A Higher Synthesis of Knowledge: DWU and the Purpose of a Christian University

Daniel J. Stollenwerk

Abstract

Over the last decade, Divine Word University in Madang, Papua New Guinea, has successfully transformed itself from a secondary to a tertiary institution at the same time that it has experienced rapid growth through an affiliation and amalgamation process with other tertiary institutions throughout the nation. During its present revision of the curriculum in all departments, however, questions have surfaced regarding how the identity and mission of the university should be reflected in departmental course requirements. Basing his argument on Bernard Lonergan's common sense bias as well as a number of ecclesial documents on universities and development, the author of the following article perceives a bias in DWU's education toward the practical to the detriment of a higher synthesis of knowledge that would incorporate not just skills, but also ethics, culture, development and religion. He ultimately takes the position that once it recognizes the need for a higher synthesis of knowledge in its courses, DWU will not only offer an improved education, but also will better serve the nation's quest for long-term solutions to very practical problems as well as fulfil its task to witness to the Gospel in all its efforts.

Acts 1:8 states the mission of the Christian Church, the reason for her very existence, quite succinctly: to witness to Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The Church has no other reason to exist. Jesus preached the kingdom of God; the Church preaches Jesus.

The larger question, however, becomes what does witness to Jesus mean? In his 1990 Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex corde ecclesiae* (ECE), Pope John Paul II elaborates on evangelization in the contemporary age. I should note from the beginning that, although in this document the pope is specifically addressing himself to Catholic universities and Catholics lecturing in public institutions, the ideas I will draw from the pontiff's discourse and other Vatican documents are by no means specific to Catholic dogma as distinct from other Christian denominations. They are rather part of their shared two-millennia year-old tradition. In other words, although there may be differences between a Catholic and a Christian university, those differences do not bear on this article. In fact, any mention of 'Catholic university' in this article can be substituted for 'Christian university'; I will use the terms interchangeably.

Thus, in ECE John Paul II insists that the Christian witness must seep into all strata of society and transform humanity from within (para. 48). Witnessing to Jesus, he continues, does not simply mean preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas, but also 'affecting and, as it were, upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, humanity's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation' (48)[1]. In other words, be it from the pulpit of the minister, the knife of the surgeon, the imagination of the novelist, the pen of the scholar, or the chair of the university, the goal of each member and institution of the church remains that of Acts 1:8: to be witnesses to Jesus in all aspects of society, at all times in history.

The purpose of a Christian university, then, can be no different. As the scholarly arm of the movement, so to speak, its role is to witness to Jesus in its three-fold task of research, teaching and service to the community. In the same address, John Paul II draws out the implications of witness in a Catholic university a bit further, saying that all its activities should be 'connected with and in harmony with the evangelizing mission of the Church.' He continues thus:

> Research [should be] carried out in the light of the Christian message which puts new human discoveries at the service of individuals and society; education offered in a faith-context that forms men and women capable of rational and critical judgment and conscious of the transcendent dignity of the human person; professional training that incorporates ethical values and a sense of service to individuals and to society; the dialogue with culture that makes the faith better understood, and the theological research that translates the faith into contemporary language (ECE 49).

In other words, although its task may differ from other branches of the Church, still the goal of a Christian university remains the same: to witness to Christ in all it does and to prepare its students to do the same in whatever profession they choose.[2] As simple as this mission may sound, however –or perhaps because of its very simplicity—the goal of witnessing to Jesus in the three-fold task of the university often appears neglected or even forgotten, the vision clouded, by a university's sincere and authentic efforts to meet the perceived demands of the age.

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[1] John Paul II is quoting here from Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 19.

[2] 'The Presence of the Church in the University', a 1994 joint statement by three departments of the Vatican, makes the same point as ECE when it speaks of the mission of the church in the university and university culture, using, however, the categories of 'subjective' and 'objective' evangelization. The primary mission, it says, is subjective evangelization wherein the church enters into dialogue with students, staff and lecturers within the cultural trends that characterize the milieu. The objective mission of the church in the university, however, the statement adds, must not be forgotten. This is the more academic dialogue between faith and the different disciplines of knowledge concerning the great questions of the value of the human person and the meaning of human existence and action. At this second level, the document continues, 'Catholic intellectuals should give priority to promoting a renewed and vital synthesis between faith and culture' (section II, para. 1).

