

62.

11 novembris 1972

*Considerationes quaedam de Educatione Superiore Societatis
in America*¹.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION
IN THE UNITED STATES

*President, Distinguished Chairmen, Special Invited Guests, Ladies
and Gentlemen,*

I sincerely welcome the invitation from the President and Board of Directors of the Association of Colleges and Universities and from Saint Peter's College host President, to share with you some reflections on Jesuit higher education in the United States today.

Let me begin by thanking each and every one of you very specially for your work in educating young people in your city, state and nation and in contributing to the intellectual life and development of the people of your country. Jesuit institutions have in the past sent thousands upon thousands of well educated, public-spirited graduates into the mainstream of American life. So, let us thank the Lord of history that we have been able to serve our brothers through our liberal arts, professional and graduate schools, and that in a preeminent way.

All past, it is said, is prologue; it foreshadows the shape of things to come. But today, private education finds itself confronted with a situation so unexpected, so unprecedented, that many, even among those who have sustained and supported our colleges and universities with the utmost dedication in the past, are fearful that today may be epilogue to all our glorious yesterdays.

The principal determinant of the decision confronting us today is viability. It does not seem possible for us to survive as we are. Must we then surrender to extinction rather than to loss of identity, or must we surrender identity to escape extinction? Mr. Alan Pifer, President of the Carnegie Corporation, certainly no enemy of private institutions, spoke feelingly some two years ago of their « steady, unrelenting deterioration » and of their consequent increasingly hazardous condition. Looking

¹ Verba P. Generalis ad Praesides et ad Coetum Directivum Con-sociationis Societatis de Collegiis et Universitatibus, prolata in Saint Peter's College, Jersey City, New Jersey.

to the future, Mr. Pifer judged that it was unlikely that any «systematic, coherent effort would be made to alleviate the financial situation of private service institutions», and that their relative position in American life would decline¹. As you know only too well, the events of the past months have not discredited his prophecy.

What is far more discouraging, however, is that while the survival of private educational institutions is questioned, there has been a steady erosion of faith in some quarters in the value of these institutions and of our commitment to them. This erosion is evident even among the very beneficiaries of the education we seek to impart.

For us Jesuits the implications of this phenomenon are momentous. The Society of Jesus is at present engaged in the most searching self-examination of its history. We are asking ourselves «Why are we doing what we are doing? Are we using our resources most effectively for the greater glory of God? In what areas must we change our commitments so that we can be allied more visibly and more effectively with those who stand in the greatest need today, the voiceless, the poor, the plundered of our planet?».

Some, it is true, ask this question in a spirit of antiintellectualism that is not consonant with the Jesuit vocation. Most, however, are disturbed by the same kind of uneasiness which seems to have prompted Father Paul Reinert, in his recent book, to state, *Now is the time for asking the right questions and for asking what our relationship should be to the rest of society. Many schools have lost sight of their mission*².

To be in financial difficulties is painful. To be subjected to probing examination may be embarrassing. But to lose sight of one's mission ... is to be like salt that has lost its savor. What this means is clear to us all.

Mission of the Jesuit College and University

I am convinced that despite the difficulties, our mission in the field of higher learning is even more important today than yesterday, provided we keep clearly in mind our over-all purpose in this apostolate.

I do not pretend that I can adequately describe the mission of a Jesuit college and university. I do, however, want to high-

² PAUL REINERT, *To Turn the Tide*, p. 55.

light one of its essential elements, and I do this by asking with you:

What do we think of man?

Where does he stand today?

And where do we stand, as committed Christians, regarding his opportunities, and ours, for his redemption?

Not for us that philosophy of materialism which sees in man a helpless pawn of scientific technology.

Not for us that equally degrading philosophy which sees worldly prosperity, at whatever cost to others, as the prime goal of education.

We cannot tolerate that man be manipulated, for whatever temporary advantage, at the expense of his freedom and dignity.

Rather must we see him as Christ saw him: crown of visible creation, constructor of a planetary home for all the children of God, pilgrim toiling along a road leading beyond time to the final disclosure of God. It was to heal his wounds as he struggled along, and to liberate him when he fell oppressed, that Christ came down to earth.

