

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

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Philippine Studies vol. 17, no. 1 (1969): 120–132

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

On the Eighth General Meeting of the International Federation of Catholic Universities

JOHN F. DOHERTY, S.J.

THE Eighth Triennial General Meeting of the International Federation of Catholic Universities was held at the Louvanium University, Kinshasha, Democratic Republic of the Congo from September 7th to 17th, 1968. Though there may have been some initial reservations regarding the site chosen for the meeting, all delegates were definitely impressed by the Louvanium as well as by the Congo itself which in the past four years has made great progress toward political stability. The reception both on the part of university authorities and of the government could not have been better.

Eighty-one delegates and observers were present at the Conference: twenty-five were from Europe, eighteen from North America; seventeen from Latin America, nine from Asia and the Near East and six from Africa. His Eminence Cardinal Garrone represented the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities.

The theme of the Conference was divided into three parts; namely, the Mission of the Catholic University, the means to accomplish this mission, and the problems in the way of accomplishing the mission.

On the opening morning Fr. Edward Rooney, S.J. of the Jesuit Educational Association of North America presented

a paper on "The Present Factual Situation of the Catholic University in the World and What It Means." The paper was based on answers to a questionnaire sent to all the Catholic universities of the world. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to "present in broad outline a general picture of Catholic education throughout the world." Since Catholic institutions of higher learning throughout the world differ widely, the questionnaire was subject to different interpretations in different areas of the world. As a consequence no clear picture of the Catholic university as such emerged. The fact is clear from Fr. Rooney's presentation which merely attempted to comment on the responses and pose a number of serious questions for further study and consideration, among them: the need for a more scientific study of Catholic higher education by a professional survey team; the divorce between some so called Catholic institutions and the Catholic tradition; the disenchantment of many with the educational apostolate; the question of lay control of Catholic institutions, and the relation of Catholic institutions under lay boards of trustees to the hierarchy and superiors of religious orders.

The questions of lay control of Catholic universities and especially that of the relation of these institutions to local hierarchies and superiors of religious orders were the central questions of the Conference. They were first dealt with in the Presidential address of Fr. Hesburgh, President of Notre Dame University, Indiana, U.S.A., which highlighted the formal opening of the Conference. This address was followed the next morning by the brilliant paper of Pere Luytens, O.P. of the Philosophical faculty of the University of Fribourg.

Fr. Hesburgh deplored the sad state of theology in many Catholic universities. Yet, he indicated, the university is by its nature committed to a universal knowledge which it will not have without theology. At the same time, he went on to point out that theology cannot expect special treatment within the university. It must compete on its own as an academic discipline with full freedom to explore God's revelation in the light of contemporary problems.

This freedom was one of the crucial questions of the Conference and Fr. Hesburgh stated one position very clearly

when he said that such freedom, "is not something that can be accomplished in the face of arbitrary controls from outside the university's professional community of researchers and scholars." Citing Fr. Ladislav Orsy, S.J. of Fordham University, Fr. Hesburgh stated:

The aim of the theologian (and I would add especially the graduate university theologian) is not to restate the facts of revelation in traditional terms; his aim is to explore it deeper and to find new insights into it. This is possible only if he feels free in his venture to push ahead in search of truth even if it means the possibility of a mistake. In other terms, there should be a freedom to make mistakes and errors in the pursuit of truth. A theologian by necessity will work through hypotheses in the analysis of revealed truth and in building a synthesis among the data of revelation. A working hypothesis is not the same as truth. It is an attempt to reach the truth, and many of the working hypothesis eventually, when verification is possible, will have to be discarded. With such hypothesis the theologian works and the ratio of mistakes in his work is not likely to be less than in any other science. In fact, it is likely to be higher. After all, he is explaining divine mysteries. Yet while such a procedure is taken for granted in any and every branch of human science, in theology it is held suspect.

In the person of the theologian the people of God are searching for a deeper understanding of the truth. This is good for the whole Church and in particular for the episcopal college. Therefore, the Bishops should give as much confidence and freedom to the theologian as possible. Since the University is the primary place where the quest of the Church for truth and understanding can be fulfilled, academic freedom at the universities should be jealously guarded by the bishops. A university does not compete with the episcopal office, it completes it.

