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Theology in a Filipino Catholic University

JOSEPH L. ROCHE, S.J.

The time seems ripe for a modest effort at clarifying one view of the nature, goal and methodology of theology in a Catholic university in the Philippines. The post-Vatican II upheavals have to some extent settled down by now, the essential *social* dimension of Christian Faith and consequently of theology has been firmly established, and a renewed interest in theology and religious education or catechesis has sparked numerous programs, courses and seminars throughout the Philippines. The recent publication of the *National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines* is both a manifestation of this interest and a stimulus to greater efforts toward "maturing in Christian Faith."

Yet with these positive signs of increased vitality there appear equally clear manifestations of uncertainty and confusion, particularly in regard to theology in Catholic colleges. While much effort has been expended by many Catholic schools in revising and updating their theology/religious studies (RS) programs, little serious study seems to have been directed at the more theoretical basis for such programs. Few ask themselves: What are we trying to do with our college theology programs? The issue is further complicated by the greatly increased stress in the past decade on "campus ministry" on both Catholic and nonsectarian campuses. Much of what used to be considered the function of the theology/RS department has now been reassigned to the office of Campus Ministry. Moreover the two terms of our topic—"theology" and "Catholic university"—are both the subject of radical questioning from any number of perspectives, with little promise of producing a general consensus. Finally, in the Philippines, with Catholic schools constituting a major segment of

higher education, and given the general religiosity of the Filipino, there is much talk of making religion/theology the "core" of the college/university curriculum.

In this complex situation, this article essays a modest proposal regarding the nature, role and methodology of undergraduate college theology in a Catholic college/university in the Philippines in the eighties. In the first part, a general Christian vision of a university and a contemporary view of theology are described and discussed insofar as they influence the question of college theology. The second part offers a concrete proposal regarding the nature, role and methodology of undergraduate theology in a Filipino Catholic university/college.

WHAT IS A UNIVERSITY?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a university as:

the whole body of teachers and scholars engaged, at a particular place, in giving and receiving instruction in the higher branches of learning; such persons associated together as a society or corporate body with a definite organization and acknowledged powers and privileges (esp. that of conferring degrees) and forming an institution for the promotion of education in the higher and more important branches of learning.

A number of relevant points can be drawn from this descriptive definition. First there are the various "constituencies" of the university: the teachers or faculty, forming a corporate body or a certain community of scholars: the students—and by implication their parents (frequently alumni/ae of the university); the administrative staff of the "definite organization"; implied today by the value judgment of "important branches of learning" would be local and national governments; and finally, both as an institution and as a society or corporate body, the university is a creation of a particular history—originally some founding group, and then a characteristic historicity as the university perdures through generations. The practical implication of these constituencies of the university for college theology resides in the evident fact that each group has its own opinion regarding the role of college theology. Parents/alumni-ae will often differ in their views from both students and faculty, while the administration may well have its own proper position, often notably at variance with the government stance. From the start, therefore, a rather

wide pluralism of opinion about college theology should be expected.

A second important point concerns the mission or goal of a university, linked with its nature as both an institution (*Gesellschaft*) and a community (*Gemeinschaft*). As an institution the university's mission is to instruct in knowledge, skills and arts through the various speculative and practical disciplines—providing a reinterpretation of traditional truths—in brief, the hermeneutical function of learning. But as a community the university implies the further mission of accumulating this specialized knowledge into a “wisdom”—a by-product of many scholars pooling their specialized knowledge and experience.¹ Finally, the phrase “in a particular place” implies that every university is situated in a larger community from which it originated and which it serves precisely in terms of its own proper intrinsic goals of specialized knowledge-skills-arts in a “wisdom community.”

This third mission of serving the larger community must be acknowledged explicitly in order, paradoxically enough, to preserve the legitimate autonomy of the university. For the university's mission is to serve the *whole* community, *all* its constituencies—not allow any one to co-opt the university for its own particular purposes—for example, government for its own bureaucratic research, business for its personnel training, or social reformers for effecting political change. Furthermore, the service which the university offers to the total community must be in terms of its two intrinsic goals—a reinterpretation of traditional truth in terms of specialized knowledge, within a wisdom community. If the order is reversed—if the specialized knowledge is directed first for business, government, or even Church purposes, and not for the truth of the various disciplines within the wisdom community, then the university's intrinsic goals are crippled, and its ability to serve both the community and its different constituencies suffers.

What the university has to offer the community—its unique contribution which no other institution or structure affords—is the service of scientific knowledge out of a wisdom context. The

1. See David J. Hassel, S.J., *City of Wisdom: A Christian Vision of the American University* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1983), pp. 44, 75, 429. This work is the primary source of this article.

highly specialized knowledge thus offered the community is that more practical and effective precisely because it is "contextualized" in a "wisdom" milieu which brings forcibly to mind the manifold aspects of any problem, its past history and present obstacles, and so forth.

A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

But our topic is not theology in universities in general, but in Catholic universities. This raises another major issue that has been debated with particular vigor since Vatican II, not only on the theoretical level—the "idea" of a Catholic university—but on the more pragmatic level as well—how to be/act/operate as a Catholic university. Amidst all the varying positions and hypotheses, certain points of agreement have emerged. Based on the fundamental ideal of the pursuit of truth in its fullness, the basic compatibility of Church and university is defended. The Church needs the university, and the university has need of the Church, affirmed John Paul II in a number of recent addresses. He points to the historical origin of the great European universities and of the Church's pursuit of truth through the centuries, highlighted in Vatican II's calm reaffirmation that faith and reason can never contradict each other. But the Church in its turn has much to contribute to the university: the full truth *about man* is radically deepened by the Gospel, since the full, harmonious integration of the human person in society involves not only the intellectual, but the ethical and the transcendent as well.