Whatever else man is, in his depths he is a pilgrim, created in love and called to love. Love is his meaning; love is his measure.

It is this simple vision of man which must animate us and permeate all our efforts in the classroom, the laboratory, the office, the playing field. Only as we promote this vision of love can we justify our work in college or university. To promote this vision is to see in every man a brother and to find in every civilization and culture glimpses of what man in his totality, man finally freed, is to be.

Financial security has never been our goal. We do not mind being labelled excessively conservative — or too radical. But we cannot, under any circumstances, be less than Jesuit in the fullest sense of that term. We cannot seek financial stability or a reputation among men by giving up our identity or obscuring it. To be a Jesuit means to be Christocentric in our view of the world and in our spirituality. It means to consider prayerfully and reflectively the signs of the times, and in response to that reading to demand ever more and more of oneself. It is to be, in Ignatian terms, *insignis*, outstanding in singleness of purpose, generosity and effectiveness. It means to have a passion for the possible and a disciplined willingness to take the next step. It means to be a new man, reborn in Christ, impelled by a faith-vision of the universe, sustained in hope and nourished in love.

This is the heritage we are called to share with others; it is our *raison d'être*. This is the vision, captured in prayer, commented on and explicated in the books that fill our libraries, and traced in the hearts of our fellowmen, that we are to announce from the housetops of our colleges and universities. And while within them we dedicate ourselves to the pursuit of truth and the dissemination of knowledge, this is the supreme truth and the highest knowledge that we have to follow and impart. As a theologian well expressed it at the Congress recently held in this country on the theme, *Religion and the Humanizing of Man*, « The vision of man which we encounter in Jesus of Nazareth could be a guide to preserve man's humanity in its most threatened hour. The highest ideal is now no longer the person who possesses himself and exists in and for himself, but rather existence for the many. Only love can effect the ideal of human existence in a human world »³.

Can it really be said that it is towards this vision that we are leading our graduates?

Let us listen to the words of an eminent international figure as we ask how truly wise and prudent we and the graduates of our institutions are. In his review of world financial trends before the Board of Governors of the World Bank Group on September 25th, Mr. Robert McNamara argued that the « growing incremental income » of the rich nations « is so immense, their technological capacity so powerful, and their whole range of advantages so disproportionately gigantic, that no rational argument can be made for their refusal to do more to assist the disadvantaged nations ». Failure to step up and improve their programs of official development assistance can have only one consequence: namely, « the community of nations will only become more dangerously fragmented into the privileged and the deprived, the self-satisfied and the frustrated, the complacent and the bitter. It will not be an international atmosphere conducive to tranquility ».

« No *rational* argument can be made for their refusal », Mr. McNamara asserts. Yet today some of the wealthiest nations in the world are appropriating for overseas assistance less than one half of one percent of their gross national product. This is less than 50% of the very modest target set by the United Nations for this purpose. While the dogs licked the wounds of Lazarus,

³ DR. WALTER KASPER of the University of Tübingen at the first International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, September 1972, at Los Angeles.

Dives languished and withered for lack of vision, for want of wisdom.

«Peace, peace and there is no peace, because men *do not think in their hearts*». The cry of the prophet echoes across the land and reechoes from the ivied walls of our campuses. It calls into question the so-called intrinsic laws of economics and politics that lead to the worsening poverty of the Third World, to the sale of slightly outmoded but lethal weapons by wealthy powers to the poor, and to the ecological suffocation of life that results from unbridled consumerism.

Only wisdom and thinking in our hearts will lead us to listen to and follow the rational arguments that now fall on deaf ears.

A New Christian Humanism

Quite clearly I am not in a position to spell out a strategy on how the vision of man we are discussing can be worked into the programs and practice of the university. This is your task and that of your faculties and students bodies. This is the task of our Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities. It is a task to which the Synod of Bishops in their deliberations last year summoned us, pleading for a type of education which would not foster a «narrow individualism» and a «mentality which exalts possessions». Let me suggest three features of a college and university whose goal it is to educate the young to responsible freedom in wisdom, to want to *be* more, rather than to *have* more.