I can't help but focus on Divine Word University (DWU) in this article, where I spent two very stimulating and fruitful years lecturing in Religious Studies to students from the faculties of Arts, Business and Management, and Health Sciences. The ideas articulated and the conclusions drawn, however, I believe could be applied in general to all Christian tertiary institutions. I begin by summarizing Bernard Lonergan's notion of general bias, which I consider to be the cause for much of the clouded visions of Christian institutions in general, and tertiary educational institutions in particular. I then consider the role of the Catholic university according to several ecclesial documents including Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, as well as a joint Vatican congregation statement on the 'Presence of the Church in the University' and several social encyclicals. Finally, I relate these first two sections –on the source of the problem and the Catholic Church's response to it— to DWU, positing ideas that I believe should be further discussed in order that this quickly growing, very hopeful tertiary institution may better live up to its mission as a Christian university.

Bernard Lonergan and general bias

The 20th century Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian Bernard J. F. Lonergan, in his highly respected epistemological work *Insight*, takes up the discussion of human bias in his exploration of common sense (173-244). Although perhaps unfamiliar with his terminology, most readers would have no trouble following Lonergan's discussion of individual and group bias. I have discovered, however, that such is not the case with the prejudice that Lonergan considers most widespread and, in the long run, most dangerous: the general bias of common sense or, more simply, general bias or common sense bias (225 ff.).

Although a detailed explanation of Lonergan's epistemology is out of the question in this small article,[3] as is any lengthy discourse on his understanding of common sense, a very brief summary of both will be necessary to comprehend his conception of general bias. Lonergan demonstrates in *Insight* that all scientific, humanistic and even common sense understanding follows a

[3] Bernard Lonergan insisted that epistemology, the philosophical study of human understanding, is not so much an objective field of learning, as it is a subjective attention to and grasp of one's own thought processes as one seeks to discern the true. The first part of *Insight*, in fact, leads the disciplined readers through a series of exercises designed to help them understand their own understanding in various fields of academic endeavor. There does appear to be a growing tendency in academia to suspect the hermeneutics of suspicion that underlie the quagmire of postmodern relativism and many are becoming convinced that Lonergan's epistemology is a way forward; it is a method that grounds truth in human intentional consciousness. At the same time, however, it would also appear that any description of, or any argument for, Lonergan's epistemological method will not convince the avowed sceptic; the only thing that might convince would be to actually go through a set of exercises like those in *Insight*. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that Lonergan insisted that one cannot understand epistemology without actually experiencing and attending to it through the use of a set of exercises like those found in *Insight*, still he did provide a summary of those exercises and the theory grounding them in his *Method in Theology*. In other words, for short-cut introduction to Lonergan's epistemology, see *Method*, pp. 3-25.

very clear pattern of 1) experience of data, 2) insight into the ordering of the data, 3) judgment as to whether the insight is true or not and, finally, 4) action taken on the judgment.[4] In fact, the reality of the process of human growth in understanding is replete not just with this successful progression but also myriad combinations of false starts, dark alleys and dead ends. Nevertheless, Lonergan's massive tome does appear to demonstrate that throughout the process, which leads to knowledge, human intelligence follows an unchanging pattern of 1) experience, 2) understanding, 3) judgment and 4) decision.

Like cosmology, mathematics or physics, Lonergan further establishes in *Insight* that common sense is a specialized development of human knowledge; in other words, like all other specialized learning, common sense follows this very same pattern of knowledge acquisition (226). Farmers and mechanics, doctors and lawyers, politicians and diplomats, sports stars and Hollywood celebrities all demonstrate their prowess by a 'greater readiness in catching on, in getting the point, in seeing the issue, in grasping the implications, in acquiring know-how' (*Insight* 173). Just as in other human endeavours, people of common sense can often identify a 'eureka' moment that pointed the way to the best possible solution, the way forward, the trick that worked. And just as in other human pursuits of knowledge, most will admit to the occasional misstep, the blind eye, and the stupid mistake that hindered a desired outcome. In other words, whether persons of common sense have averted to it or not, and grasped it or not, they are following the universal human progression in knowledge of experience, understanding, judgment and decision.