The essential validity of a Catholic university is clearly manifested in the delineation of its goals by John Paul II:

A Catholic university or college [1] must make a specific contribution to the Church and to society through high-quality scientific research, in-depth study of problems and a just sense of history . . . [2] must train young men and women of outstanding knowledge . . . having made a personal synthesis between faith and culture . . . to assume tasks in the service of the community and society in general . . . [3] must set up a real community which bears witness to a living and operative Christianity, a community where sincere commitment to scientific research and study goes together with deep commitment to authentic Christian living.²

2. John Paul II, "Address to Presidents of Catholic Colleges and Universities," *Catholic Mind* 78 (January 1980): 54.

Thus the Pope reiterates for the Catholic university the three essential ends affirmed above of any university, namely, scientific knowledge, wisdom community, and service of the community. But in the same address, the Pope also addressed the more formidable question of academic freedom, specifically the relation of the Catholic university's theological faculty to the bishops and to the faithful. The latter were described as having the right "not to be troubled by theories and hypotheses that they are not expert in judging or that are easily simplified or manipulated . . ." This caused some consternation among Catholic theologians since theories and hypotheses are of the essence of the university's pursuit of truth.³

This issue of academic freedom related specifically to theology or teaching on religious questions in an avowedly "Catholic" university, is the core issue. On the one hand, there is academic freedom in the pursuit of truth indicative of the essence of a university, prompting the International Federation of Catholic Universities to declare: "The Catholic university is not simply a pastoral arm of the church. It is an independent organization serving Christian purposes, but not subject to ecclesiastical-juridical control, censorship or supervision."⁴ This is explained further in the American NCEA statement that "there is a way to maintain intact the Catholic character of the university and witness to the faith . . . a way to serve the church through service rather than through mechanisms of control."⁵

On the other hand there are the persistent complaints of parents, alumni/ae as well as bishops, of students' loss of faith and virtue—the two temptations assailing the young and the intellectual, according to Newman—precisely from what they were taught at a "Catholic" university. Over a long period of time, the university's community of scholars in free dialogue exerts a strong critical influence on "what is taught"; but within the college career of the individual student, this check has very limited effect. Just

3. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "John Paul II, Academic Freedom and the Magisterium," *America* 141 (1979): 247-49.

4. "Freedom, Autonomy and the University," *IDOC International* 39 (15 January 1972): 83, quoted in Charles E. Curran, "Academic Freedom: The Catholic University and Catholic Theology," *Catholic Mind* 78 (February 1980): 16.

5. National Catholic Educational Association, "Relations of American Catholic Colleges and Universities with the Church," *Catholic Mind* 74 (October 1976): 62.

how "free" is—or should be—a Catholic university's faculty to propose any and all theories and hypotheses, particularly in regard to religious questions?

To this question there is admittedly no common consensus at the present time, but a sharpened awareness has grown of the limitations inherent in both sides of the debate. The critical and interpretative function of a Catholic university's theology/religious studies department carries with it an inescapable "pastoral" dimension—the university is, after all, in the service of the larger community, not an isolated island in itself. Academic competency must be joined with responsibility if the Catholic university's freedom and autonomy is not to be abused. Responsible freedom for the Catholic theologian includes recognition of the legitimate concerns and responsibility of the Church in the proclamation of the faith; both bishops and theologians have essential roles which complement each other. On the other hand, Catholic universities are not simply another "pastoral arm of the church," "custodial institutions" whose only function is to preserve, defend and proclaim dogmatic faith. The proper contribution of Catholic universities to the Church—as distinct from the parish, monastery, seminary,—is paradoxically in their relative, legitimate autonomy and freedom. Only thus can they relate "all human culture to the gospel of salvation."

The relation then, of the Catholic university to the Church, specifically in regard to religious questions, is an ongoing question that does not allow one definitive solution for all times and all places. Much depends upon the concrete faith-culture relationship prevailing in the particular country in which the Catholic university is situated and operates. What the present post-Vatican II discussion has brought out, however, is that there is greater need than ever before for universities that are truly "Catholic" but with the full integrity of responsible academic freedom and autonomy of an institution of higher learning.

CATHOLIC THEOLOGY TODAY

From a more traditional approach, perhaps the simplest description of theology is Augustine's *fides quarens intellectum* (Faith seeking understanding), the basis for Rahner's more detailed explanation:

Theology is the *science* of faith. It is the conscious and methodological explanation and explication of the divine revelation received and grasped in faith.⁶

In his *Theological Dictionary*, Rahner further elaborates this description by defining theology as "essentially the conscious effort of the Christian to harken to the actual verbal revelation which God has promulgated in history, to acquire a knowledge of it by methods of scholarship and to reflect upon its implications." More pragmatically, theology is "the study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the contents of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language possible."⁷ From these descriptions, certain common points can be drawn. Theology involves systematic reflection on religious faith based on some revelation or religious event. Hence there are three closely connected but clearly distinct realities: revelation, faith, and theology. In addition to these more traditional dimensions of theology, a recent stress has been added, namely, the insistence that theology is always exercised "in terms of cultural experience." It is a human work, and thus profoundly affected by man's historicity and concrete cultural milieu. "Revelation is God's Word of gracious love to man; theology is man's words of faith about the Word."⁸ These "words of faith" always come out of a definite time and place, a total economic, political and cultural situation which make up the concrete historicity of the particular theology.