It should be noted in passing that theology had its First Spring in the Middle Ages when the great syntheses were being created mainly in a University context. It was not until theology re-entered the University that it began to enter its second spring with the fruitful activity of University theologians during Vatican II. On the other hand, "most of the difficulty in elaborating new and creative theological texts in the Council came precisely from those theologians who were wedded to an outdated, repetitive and uncreative theology that, unfortunately had largely characterized seminary teaching for some centuries."

The paper of Pere Luyten, on the second day, developed at greater length the ideas set forth in the Presidential address of Fr. Hesburgh especially his emphasis on the autonomy of the Catholic university from any form of ecclesiastical control. Fr. Luyten felt that a Catholic university is Catholic because it is permeated by a Catholic spirit, and not by any bond to the Holy See or by any form of ecclesiastical control. In his presentation, Fr. Luyten cited the example of Fribourg which is a Catholic University, supported by the State and staffed by the Dominican Fathers. Though partial to such an arrangement and to the freedom it ensures, Fr. Luyten nonetheless felt that in other situations, other structures might be as well suited to the aims of a Catholic university. However, he felt that any external control would be foreign to the Catholic spirit and to the essential freedom of research as well as of theological development itself. He felt that the Church must always be in a position to bring its message to bear on new problems and perspectives and that this is best done in the Catholic university where, if the spirit referred to above is present, theology is in constant dialogue with the natural and profane sciences. He cited the interdisciplinary seminars at Fribourg in which students and faculty participate as one means of ensuring a Catholic spirit since in these seminars, the theologians are constantly confronting contemporary issues.

This brief summary scarcely does justice to the paper of Fr. Luyten or to his explanation of it. It was without doubt the most provocative paper of the entire conference and helped bring the central issue of external ecclesiastical control of the Catholic university into very clear focus.

Excellent as Fr. Luyten's theoretical presentation was, however, it failed to touch some more pressing contemporary problems facing the Catholic University in some areas of the world. Attention was first called to this fact by Fr. James Meany, S.J. of the Secretariat for Jesuit Education in East Asia. Fr. Meany in an excellent intervention pointed out the disillusionment with the educational apostolate prevalent among large segments of the younger generation especially

of priests and religious who often feel, they are accomplishing little in the increasing anonymity of the university atmosphere, and who prefer varying forms of the direct apostolate.

The gap between the ideal as developed in Fr. Luyten's paper and the actual was again emphasized in an unofficial evening session during which Fr. Luyten met with a group of Louvanium University students for an informal discussion on the role of the University. The students were extremely critical of the way the ideal set forth by Fr. Luyten has been implemented in practice at the Louvanium. Their objections, though reflecting their concrete situation in the Congo, bore striking similarity to the objections voiced by students in other areas of the world. First of all, they denied categorically that the Louvanium was Catholic in anything but name. They questioned the great emphasis on brick and mortar and what they felt was an almost total lack of concern with students as persons. The lack of any meaningful religious and liturgical life was also criticized. They stated rather forcefully that the students generally were cynical about religion and went out of their way to ridicule those who practiced their religion, with the result that in time few continued to practice it. Yet as the students saw it this did not seem to concern the priests on the faculty whose apathy, according to the students, reinforced their own cynicism. Unfortunately, not many of the delegates attended this session which I felt, called attention to some very serious questions neglected in the conference itself.

Finally, though Fr. Luyten dwelt at great length on the freedom of the Catholic university from ecclesiastical control, he did not touch, except in passing on the question of State control. Yet, it would seem that one of the dilemmas facing the University today especially in the underdeveloped areas of the world as Fr. McGregor pointed out the following day is whether and to what extent the university will transform itself into a training school for the needs of the State or remain, as it states it is, a training school for free men, competent in their specialty and capable of criticizing.