Having demonstrated this view of common sense as following a universal pattern of human knowledge, then, Lonergan goes on to describe bias: be it culpable or inculpable, individual or group, somewhere along the progression bias simply blocks one of the four steps from experience to decision. Individuals or groups may simply not have the data at their disposal to come to clear judgments and actions. Or, through any combination of psychological, social or historical reasons, they may knowingly or unknowingly block the accumulation or processing of data. Regardless of how it occurs, however, somewhere along the line, every evasion of insight, every false judgment or sinful action can be viewed as a breaking down of an authentic process of

[4] Take the relation of the sun to the earth for a simple illustration of this process of human comprehension. Experience shows that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Only insight into that data, however – be it through simple observation, the use of mathematics, and/or the assistance of instruments such as a telescope— will come up with such hypotheses as a flat earth, an earth-centered or a sun-centered universe. Judgment must make the next call as to which hypothesis is correct – or at least which is the best possible guess until new data come forward. Depending on the judgment call, then, various actions may follow. Thus, in the case of the shape of the earth and its relative position to the sun, depending on one's judgment one may decide, for example, to sail around a spherical earth without fear of falling off, or even come up with a more exact calendar to chart the seasons of the year and the days of communal celebration such as Pope Gregory XIII instituted in 1582. This example of a growing understanding of the heliocentric solar system may appear simple in hindsight, but it took decades of scientific and political sparring before it was finally accepted as true. For a fascinating study of how science gave up the very common sense theory of an earth-centered universe to embrace the counter-intuitive helio-centered universe, see Thomas Kuhn's, *The Copernican Revolution*.

human understanding and action which follows the unchanging pattern of experience, understanding, judgment and decision.

Common sense bias, like all biases, blocks this progress in human understanding and action as well. Lonergan explains how: Common sense differentiates itself from other human intellectual endeavours in that it is eminently practical. Whereas the cosmologist or mathematician may gather, sort and investigate data for years, may contemplate theories for a lifetime, may seek truth for its own sake – data, theories and truth that may have no apparent or immediate human practical benefit— common sense sticks to the practical, to the concrete. 'It entertains no aspirations', as Lonergan would say, 'of reaching abstract and universal laws' (*Insight* 226). It simply wants to solve the problems at hand.

Now all persons with specialized knowledge can tend to slip into the feeling that their field of study is more important than others; they may fail to recognize the place and importance of other disciplines. Common sense, however, as a specialized development of human knowledge, has a far greater tendency to commit this error of arrogance, or, as Lonergan put it a bit more kindly, common sense is 'incapable of coming to grasp that its peculiar danger is to extend its legitimate concern for the concrete and the immediately practical into disregard of larger issues and indifference to long-term results' (*Insight*, 226).

By its nature, then, common sense is interested in the 'here and now'; it wants to solve the problems that arise. Ironically, however, in its pursuit of the short-term solution, the short-term problems that it must face simply continue to grow. And yet, by its very nature, common sense is blind to the long-term approach that may hamper the short-term problems from ever arising in the first place. Now it has become abundantly clear in the last few centuries that humanity must not only remember and understand, but must also direct history.[5] Yet common sense is not up to the task. In fact, more often than not, it will say it cannot do anything about the situation at hand; it simply must live with it, react to it, and cope with it.

In addition to its short sightedness, however, conceivably the biggest hindrance of common sense bias is its failure to respect a 'detached and disinterested intelligence' (*Insight* 230). In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle was perhaps the first western philosopher to define wisdom as humanity's noble quest for the 'ultimate principles and reasons-why' (book I, part I), a pursuit of study with no motive of utility, no external advantage, a study that exists for its own sake. According to Lonergan's epistemology, the pursuit of human knowledge is simply asking the further question, entertaining the next hypothesis, making judgments based not on gain, but on a pure desire to know, and then acting upon that judgment irrespective of the consequences.

[5] Or, as Lonergan put it, the challenge of humanity is to progressively 'restrict the realm of chance or fate or destiny and progressively to enlarge the realm of conscious grasp and deliberate choice' (*Insight* 228).

Lonergan's further question, Aristotle's 'ultimate principles and reasons-why', then, in due course lead beyond the practical and immediate to a higher synthesis of knowledge. The further question in counting sheep leads to arithmetic; the further question in arithmetic leads to algebra; and the further question of algebra leads to calculus. Linguists look for the 'ultimate principles and reasons why' to those extremely practical conventions of language; physicists do the same with waves, beginning, perhaps, with a boat on the sea, but later looking at such things as rainbows and ultimately gaining very impractical knowledge (apparently for now anyway) about the make-up of some very distant suns. It should be noted that each 'higher level' of knowledge takes nothing away from the 'lower'; rather, it adds to it. It synthesizes the lower into a higher, more global, all-embracing understanding of reality. In other words, human understanding 'ascends', as it were, from the most practical of knowledge to ever-higher syntheses. Finally, the highest of all syntheses begin with the (again, apparently anyway) most 'impractical' questions of all, usually relating in some way or another to origin and destiny: How did light come to exist in the first place? Why does light exist? In fact why does anything in the universe exist at all? And what is the ultimate destiny of the universe? Or, closer to home, given the overwhelming probabilities of it never occurring, why was I born? And what, for goodness' sake, is the purpose of my life?