Theology in such a perspective can be divided into three basic phases of the total work, or three main areas: *Positive*, including biblical studies, patristics, history of dogma, liturgy and Church practice; *Systematic*, or speculative, which attempts by using some basic philosophic method, to unify the data of positive theology in a coherent systematic explanation; and *Pastoral*, which in studying how the positive data and systematics can be embodied in the lives of the faithful makes wide use of psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, and includes moral, ascetical and

6. Karl Rahner, "Theology: Nature," *Sacramentum Mundi*, 6 vols. (London: Burns and Oates, 1970), 6:234.

7. John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1966), p. 2. To this definition theology's *ecclesial* dimension must be added.

8. Thomas F. O'Meara, "Where Is Theology Going?," *Thought* 44 (Spring 1969): 68.

mystical theology, liturgy, pastoral guidance and devotions. This division corresponds roughly to the three goals or missions of the university: positive theology with specialized knowledge-skills-arts; systematic theology with unifying wisdom, and pastoral theology with serving the community. Such a division obviously concentrates on the object or "formative factors" of theology: revelation, scripture, tradition, reason. By including its close interrelation with other disciplines—philosophy, history, the social sciences—even the natural sciences (for example the science and religion theme)—theology is opened to much wider areas of human experience.

Nevertheless this more traditional perspective has been challenged by a number of contemporary developments in theology which have shifted the focus from the *object* of study (what) to theology as *act*—its methodological concerns (how) and its context (where). This has been the consequence of the widely noted "shift to the subject," which has gradually exercised a profound influence on the place and starting point of theologizing, the methods used in both teaching and learning theology, and the outcomes and uses of theological reflection.

The new divisions of theology, then, focus on the context and concrete theologizing of the theologian. Three principal contexts have been distinguished: the *university*, wherein theology exercises a *critical* mediation; the *Church*, in which theology functions in a more *dogmatic* role; and the "daily life" *social-cultural* situation of the world in which theology is primarily concerned with the existential mediation of moral conversion.⁹ Each of these three contexts or "publics" calls for a distinct kind of theologizing, different from one another in its starting point, mode of argumentation, particular aspect of truth and of ethical stance stressed, and the particular transformation or "conversion" involved. Yet beneath these differences there are at least two basic constants: the *religious tradition* which has to be understood and interpreted, and the *contemporary situation* which needs to be analyzed in terms of the perennial "religious" question: the fundamental probing into the ultimate meaning of human existence. Theology as the "active correlation" of these two constants

9. See David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), chap. 1.

is the basis for this second perspective, effecting a significant shift in content from "faith with a philosophical elaboration" to "the word and events of salvation-history" in existential correlation with today's scene. Such inter-relating has always been an overriding concern for the great theologians of history, but it must be admitted that despite all the current talk and some notable exceptions, college theology today still labors under the general accusation of being too abstract, dogmatic, irrelevant and removed from common daily experience.

THEOLOGY AND/OR RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Having treated, however inadequately, both the Catholic university and theology, we should be in a position to put the two together. Unfortunately such is not the case; there is the further discussion regarding the preference for either religious studies or theology in a Catholic university. In the Philippines a number of Catholic colleges and universities have changed from theology to "RS," apparently following the lead of similar institutions in the United States. "Religious Studies" has been for decades the general heading for departments in public, non-sectarian universities which treat of man's religious heritage because such an approach, comprising literary, historical and comparative studies, could claim to be objectively "neutral"—presuming no "faith" on the part of either professor or student, and focusing solely on the question of meaning, without venturing any value judgment regarding "truth." For a Catholic university, the shift from theology to religious studies could be motivated by the desire to enlarge the ambit of study to embrace "religion" in general, rather than a tightly focused study of divine revelation as proposed in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. "Religious education" may be the desired goal rather than theology strictly so called.¹⁰

As in the previous discussions described above, although no wide consensus has been reached, a certain advance in clarifying some basic issues has been reached. For one thing, that the reality

10. In the Philippines, most "RS" departments of Catholic colleges are staffed by Catholic theologians, who according to Gregory Baum "reflect out of a critical responsibility for a religious community an orientation which the student of religion does not have or at least need not have." See *Studies in Religion* 4 (1974-75): 224.

of religion in the world extends beyond the limits of Christian theology, and presents a legitimate area for interdisciplinary studies valuable in themselves for a Catholic university, is widely accepted today. On the other hand, the discussion has also confirmed the academic integrity in a Catholic university of a theology which reflects within faith, out of a critical responsibility for a religious community, and treats questions of both meaning *and truth*. Whereas theology is radically theocentric, appealing to Christian revelation as its basis, religious studies are generally concerned with the human religious phenomena and experience. "Religious studies can survive the death of God and even thrive. On the contrary, if God is dead, so is theology."¹¹

An obvious objection could be posed: isn't Christianity a religion? The answer to this question is not simple, as Barth's outright denial and Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity" clearly show. A Catholic affirmative response could argue from man as a sacramental being (historical, social and political) as well as from God's incarnational act. Yet this must be done without reducing Christianity to just one religion among all others. The uniqueness of the "Christian fact"—Christian revelation and faith-experience including the inner word of the grace of faith and the outer word of Christian witness—can ultimately be tested only within a Christian faith commitment. Christian faith involves an ultimate commitment, involving risk—a response to invitation, not proof. Such reality cannot be adequately treated by the "neutral" critical observer; such a faith-response is not arrived at by the search for the security of some religious least common denominator.

The above argues for the necessity of *theology* for a Catholic university, while recognizing the valuable—even necessary—contributions of the various "religious studies" for the university and for theology itself. But without a strictly theological study, an adequate understanding of man's religious heritage from a Catholic perspective is short-changed. Thus two basic reasons argue for the need of theology in a Catholic university: the adequate pursuit of the *truth* of man's religiosity, and the essential place of theology in defining a "Catholic" university.