The *first* is increasing stress on truly *interdisciplinary study and research* as a means to find at least partial solutions to the problems that most severely plague the peoples of our earth. The concrete complexity of the major human problems of today must be respected, it seems to me, in the very way in which they are studied.

Individual disciplines are concerned with individual aspects of man: the biological, economic, political, and so forth. But the judgments that man must make in today's world demand the ability to draw information from many sources, to balance and weigh conflicting claims, and to fuse into a single mosaic the scattered and isolated pieces which are unintelligible in themselves. The boundaries between separate disciplines do not fence off compartments in man himself. They have been drawn precisely to enable the researcher and student to probe more profoundly into man. Therefore these boundaries must be transcended in our judgments about man and the human situation

if the gain in deeper understanding of one facet of man is to issue in real insight.

It should be an interdisciplinary study and research that also takes into account the international dimension and close interdependence of today's problems: does one, for example, have a clear grasp of international trade relationships if they are seen only from the viewpoint of one's own country's balance of payments, increasing volume, and so forth? If those trade relationships are such that almost inevitably they lead to the devaluation of the currency of a very poor nation, is not that predictable effect part of what the student or researcher should study and be concerned about? Taking the matter a step further, should not the impact of such predictable effects on men, women and children of the poor nation be a major criterion for judging the value of the relationship in question? The sharpening division between rich and poor nations is one of those signs of our times which *must* be read in classrooms across the country — if we are to describe our education as the development of man toward wholeness and freedom.

A *second* feature of an updated Christian humanism is, it seems to me, a strong accent on man in his pluralistic concreteness. The re-opening of relations between countries extolling Communism and those set on capitalistic paths — prescinding now from the reasons that motivated it — emphasizes the socio-economic, cultural and political pluralism in which we live. Their seemingly irreconcilable views on economics and geo-politics have been candidly admitted. Yet these differences have not proved a barrier to limited mutual understanding. This rapprochement dramatizes the need for a humanistic education that critically draws on the resources and accomplishments of man in his concrete diversity and prepares the citizen of the 1980's and the 21st century for the world that is now being shaped.

Our Jesuit predecessors eagerly accepted the interest of their contemporaries in the world of Greece and Rome, as transmitted through classical literature. They helped generations discover man in his pluralistic concreteness, on the time dimension, through the speeches of Demosthenes and Cicero, the plays of Sophocles, the histories of Thucydides and Livy. Do we not have a similar task today; namely, to work into our courses of study and into our research more that concerns man in his multiform *contemporary* cultures? Young people are becoming more and more centripetal, it would seem, as they pedal across national boundaries, or drop down in chartered jets on the airports of

countries their parents knew largely through the pages of a geography book.

Can we today be as ingenious in discovering the educational consequences of jet travel, films, television, and the computer as were our renaissance predecessors in the new age of the printing press and the rediscovery of the classics of Greece and Rome? I am convinced that unrealized opportunities lie before educators in Jesuit colleges and universities, for you are united to Jesuit institutions in over 40 countries on every continent, whose administrators and faculty are indigenous to the country where they live and labor. Student and faculty exchange, centers and institutes for research on common problems, cooperative projects with experts who can provide deep-rooted understanding of world trends and sensitive involvement in them: these and similar programs could evidence to your creative spirit in education and so foster that mutual respect, understanding and collaboration between nations and cultures which are so necessary in the world of today.

We may be so conscious of widespread materialism, of surly inward-turning nationalism and of profiteering liberalism, that we lose sight of the fact that now for the first time in history men are being driven to think of and to feel this earth as a planetary village, and themselves as brothers who must live or die together. Today's man, rooted in his town or city, is truly educated only if he stretches his hand and heart and mind beyond his geographical horizons.

I turn now to the *third feature* of the Christian humanism that our times demand: a delight in things of the spirit, a relish for contemplation. Let us not be deceived by youthful ways of dress or styles of music or attitudes of disinterest in the past and hastily judge that modern youth are extroverts, unwilling to face themselves and to explore the recesses of their hearts. The fact that in the United States there is a dramatic growth in the number of devotees of pentecostal and Jesus-movements, a growing resentment at the technological ravage of nature — these are signs indeed of that restlessness of the heart of man calling for interiority.