The third day was devoted to a discussion of the paper of Fr. Felipe McGregor, S.J., Rector of the Catholic University of Lima, Peru, entitled "The Future of Catholic Universities." Fr. McGregor felt that the Catholic University is here to stay. He saw its basic contribution to be in its capacity for humanizing the university world in general. However, to achieve this humanizing influence, a restructuring is necessary which would make the Catholic university "open to the world" and in agreement with the evolution taking place within the world. He wondered if the present proliferation of institutions with their scant resources can bring about this restructuring.

Dwelling on the Latin American experience of student participation in University management, Fr. McGregor cautioned against student participation in university management. He stated quite categorically that it has not worked in Latin America. It was, he felt, temptation to assume that university conflicts can be settled by university co-management and co-government. Rather he suggested that what should be pursued was "a form of organization stemming from converging action by institutions sufficiently different and free to make their own decisions and capable of jointly pursuing various objectives that are compatible to them." In an interesting paragraph he elaborates this point further.

Authority is the exercise of different and necessary functions for the common good: there is a power in the intelligence and knowledge acquired—not exclusively but mainly—by the professors; there is a power which gives an aptitude and capacity to direct, which is possessed by managers. Society and the community have rights on the University which stem from the service provided to the University, the students have the right to seek the forms they choose for their organizations to ensure that their rights are safeguarded by the University in its tasks. These rights include the right to criticize the university and to make a contribution by what they can bring to it; to suggest the requirements of their status. These rights tend to become a power when they are not recognized.

Four brief ten minute comments, proposed by a representative of each of the four areas of the world were delivered on each of the papers. In general, these comments added little to the overall discussion. For the most part, the commentators

spoke for their own country rather than their areas of the world.

As mentioned earlier the two basic questions occupying the conference were the autonomy of the Catholic university and that of lay control. Two opposing views quickly developed on these issues. The first, proposed most eloquently by the North American delegates, pushed strongly for the complete autonomy of the Catholic university from the Holy See and from any form of ecclesiastical control. The second view, defended by the Latin American delegates, proposed what they called "a juridical bond" of the Catholic university to the Holy See. They felt that without such a juridical bond, a university could not be Catholic. The North Americans, on the other hand, felt that the Catholicity of the university depended on its Catholic "spirit" and on a vital but free theology. Though this writer favors the view of the North Americans, he could not escape the feeling that in the course of the conference, "they did protest too much."

When one of them was asked in passing "whether to his knowledge the hierarchy or Rome ever interfered with a Catholic University?" he answered, "No." In fact, the delegates from the United States could only recall one case of ecclesiastical interference and that was the recent case of the Catholic University of America where the Board, almost exclusively made up of American bishops, tried to fire a young theologian. The result was a reorganization of the Board and the reinstatement of the theologian in question. The question of the interference of religious superiors, however, is more real and may at times be attributable to pressures from the hierarchy on them rather than on the University directly.

It does seem that in the case of the Americans at least, the reactionary views of many of the American hierarchy since the Second Vatican Council have given grounds for concern that more interference may be forthcoming.

Catholic universities in Latin America, on the other hand, have developed in a completely different atmosphere. This atmosphere has been characterized by a strong anti-clericalism

and hostile, anti-clerical governments. In this situation, the so-called "juridical bonds" with the Holy See have provided these universities with some leverage in a hostile environment. In listening to the Latin American delegates, however, one could not escape the feeling that they were living in the past and failing to open to the challenges of the present.

The question of lay control of the Catholic University was discussed at the Conference mainly in relation to the question of autonomy. Opponents of such control seemed to feel that under a lay board the Catholic University would lose its Catholicity. Again this feud was most noticeable in segments of the Latin American and Southern European delegations. It is perhaps best understood as a clerical reaction to anti-clericalism. While not an overtly anti-lay attitude, it certainly is an attitude of deep suspicion of the layman's intent in seeking his proper place within the Church.