11. John Connelly, "The Task of Theology," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 29 (1974): 21.

THEOLOGY IN A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

In the various attempts to describe what makes a university "Catholic," the more common response usually fixes on the presence of philosophy and theology. Both surely have important, indispensable roles—without both it is difficult to imagine how a university could claim to be "Catholic." Yet it is doubtful if either or both together are sufficient to constitute the distinctiveness of a truly "Catholic" university. Philosophy among Catholic scholars today is itself pluralistic. It pursues both an ultimate "overview" of how all the university's knowledges-skills-arts converge into some unity, as well as an ultimate "under-view" in dealing with its own presuppositions and those of the other disciplines, including theology. But precisely in this task, philosophy is unavoidably abstract, involving highly complex conceptual analyses and reasoning. It deals with general goals and values, but not with the concrete steps and day-to-day methods of achieving such ends. In practice, college philosophy needs to stay closely linked with the concreteness of history, literature, the social science—in general the disciplines, skills and common sense which can keep its "imperial generalities" from slipping into mere verbal, rationalistic generalizations.

Theology's ability to ground the unity and distinctiveness of a Catholic university meets similar inadequacies. There is a pluralism of Catholic theologies, employing different underlying philosophies to develop distinctive systematic understandings of God's revelation today, in particular concrete cultural contexts. The simplicity of Gospel values and commandments has to be translated into present-day situations through complex moral reasoning, involving collaboration with the social sciences and philosophical ethical systems. Again, it never reaches the pragmatic steps to be taken here and now.

It seems more likely, then, that theology's contribution to the unity and distinctiveness of a Catholic university is to be found in some kind of basic *Christian vision* which draws not only on philosophy and theology, but on the total current resources of the university. Such a vision would be *Christian*—even specifically *Catholic*—because of the basic input of philosophy and theology as well as the concrete Christian charity-inspired lives of the university's administration, faculty and student body.

Concrete in drawing on literature, history and the specialized knowledges of the sciences, this vision would nevertheless be precisely a look into the future, beyond the status quo, yet with a depth and singleness of purpose that is strong enough to give unity and direction to the university's vocation.

The great danger of such a vision is the temptation posed by ideology. A Christian vision can avoid this pitfall by grounding itself in a Christian wisdom. Wisdom involves integration of specialized knowledge and values into a total view, a willingness to cooperate with others through shared values and prudently balanced judgments. Wisdom is not overly impatient for results—it stands easy before complex issues and needs because of a sense of tradition and an ability to recognize congruent values. Wisdom can ground prudent commitments, including the ability to suffer for such truths/values. Grounded on the discipline needed in all serious intellectual work, wisdom can furnish the meaningful context and the motivational drive so badly needed in the university.^{1 2}

Christian wisdom is Christ-centered; it thus stresses the personal over the institutional, the wisdom value of intelligence over the sheerly pragmatic/utilitarian; the intellectual life *for* love and service rather than merely for self-gratification or power. Liberation from ignorance, prejudice and injustice is wisdom's gift. Yet Christian wisdom pursues these ends with sensitivity to both the tragic and the humorous, and thus with a humility that comes from acknowledging the grace-sin drama in which we all play our individual and social roles. Finally, there is a sense of destiny — history-with-a-purpose—that flows from faith in the Risen Christ. Such a Christian wisdom, centered on Christ and carried forward by the gift of the Spirit, seems eminently capable of establishing an *esprit de corps* that qualifies a university as "Catholic."

It is in terms of such a Christian vision that theology finds its definitive role in the Catholic university. But just how is this inspiring role to be achieved in the practical order? Regarding the nature, role and methodology of theology in a Catholic university in the Philippines, our treatment will follow a group

12. Hassel, *City of Wisdom*, pp. 64-82, 106-9; 337-71. See also James E. Will, "The Place of Ideology in Theology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 15 (Winter 1978): 41-53; Alan Reuter, "Ideology, Criticism and Trust in Religious Education," *Religious Education* 76 (1981): 77-87.

of basic questions, based principally on the three goals of a university discussed above.

WHAT: THEOLOGY AS SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE

The key characteristic of theology in a Catholic university, is its pursuit of *critical understanding* of the faith, that is, of God, man and the world as illumined by faith. Such an understanding refutes both the secularistic reductionism of reality on one side, and on the other, the various forms of Christian positivism—biblical, liturgical, dogmatic and juridical fundamentalisms. These fundamentalisms absolutize a good thing by making Scripture, liturgy, dogma or Church practice ends in themselves, idols, lifted out of their historical and cultural contexts. By bringing them under serious criticisms, theology will at times create certain tensions with the practical piety of Filipino Catholics. But the Church badly needs this on-going purification if it is to avoid allowing the faith to slip into sentimentality and superstition.

Theology's pursuit of this critical understanding, however, does *not* demand a suspension of faith—a methodological doubt that eschews any faith-commitment.¹³ On the contrary, Christian understanding is a matter of both understanding and participation. It involves a responsible, alert, committed or convictional knowledge. The pose of the completely unprejudiced, neutral, value-free scholar of the Enlightenment has finally been deposed as simply another "prejudice." Yet regarding religious studies, it still commands rather wide, often unreflected support. What is affirmed here is the possibility—the reality—of being critically committed without this necessarily leading to indoctrination or the denial of religious freedom.¹⁴

A second characteristic of Catholic university theology asserted

13. See Avery Dulles, "Faith, Justice and the University," *Catholic Mind* 76 (October 1978): 25-32; John Carmody, "Faith in Religious Studies," *Communio* 3 (Spring 1976): 39-49; William Shea, "The Stance and Task of Foundational Theology: Critical or Dogmatic?," *Heythrop Journal* 17 (1976): 272-92.

