Decatholicizing the Catholic Religious Curriculum* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 44. I cited this work in a footnote in the original manuscript of my lecture, but the notes were omitted in the *Boston College Magazine*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

expanded beyond its present one-credit status and thereby become more than "a mere finger in the dike." His other good suggestion is that the entire university should consider itself responsible for shaping Catholics of the future.

Anne Clifford has some very encouraging things to say about the orientation of theology at Duquesne. I can only applaud a department that keeps "an unapologetic focus on the Roman Catholic faith tradition" in spite of the diminished ratio of Catholics in the classroom. If this emphasis is maintained, ecumenical openness and dialogue with other faith traditions may be all to the good. I do not advocate ignoring the fact of religious diversity, as Clifford seems to suppose. She also caricatures my view of propositions. Propositional truths, in my epistemology, are not focal objects of knowledge but subsidiary means whereby reality can be better understood. Anne Clifford's concerns about personalism and religious experience can therefore be accommodated in the approach I am urging, but I would try to disabuse my students of the illusion that their personal religious experience ought to "trump institutional religion."

John Cavadini, if I rightly understand him, makes no criticism of my paper. He advocates a middle road between aggressive secularism and adamant fideism, as does Pope John Paul II in his *Fides et Ratio*. He argues effectively that courses in strict theology can foster "academic excellence" by requiring rigorous thinking within a faith commitment. I am intrigued by Cavadini's proposed "apologetics of love." I have no doubt that we shall be hearing more about this project in years to come.

Mary Ann Hinsdale has perhaps been misled by the brevity my article, which is a partial reprint of a single lecture. Confining myself to a very specific problem, I did not go into the broader questions she raises. What she particularly misses, she reports, is a sense of how I would conduct an undergraduate theology class. I am sure that I would enjoy teaching it, but I cannot say in advance what my method would be. Instead of treating my students as "mere passive learners," I would encourage the kind of inquiry described in *Fides et Ratio* and in the writings of master theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas. I would also try to help them see that Catholic doctrine is a treasure to be gratefully received, not a plaything to be reconstructed at will.

I cannot fathom what makes Hinsdale imagine that I regard the magisterium as the only locus of authority. How could I possibly place it above Jesus Christ and Holy Scripture? Having written a good deal about the authority of theologians and the *sensus fidelium* on other occasions, I do not find it necessary to repeat myself here. If I gave special emphasis to the magisterium in the present article, that is because it is the organ that formulates Catholic doctrine in a binding way.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Hinsdale wants to know why I make no mention of "historical consciousness." I actually had it in mind when I wrote that historicism "contains a modicum of truth." What I rejected was the "radical form" of historicism espoused by modernists and others who deny the enduring validity of truth. I readily acknowledge that every human expression of truth is somewhat limited by cultural and historical conditions. We should, however, be slow to discard doctrinal formulations that been laboriously composed by high authorities and have stood the test of time.

Hinsdale's beguiling picture of the church constantly moving forward toward the fullness of truth is, I suppose, a conscious echo of Vatican II's progressive view of tradition. Progress, however, presupposes that we conserve the past and build upon it. Tradition serves to prevent us from dissipating the great heritage handed down to us and from repeating the errors of the past.

Finally, Christopher Ruddy gives a generous and supportive response. He draws an interesting contrast between the twin errors of fundamentalism and indifferentism, reminiscent of John Cavadini's antithesis between fideism and secularism. In the years following Vatican II, alert theologians were striving to avoid excessively rigid and naive presentations of doctrine. But now that everything has been exhaustively questioned, the first priority is to rediscover and perfect the edifice of wisdom that stands firmly on the rock of faith. Like William Poitier, Ruddy calls for a more evangelical style of Catholicism that does not eschew proclamation. But he does not settle for a new fundamentalism. He calls for a wisdom based on spiritual conversion and a deepening "encounter with the person of Christ." That is exactly what is needed, and what the Catholic tradition is best equipped to supply. The great doctors of the church offer a sapiential theology that speaks to the heart as well as the head.

Like Mary Ann Hinsdale, Ruddy is convinced that the current suspicion of authority derives in part from the moral and intellectual shortcomings of prelates. Such failures, of course, exist, but I must say that most of the bishops I have met are intelligent pastors, striving earnestly to discharge their multiple responsibilities. They deserve a better press than they get. Only a few are geniuses, but what else is to be expected? If we want better bishops, we will need to encourage young men of outstanding character and ability to apply for our seminaries. The most effective kind of reform in the church at large, as well as in theological education, does not consist in complaining from the sidelines but from trying to supply what is lacking.

The discussion represented by these papers leaves me quite hopeful. A growing number of Catholic colleges, it appears, recognize the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press

challenges to which I called attention. Many of our younger theologians are well armed against relativism and eager to recover the best and most enduring insights of the Catholic tradition in philosophy as well as theology. The desirability of rigorous academic study within the commitment of faith is increasingly acknowledged. And there is general agreement that more evangelization, catechesis, and philosophy are necessary for a serious study of theology. If these requirements cannot be presupposed, they must be incorporated, to the extent possible, in the teaching of theology itself.

*Fordham University* AVERY CARDINAL DULLES, S.J.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900003455 Published online by Cambridge University Press