It seemed that both sides, for different reasons, were failing to face the central issue. In the universities of both North and South America, theology has been for the most part dead. The North Americans tend to attribute this fact to ecclesiastical control while the Latin Americans are not even conscious of the fact that their theology is for the most part "out-dated and un-creative." It would seem that serious efforts in both areas to develop top flight, vital academic departments of theology would make the questions of outside interference and of lay control, academic. As Fr. Hesburgh pointed out in his opening address, quoting Fr. Orsy, "the charism of the episcopate is primarily that of fidelity to the Word of God; the charism of the theologian is that of searching for new questions and new answers." There need be no conflict between the two, between the "need of being faithful to God's revelation and the need to explain it more deeply; between the genuine Christian tradition and the Christian response to contemporary problems."

One could not but help feel that much of the reaction against any form of outside control of the university stemmed from a certain insecurity and possibly defensiveness regarding the real status of theology within the Catholic university,

especially in the United States. Though the effort to have the conference go on record with a strong statement regarding autonomy was a good one. I personally feel the problem is more basic and one would hope that the more basic issue is recognized.

It is regrettable that except for one or two interventions, little recognition was given at the Conference to the challenge provided to theology today by the newly emerging nations of Asia and Africa. Perhaps the real opportunities for theological renewal lie here. If theology to be vital must arise from the grass roots of a place, then may we not hope that reflection on the revelation in terms of the cultures of these areas may provide the challenge needed for the flowering of a more vital and creative theology.

On this the anniversary year of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it was especially appropriate that the last item of discussion at the Conference was devoted to this Declaration. Fr. Robert Drinan, S.J., Dean of the Boston College Law School, gave an excellent presentation of a book, prepared by him under the auspices of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, entitled: *The Right to be Educated*. This book was limited to a discussion of one of the rights contained in Article 26 of the U.N. Declaration, namely, the right to educate. It is interesting to note that the Charter states "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." In view of the continuing subtle pressures being brought to bear on parents in many areas of world, including, at times, the Philippines, to send their children to State schools, it is heartening to note this emphasis on the prior right of the parents and the consequent obligation on the part of the State to uphold this right.

The final afternoon was devoted to a discussion of the resolutions to be adopted by the delegates. Again the central issue was the autonomy of the Catholic University. The final statement, quoted below, was not as strong as some would wish it. It represents a compromise between the two opposing views outlined earlier.

By and large the meeting was very valuable. Under the enlightened presidency of Fr. Hesburgh, the International Federation has come a long way. From an organization largely controlled by the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities to an autonomous organization, discussing contemporary problems in an atmosphere of freedom and responsibility. In brief, it can be said that the convention was a worthwhile experience and that in a few short years the Federation has moved from a lethargic, to an exciting organization. With the promise of Kinshasha, we can look forward to the 9th General meeting in Quebec in 1970.

SECOND DECLARATION OF THE 8TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONCERNING CERTAIN ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN

At the close of its 8th General Assembly, the International Federation of Catholic Universities undertakes to promote to the best of its abilities the following list of activities. The Secretariat will search out institutional members or groups of institutional members which might accept complete responsibility for one or other of these projects. The Secretariat, moreover, will remain at the disposition of these member institutions and will make its services available to them.

Here is the list of proposed activities:

1) To create a development committee charged with the greatest possible promotion of the programs of the I.F.C.U. and their fulfillment by the institutional members.

2) To develop a program of systematic research relating to the basic problems of Catholic universities, all the while distinguishing the different models of the Catholic University.

3) To resume the study of the findings, documentation, and debates of the 8th General Assembly and of the regional meetings preceding it, particularly the gathering of statistics; to have all or part of this material published, to hold annual regional meetings between the general assemblies in order to continue and to prepare for the work of the general assemblies.

4) To undertake studies concerning the status of the Catholic Universities in relation to their economic and social contexts, especially concerning their periods of development and change, their resources for forming a Christian social conscience in the student.

6) To name a permanent representative for the Commission on Justice and Peace, with the double task of encouraging members to

promote its projects and programs, as well as to inform the membership of what it undertakes.

7) To encourage the members to take up or to continue studies of all sort concerning the many and difficult problems which are creating the population explosion.