14. See Brian Hill, "Teacher Commitment and the Ethics of Teaching for Commitment," *Religious Education* 76 (1981): 322-26. See also Charles Melchert "The Future of Religious Education: Commitment in Religion and Education," in *Emerging Issues in Religious Education*, ed. Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, (New York: Paulist, 1976), pp. 88-98; Kevin Nichols, "Commitment, Search and Dialogue," in *Voice of the Hidden Waterfall*, ed. Kevin Nichols (Middlegreen: St. Paul Publications, 1980), pp. 107-17.

here is its *programmatic* nature: there should be a series of courses that inter-relate and mutually support one another. This is the direct opposite of the religious smorgasbord commonly offered at secular universities and adapted in some Catholic institutions for various reasons. Given the intrinsic depth and complexity of theology's content, a smattering of knowledge in for example, theological anthropology, mystical prayer and contemporary atheism, can hardly be seriously proposed as an adequate means towards critical understanding and maturity in the faith. It is difficult to understand why, while the great majority of university disciplines have a carefully worked-out sequence of courses according to their intrinsic inter-relations and internal content, theology in a *Catholic* university is supposed to get along with a number of required courses and an assortment of "electives."

The theology program itself, and the individual basic courses offered, depending on their specific content, must be marked by a third characteristic, *integration*. This essential dimension is simply the consequence of the obvious fact that revelation-faith embraces the whole person—mind (doctrine), heart (worship), and behavior (morals). To understand a basic doctrinal truth of the faith is to see its implications in both the moral and spiritual spheres. To appreciate a Christian moral value is to perceive its basis in the doctrinal understanding of the person in society, and its consequences in worship. To realize the nature and role of sacrament in human life is to grasp its relation to both doctrinal foundation and moral commitment. Integration is demanded not only by the specific nature of theology's revelation-faith content, but also by the persistent *theory-practice split* that has "haunted" theological education in the past.

Put simply, "integration" in the theological program and in its individual courses, attempts to bring the experiential into the classroom, and the method of correlation into the practical lecture-discussion procedure. It means consciously working against the ordinary, commonplace method of "application," in which fundamental Catholic doctrinal, moral and spiritual truths are habitually reduced to trivial, moralistic clichés.

This notion of *integration* of the doctrinal, moral and spiritual dimensions of the faith is admittedly drawn more from current literature in religious education than from individual studies in theological methodology. But this source is essential to the posi-

tion proposed here for college theology in our Catholic schools in the present Philippine context. College theology must try to relate to the age, sophistication and previous formation of its students, without losing its call to contribute to the university as such. The practical implementation of college theology today must draw on the wide area of religious education as well as on strict theology. In the past college theology has too often been treated as merely "watered-down" professional theology of the seminary course. Today this is clearly recognized as a false assumption; the religious education notion of integration, therefore, seems eminently applicable to college theology.

But what should this integration mean in practice? Without entering into theology's use of sources (which will be taken up in the next section), a few examples from courses commonly offered in Catholic colleges can be given. A college theology course in Christology could profitably propose a spectrum of contemporary theological views on Christ and the Church as mediating salvation.¹⁵ In so doing, however, the direct implications of these views regarding moral stance and spiritual prayer-life, both for the Church as a whole and for the individual believer, would be carefully brought to light. In like manner, a course in "Christian Morality Today" could survey the models of Christian moral life (for example, legal, relational, love, discipleship and liberation) while at the same time indicating the doctrinal bases and spiritual attitudes involved in each.¹⁶ Forms of popular ethical subjectivisms could be traced to inadequate, faulty conceptions of the moral person and illustrated in certain patterns of religious superstition and false piety. More positively, Christian *moral* discernment, analyzed in relation to relevant social science data, could be shown to be grounded on prayerful openness and related directly to doctrinal truths of creation, redemption, judgment and destiny.¹⁷ The role of worship in Christian living must not be left to campus ministry alone; college courses in the sacraments and

15. For example, J. Peter Schineller, S.J., "Christ and the Church: A Spectrum of Views," *Theological Studies* 37 (December 1976): 545-66.

16. One handy summary is in William Cosgrave, "Models of the Christian Moral Life," *Furrow* 34 (September 1983): 560-74. See also Edward Vacek, "Popular Ethical Subjectivism: Four Preludes to Objectivity," *Horizons* 11, No. 1 (1984): 42-60.

17. See James Hug, S.J., "Christian Moral Discernment," in *Tracing the Spirit*, ed. James Hug, S.J. (New York: Paulist, 1983), pp. 279-309.

prayer should be doctrinally grounded and intrinsically linked to the Christian moral imperative of love.¹⁸

WHERE: THEOLOGY IN A WISDOM COMMUNITY

It has been argued that theology has three basic contexts or publics—the Church, the university, and the socio-cultural situation.¹⁹ The nature of even a “Catholic” university is such as to necessitate some “distance” from both the institutional Church and the pragmatic day-to-day concerns of economic, socio-political life. Yet distinction cannot in this case be pushed to separation: the third goal of the university as service to the community (both Church and society) effectively negates that. There will always be the tension, therefore, within the college/university’s pursuit of truth, with this challenge of relevance to, involvement in, the larger community.

Theology in a Catholic university, therefore, cannot simply be identified with faith, spirituality or holiness. In its specific academic context it must be relevant to all knowledge and be open itself to the relevance of all human knowledge to itself. In brief, theology must be involved in a “dialogue-among-equals” with the other disciplines of the university: literature, history, philosophy, the social sciences and so forth. The Church needs such a university theology precisely to bring faith into the world of the academy and to strengthen the place of faith in contributing to the overall culture of a people or nation. Without the critical role of theology in a university, the total life of the Church would be impaired.