Our students and we ourselves will want seriously to study man in his pluralistic concreteness and to engage in the arduous task of interdisciplinary research, only if we plunge into the depths of our own hearts, only if we are *contemplative* in our view of the world. What the world hungers for is men and women of the spirit, alert and responsive to the fascination of the outer universe in proportion to their inner openness to the

Spirit of Christ. To see in the wealth of our planet and in the human universe around us only resources to be exploited for selfish ends is a terrible thing. It is to misread the whole sense of things. No, we must lovingly embrace all in our hearts, resonating to the groans of creation, as in travail it strains towards final redemption.

To become contemplative demands an inner remolding, a change of feelings, a conversion in heart. To reach this point of utter inner freedom, to be contemplative in the very midst of our activity means, of course, that we discover man prior to, and irrespective of his position in class and caste. *But it goes far beyond.* All the disciplined austerity, the linking of work and study, the predilection for the poor and outcast which secular humanists rightly insist on in the total education of man should lead to where words wither and the heart of man touches the heart of God. Only there do we find ourselves as we are: creatures created in love, redeemed in love, called to love.

I know that you share my conviction on the indispensability of reflection and contemplation in the full education of the person. In March this year, for example, three of your number, at a meeting with representative Provincials, agreed that without *high visibility to the spiritual dimensions of the higher education apostolate, the institution would not live up to (its) deep motivation; hence there should be a positive effort on the part of Jesuits to share the Jesuit vision with lay faculty*⁴.

I hope that those engaged in the pastoral apostolate on the campus will be serenely confident that they play a vital role in leading student and faculty alike to that *metanoia* of which I have spoken. I hope that we will all take courage from those stirring words of Our Holy Father on the vivifying power of the evangelical message. *Christians, he says, must first of all renew their confidence in the forcefulness and special character of the demands made by the Gospel. The Gospel is not out-of-date because it was proclaimed, written and lived in a different socio-cultural context. Its inspiration, enriched by the living experience of Christian tradition over the centuries, remains ever new for converting men and for advancing the life of society*⁵.

⁴ *Minutes of meeting of Education Committee of Jesuit Conference and representatives of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities*, p. 11.

⁵ *Octogesima Adveniens*, paragraph 4.

CONCLUSION

Linking the demands of the Gospel with the exigencies of modern living — this work of synthesis is your task. It is a demanding task, as you know so well, you who are bearing the heat of the day and its burden. But if the burden is heavy, the reward is great. For through your efforts tens of thousands of young Americans can join their peers in scores of countries in the quest for the new promethean fire of which Father Teilhard de Chardin wrote. *One day, he prophesied, after we have harnessed the air, the winds, the seas and gravitation itself, we will seize for God the energies of love. And man, for the second time in the history of the world, will have discovered fire*⁶.

63.

23 decembris 1972

De cooperatione interprovinciali in Nostrorum theologica institutione in Assistentia Americae.

AD PRAEPOSITOS PROVINCIARUM AMERICAE

DEAR FATHERS PROVINCIAL, P. C.

I would like to take the occasion of this letter announcing my decision about the theologates to express my gratitude to you for the way you approached this question. You have shown a commendable concern not only for the local or special interests that understandably engage each of you but for the greater good of the Society of Jesus and the Church in the United States. I realize that, as is often the case in matters involving such complex questions, not everyone will be equally satisfied with my answer, notwithstanding the many days and even months of consultation and discussion you conducted to provide me with the necessary data, along with the recommendations you have made. Yet the question called for a decision on my part.

This decision, which is in accord with your recommendations, is that the American Provinces cooperatively sponsor three centers for the theological education of Jesuits at Bellarmine, Berkeley and Weston.

⁶ J. M. MORTIER, *Avec Teilhard de Chardin « Vues Ardentes »*, Editions du Seuil, 1967, p. 99.