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

A statement of position

The representatives of the catholic universities of the world assembled at Louvanium University, Kinshaha, Democratic Republic of Congo, for their eighth triennial Congress (September 10-17, 1968), conscious of their responsibility to share in building a better and more human world, wish briefly to describe their specifically Catholic role in their fraternal collaboration with other institutions of higher learning.

In addition to the teaching, research and service common to all universities, by institutional commitment the Catholic university brings to its task the inspiration and illumination of the Christian Message. In the Catholic university, therefore, Catholic ideals, attitudes and principles penetrate and inform university activities in accordance with the nature and autonomy of these activities. Distinctively, then, the Catholic University must be an academic institution, a community of scholars, in which Catholicism is present and operative.

In the Catholic university, this operative presence is ideally and normally achieved first of all by the presence of a group of scholars in all branches of Theology. The disciplines represented by this theologian group are recognized in the Catholic university, not only as legitimate intellectual disciplines, but as disciplines essential to the integrity of the Catholic university. Indeed, we believe that the science of religion by its very nature belongs to the task of any university. Since the pursuit of the theological sciences is, therefore, a high priority for a Catholic university, academic excellence in these disciplines becomes a double obligation.

At this period of social change when the mind questions the role of the university in society, when the Christian community itself is uncertain of the future of the catholic university, we deem it essential to recall the reasons which justify in regard to society in general and to the Christian community in particular the objective which Catholic institutions of higher learning have to fulfill in the present time.

In practice there is a variety of activities proper to a Catholic University, which would include such endeavors as the following:

1.—To contribute as much as possible to the integration of all knowledge in the light of the wisdom of Christian Revelation, in accord with the university's mission of universality.

2.—To make Theology relevant to all human knowledge and all human knowledge relevant to Theology itself.

3.—To put at the disposal of the people of God and especially of those with responsibility for making serious decisions in the Church the discoveries of knowledge in every field.

4.—To study and research problems of high Christian and human priority. For example:

- Respect for student freedom during their formative years,
- Enriching of culture and its profound human meaning,
- The problem of faith in a pluralistic society,
- The dignity of love and the stability of family life in an age where these values are being eroded.

5.—To create a Christian community of learning, in which, because of its authentic universality, non-catholics as well as catholics may participate and cooperate thus bringing to the Catholic university the ideas and values of many traditions.

6.—To create a true university community in which all members, whether professors, students or administrators, whether clerical or lay, participate authentically in its total life.

7.—To promote ecumenism by forming thinkers fully equipped for dialogue through ecumenical studies at the highest level.

8.—To serve society in general with dedication, in a Christian perspective, which especially focuses on the needs of the emerging nations and on the new world civilization now forming. To assist Catholic universities in the developing areas in the formulation of a theology suited to their cultures and ways of life.

9.—To prepare graduates who can participate with all men in the continual development of every sector of our pluralistic society, especially in the achievement of social justice.

To these special tasks, Catholic universities are dedicated by an institutional commitment which includes a respect for and voluntary acceptance of the Church's teaching authority.

Thus, the Catholic university both in theory and in fact presents a rich potential of forms, modes and activities. The Catholic universities of the world judge, therefore that they have a specific contribution to make to university activity in general, and that they should respond in rich and creative ways to the needs of contemporary society.

To achieve any significant influence in contemporary society, an institution of higher learning must possess a certain quality of excellence recognizable throughout the academic world. Accordingly the I.F.C.U. urges careful planning before the foundation of universities and uni-

versity colleges under Catholic sponsorship. Moreover, the Federation wishes to encourage the movement among Catholic institutions to affiliate both among themselves and with other private and state institutions of learning, as well as the movement toward sharing of resources.

The Catholic universities desire to be of service to their local communities as well as to the larger society, national and international. They feel, consequently that to achieve these goals they merit wide support not only from the general public, and philanthropic institutions, but also from governmental sources.

All are agreed that the essential note of a Catholic university consists, as Pope Paul VI has noted, in its existence as "a community of persons who are diverse in experience and in function, equal in dignity, occupied with scientific research and the integral formation of man, and who, whatever their task, draw inspiration from the light of Revealed Truth rendering it therefore a center for development and diffusion of an authentic Christian culture."