Both as a discipline of specialized knowledge in the university, and as a contributor to the university as wisdom community, theology must be exercised in a specific culture. It must be *inculturated*—reflected of, and responding to, the indigenous culture of the university’s community, local, regional and national. Modern hermeneutics has alerted us to the absolute necessity of interpreting Scripture and tradition in terms of their specific his-

18. See Jeff Astley, “The Role of Worship in Christian Learning,” *Religious Education* 79 (Spring 1984): 243-51; Stephen Happel, “Prayer and Sacrament: Role in Foundational Theology,” *The Thomist* 45 (1981): 243-61.

19. See John Elias, “The Three Publics of Religious Educators,” *Religious Education* 77 (1982): 615-27.

torical cultural situations (*Sitz im Leben*). This means that, whether we know it or not, our theologizing today must be equally influenced by our total environment. In broadest terms, this argues for a much more conscious realization of the *experiential* and contextual dimensions of theology.²⁰ Current studies on the local Church, on religious experience, on moral questions raised by current events, on adaptations of the liturgy to specific cultures, on new insights into faith's ecumenical dimension or ideological presuppositions—all these are practical manifestations of the concrete historicity and inculturation of any authentic theology. This, however, does *not* argue for a superficial "relevant" study that is so immersed in the moment-by-moment set of crises that any in-depth, balanced, authentically objective theological education is rendered impossible. On the contrary, serious study of the Christian tradition—other times, places and conditions—can be extraordinary useful in discerning the Christian response to the present challenges of Philippine society.

Besides being carried on in the context of a university and in a specific culture, theology as contributor to the Catholic university as wisdom community takes place in a third area namely, within the study of its own proper sources of Scripture and tradition. How does college theology handle the basic Christian sources of Scripture and tradition?²¹ As befits a university discipline, theology must be critical in its use of both; as Catholic, it indicates how the Church has understood and used the Biblical word of God down through the ages. Thus any undue separation of Scripture and tradition is avoided, and the practical appreciation of Scripture as drawn from, and as an embodiment of, the oral tradition of the times, is assured.

20. "Experiential" here refers principally to two levels: the interpersonal and the social-contextual. For the first, see Edward G. Bozzo, C.F.X., "Theology and Religious Experience," *Theological Studies* 31 (1970): 415-36; Donald Gelpi, S.J., *Experiencing God: A Theology of Human Experience* (New York: Paulist, 1978); and Denis Edwards, *Human Experience of God* (New York, 1983). For the second, see the works of the liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Juan Luis Segundo, Leonardo Boff, and the like.

21. See, for example, Raymond Brown, "And the Lord Said? Biblical Reflections on Scripture as the Word of God," *Theological Studies* 42 (March 1981): 3-19; Mary C. Boys and Thomas Groome, "Principles and Pedagogy in Biblical Study," *Religious Education* 77 (1982): 486-507; Cora Dubitsky, "On the Use of Scripture in Religious Education," *Lumen Vitae* 36 (1981): 163-75; A. Nicholas, "Growing in Christ Through the Text," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 18 (1981): 20-34.

Experience indicates that a proper critical use of Scripture at the college level is not too common. Either historical-critical exegesis and contextual hermeneutics are used to "shock" the poorly prepared students, or (more commonly) an uncritical, pious moralizing approach is employed. The authentic goal of college theology is inhibited in both cases. Wider acquaintance with the practical uses of Scripture in religious and moral education—in addition to adequate professional scriptural formation—is badly needed for effective college theology teaching today.

Regarding tradition, one of the more common, well-grounded complaints heard in Catholic higher education today is the lack on the part of Catholic students of any sustained, personal contact with their Christian heritage. An indication of what they are missing is afforded by Morneau's recent unpretentious article entitled "Mirrors of Hope for a Troubled Time," which sketches in brief fashion the witness of Augustine of Hippo, Julian of Norwich, Thomas More, Catherine of Siena, and John Henry Newman. For the "now" generation, a lively sense of Catholic tradition has much to offer.

WHY: THE SERVICE OF THEOLOGY

Besides contributing to the two intrinsic goals of the university—specialized knowledge and the formation of a wisdom community—theology has a significant part in its third goal, service to the community. Contemporary discussion, especially throughout religious education literature, has stressed that an adequate goal must embrace both tradition and transformation, continuity and change, nurture and mission. Within the university's outward look to the larger community, theology offers a deep source of motivation and discernment by grounding the ideal of self-giving service in God's Self-revelation in Christ. Both on the individual and institutional levels, theology responds to Kant's fundamental queries: what can I know? , what ought I to do? , and what may I hope for? , with the critically grounded Christian virtues of faith, charity and hope. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy can be developed today in terms of societal as well as interpersonal levels.

One useful approach for outlining the *why* of college theology

is through the theme of conversion.²² Theology can contribute significantly to the transformation described in terms of six conversions. The first three form a pattern of increasing detail: *religious* conversion, from an alienated, radically ambiguous existence to the acceptance of basic meaning in life; *theistic* conversion from impersonal mystery to a Personal God, while *Christian* conversion changes the focus from a generalized God of the universe to the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. *Ecclesial* conversion moves the person from individualized religion to the community of the people of God. *Moral* conversion turns one from self-centered subjectivism to the realization of authentic human values, while *intellectual* conversion changes undifferentiated, uncritical consciousness to a holistic view of truth formed by integrating the manifold levels and disciplines of learning. There is no chronological sequence to these conversions, and they obviously overlap and interpenetrate one another; moreover, one or other could be absent. But they do offer some schematic structure for developing what "maturity in the faith" means when discussed in terms of theology's role in a Catholic university.

Two examples can serve to concretize theology's contribution to this maturing process through conversions. First on the level of the individual university student's quest for maturity, theology offers the spiritual sources and skills that can complement and deepen the content from other university disciplines, for example, the psychological input of Rogers, Allport, Blocher, Heath and others.²³ With the broader spiritual perspective provided by theology, a sketch of Christian adulthood as experienced in college years can be drawn in terms of Christ-centeredness, Christian commitment, prayerfulness, other-centeredness, openness, self-acceptance, and grace or giftedness—a view that is at once critical and unmistakably Catholic.

A second example could be drawn from the current, worldwide thrust for justice and human rights. Here theology can offer substantial grounds for the dignity of every human person, as well

22. See Edward K. Braxton, *The Wisdom Community* (New York: Paulist, 1980), p. 77.

23. See Charles Shelton, S.J., *Adolescent Spirituality* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1983).

as a sound critique of methods employed in the pursuit of justice. More specifically, theology can show how a thrust for justice without love can become impersonal, mechanically restrictive—even vindictive—rigid and joyless, and finally visionless. It is love that makes justice personal, not merely mechanical, a virtue rather than routine. Love allows for some give-and-take, for individual differences beyond justice's rigid criteria which frequently motivate more by fear and coercion. Christian love thus can complete justice by imparting a certain inventiveness and liberty to overcome any tendency toward a purely rationalistic vision of life. On the other hand, justice makes authentic love possible; without justice, love can become a destructive source of rancor and humiliation.

The love which theology treats of is *caritas*, the grace of Father, Son and Spirit, strengthening, deepening and purifying the "natural love" of human persons. This *caritas* integrates faith and justice in a Christian wisdom vision. As biblically grounded, Christian love is especially oriented toward the *anawim*—those underprivileged, oppressed, exploited, marginalized. As based on the experience of the Risen Christ, this *caritas*-wisdom is never provincial, privatized, parochial, but rather develops an openness toward universal service with a responsible attitude of community stewardship.

The *why* of college theology, then, is here expressed in terms of the specific community service that a Catholic university offers the larger community—both Church and civil society. Theology's own contribution to this service can be sketched in terms of tradition and transformation: it fosters a deeper, critically grounded personal faith (tradition including understanding, moral witness, and spirituality) precisely to serve as the abiding inner source for the *personal* transformation toward the Christian vocation of loving service.²⁴ High ideal indeed—but how can one work effectively and realistically toward its achievement in our concrete Philippine situation?

24. See James Loder, "Transformation in Christian Education," *Religious Education* 76 (1981): 204-21; Mary C. Boys, "Access to Traditions and Transformation," in *Tradition and Transformation in Religious Education*, ed. Padraic O'Hare (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1979), pp. 9-34; and Mary E. Moore, *Education for Continuity and Change* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983).

HOW: THEOLOGY'S PRAXIS IN A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

A good part of general methodology for college theology has already been outlined in the insistence above on an *integrated* presentation of faith (doctrine, moral and worship taught in their mutual inter-relationships), *inculturated* and experiential, and drawn from a critical and responsible use of Scripture and tradition. What needs to be faced squarely, however, in considering college theology methodology, is the noticeable gap between what is "taught" in Catholic schools—on all levels including college—and the living experience of the ordinary Filipino Catholic student. Perhaps it is not too oversimplistic to suggest that this gap is due in good part to improper methodology. Few Filipino Catholic college seniors seem to have acquired the *skill* of "thinking within the Faith." This may be due both to the unreflected faith-culture in which they have been nurtured, as well as to poor educational formation which stresses memory rather than critical understanding. But it would be less than honest to absolve present college theology from all responsibility in this matter.

What can be suggested on a more pragmatic level toward improving the effectivity of teaching theology on the college level?

First, it is precisely in this area of methodology that the relatively new discipline of religious education has much to offer. College theology obviously includes both a critical understanding of the faith, and an educational process—our focus is *teaching* theology at the college level. In the work of contemporary scholars in religious education can be found the most substantive aids toward *how* to teach theology, since they are already engaged in interrelating theology with the valuable advances and data from the social sciences, especially educational theory, psychological growth and maturation process, and the like.²⁵ Formerly relegated to child education and catechetical work, religious education today includes major research in adult education, much beyond the college level.²⁶

25. See, for example, the works of Gabriel Moran, Thomas Groome, Charles Melchert, Kevin Nichols, Maria Harris, Gloria Durka, Mary C. Boys, Padraic O'Hare, and the like.

26. For example, Leon McKenzie, *The Religious Education of Adults* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1982); John L. Elias, *The Foundations and Practice of Adult*

Both religious education and common sense agree that the basic factor in effective teaching of theology remains the *teacher*. The teacher is *not* merely a coordinator, a facilitator, an environmental organizer, or some other innocuous figure—as has been proposed quite frequently in past years. A teacher *teaches!*²⁷ The theology faculty of the Catholic college/university is undeniably the single most important factor for an effective successful theology program. The individual theology teacher must be well formed in the basic theological disciplines—doctrine, moral, sacraments—while being exercised in the necessary skills of biblical interpretation together with creative use of Catholic tradition. This takes much time and effort—a process that ideally is accompanied by the equally demanding challenge of actual classroom teaching with its stress on immediate pedagogical techniques and methods.

Two major obstacles are commonly present to impede the development of such a theology faculty. The first is the time and expense involved in such a formation; most college theology teachers have not the time nor the resources to earn a good Masters degree in theology, much less a doctorate. The practical costs of a well-trained theological faculty are apparently still too high for the majority of Catholic colleges/universities in the Philippines. The second obstacle is the teaching load of the ordinary college theology teacher. Again because of financial constraints, the sheer number of class hours and students make quality teaching and serious on-going faculty formation quite impossible. Neither of these restraints will disappear tomorrow, nor through wishful thinking. However, there are hopeful signs that many Catholic schools are doing their utmost to improve the professional formation of their theology faculty and reduce the teaching load as far as possible.

One practical measure of improving the quality of teaching is through creation of better *teaching materials*. It is true that even a good text does not teach itself, but needs a well-prepared teacher

Religious Education (Malabar, Fl.: Robert E. Krieger, 1982); and Gabriel Moran, *Education Towards Adulthood: Religion and Life-Long Learning* (New York: Paulist, 1979).

27. See Gloria Durka, "Towards a Critical Theory of Teaching," *Religious Education* 74 (1979): 39-48; and Mary C. Boys, "Teaching: The Heart of Religious Education," *Religious Education* 79 (1984): 252-72. This implies the importance of faculty selection, formation and spiritual development. For these, see Robert R. Newton, "Faculty Selection," *Religious Education* 74 (1979): 94-99; and "A Systematic Approach to Faculty Religious Development," *Living Light* 16 (1979): 328-41.

to become an effective instrument for successful teaching. Nevertheless a well organized and printed textbook in the various courses of the college theology program would constitute a major breakthrough. The production of such theology texts should be high on the priority list of all Catholic colleges/universities.

The method of college theology must obviously reflect seriously on the college *students*—their actual intellectual and affective maturity, their capacity in critical thinking and interrelating, their interests and basic motivation.²⁸ If theology is to make a significant contribution to the total Catholic education of the student, it must: 1) demand as much as the other serious academic disciplines of the college program; 2) exercise the student in critical thinking, in order to develop the *skill* of thinking within the faith; 3) lead the student to understand the inherent relationship between believing, acting and praying; and finally, 4) highlight the importance of a Christian commitment to the *praxis* of loving service of their fellowmen. Today this demands a balanced, critical and responsible use of much social science data on development in the student's moral and faith life—a development conceived in terms of a multifaceted *process*.

Finally, in the effort to improve the methodology of college theology, care must be taken to keep to "reasonable expectations." One debilitating factor has been the unreal claims and goals proposed for the theology program. No little harm has been done by sincere, pious but misconceived aims proposed for the theology program as a whole, and not infrequently by individual theology teachers for their own courses. The theology program should not be illegitimately burdened with the goal of the *whole* Catholic university. All the academic disciplines, separately and together as part of the "wisdom community," have their part to play. Much less should college theology be expected to substitute for the family, the parish, various Church social and spiritual groups and organizations. In trying to do everything, college theology

28. For the influence of both education and social class on Filipino ideas of God, see Rita Mataragnon, "God of the Rich, God of the Poor," *Philippine Studies* 32 (1984): 5-26. For student-oriented thrust, see "Pastoral Ministry to University Students," *Catholic Mind* 75 (February 1977): 53-64; and Padraic O'Hare, "A Church at Crisis Point: Conventional or Critical Religious Education?," *Living Light* 20 (June 1984): 329-40.

will end up accomplishing nothing.²⁹ It is important, therefore, in the constant search for a more effective methodology, that college theology keep clear its own precise nature and goal, and not be led astray to assume commendable but extraneous purposes which go beyond—sometimes even contradict—its own legitimate role.

CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to present one critically reasoned approach to theology in a Catholic university in the Philippines. It was found that such an effort necessarily entailed two basic preliminary steps:

One, a serious consideration of the nature first of a university in general (its constituencies and goals), and secondly, of a *Catholic* university (with its academic freedom and Church relatedness) in order to avoid the trap of reductionism in its two opposite forms, secularism and religious fundamentalism;

Two, a critical appraisal of contemporary theology (its nature, approaches divisions, and contexts) together with its relation to Religious Studies and to religion in general.

From these preliminary steps, the following picture of college theology was drawn:

1. A Catholic university needs *theology*— not just Religious Studies, despite the intrinsic value of the latter;
2. Undergraduate theology in a Catholic university is specifically different from seminary theology, and *a fortiori* from parish study groups, faith sharing and the like;
3. While theology itself does not constitute a university as “Catholic,” it plays an indispensable role in creating a Christian vision that characterizes such a university;
4. The *nature* of theology in a Catholic university is to pursue critical understanding of the Faith, through an ordered program of courses, integrating faith’s three basic dimensions of doctrine, moral and worship;

29. Michael Buckley, S.J., seems to assert too much for theology in his otherwise excellent article, “Jesuit, Catholic Higher Education: Some Tentative Theses,” *Review for Religious* 42 (1983): 339-49.

5. The *context* of college theology is the conflux of multiple specialized academic disciplines, which constitute a “wisdom community” in their mutual dialogue and critical interaction. Theology’s own contribution to this dialogue will be grounded on its critical interpretation of its own proper sources, Scripture and tradition, in today’s context.
6. Theology’s *goal* is to contribute to the Catholic university’s aim of educating mature responsible men and women, critically grounded in their faith, and thus inspired toward community service of their fellowmen. Theology’s own contribution can be traced in terms of tradition and transformation, with a pattern of “conversions” as signposts in the educational process;
7. The *method* of college theology necessarily involves the matter at hand (the “unceasing interplay between the Gospel and man’s concrete life, both personal and social”), the *faculty* (their formation, teaching schedule, motivation), *materials* (sound doctrine, presented in a relevant, inculturated manner, at the developmental level of the student) and the *students* (their previous academic background or lack of it; their level of critical thinking, emotional maturity and spiritual depth). Drawing on contemporary work in religious education, college theological method will stress the integration, inculturation and community-forming characteristics of the Catholic Faith.

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