These last, of course, are the very questions of philosophy and theology which common sense bias ignores. Instead of asking the further question, it says there is little or no value in the pursuit of such knowledge. There are, after all, much more pressing problems at hand. In other words, common sense bias effectively reduces human understanding to the practical, to the 'doable', to the short-term solution that disregards the higher synthesis of human wisdom, of seeking truth for truth's sake.[6] The irony of the common sense bias, of course, is that the greatest changes in human history – and most probably the long-term solutions to social and international problems— lie exactly in these so-called 'impractical' studies of human wisdom, that is, in philosophy and theology.[7]

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[6] In this sense common sense bias is a form of reductionism. Instead of incorporating and synthesizing the entire spectrum of human knowledge, reductionism considers human consciousness and human existence itself at ever lower levels of human understanding such as that of human or merely animal psychology, of biology or chemistry, or ultimately atomic or even sub-atomic theory. Ironically, the argument against such reductionism is found in the operations of those who produced the theories in the first place. The very fact that one is able to gather data, make such hypotheses, judge them (even falsely) and write them down, would demonstrate that the very structure of human consciousness cannot be reduced exclusively to any one level. Just as calculus cannot be reduced to algebra, or algebra to mathematics, so neither can reductionism be the last word on human consciousness. Common sense has a tendency to fall into this error of reductionism as well; it diminishes human intelligence to the practical, to the 'doable', affording it no place for the higher synthesis of knowledge.

[7] For a very insightful look at how Europe's understanding of the cosmos influenced its ordering of society and vice versa, as well as the dialectical breakdown of both and the rise of a new understanding of the cosmos in conjunction with a new order in society in each era, see Goerner's *After the Clockwork Universe*.

A higher synthesis and its role in development

A number of ecclesial documents have taken up this theme of practicality and the higher synthesis, documents that, I believe, may shed further light on the purpose of a Christian university. The first I will consider is *Ex corde ecclesiae* whose principal concern is the mission of the Catholic university and the role of Catholics in secular universities. In paragraph four the document states that 'without in any way neglecting the acquisition of useful knowledge, a Catholic university is distinguished by its free search for the whole truth about nature, man and God.' At times ECE calls this search for the whole truth a 'universal humanism' (4), at other times the 'integration of knowledge' (14), and still in other places a 'higher synthesis of knowledge' (16) or simply a 'synthesis of knowledge' (19). But whatever its name, its description and role within the Christian university are clear. First, according to *Ex corde ecclesiae*, the higher synthesis of knowledge is dedicated above all to truth in its essential connection to the supreme Truth, who is God (4). Secondly, it grounds ethics: the present age, ECE insists, 'is in urgent need of this kind of disinterested service, namely of proclaiming the meaning of truth, that fundamental value without which freedom, justice and human dignity are extinguished' (4). Thirdly, it engages science and technology, evaluating their attainments in the perspective of the totality of the human person (7). Fourthly, it conducts an impartial search for truth, 'a search that is neither subordinated to nor conditioned by particular interests of any kind' (7). Finally, it is interdisciplinary; 'assisted by a careful and thorough study of philosophy and theology, [it] enable[s] students to acquire an organic vision of reality and to develop a continuing desire for intellectual progress' (20).[8] In summary fashion, according to ECE, this higher integration of knowledge, 'aided by the specific contributions of philosophy and theology' will enable a university to help 'determine the relative place and meaning of each of the various disciplines within the context of a vision of the human person and the world that is enlightened by the Gospel, and therefore by a faith in Christ, the Logos, as the center of creation and of human history' (16). Thus, again, do we hear echo of the evangelical mission of the Church, this time in the way that a university higher integration of knowledge serves that mission.

Just four years after the publication of *Ex corde ecclesiae*, the congregation for catholic education, together with the pontifical councils for the laity and culture, issued a joint document on 'the Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture'. This document again makes it clear that there is an 'urgent need' for a higher synthesis of faith and culture within the university environment. It claims that there exists a sort of 'university culture' that generates a characteristic 'forma mentis' or mindset characterized by a 'high level of compartmentalized information and little capacity for synthesis,

[8] Because of the importance of theology in the synthesis of knowledge, moreover, the ECE makes special note that 'every Catholic university should have a faculty, or at least a chair, of theology' (19). 'The Presence of the Church in the University' similarly claims that, be it a Catholic university or not, the Church 'seeks to support and foster the teaching of theology wherever possible'(II, 1; cf. also II, 3).

even within specific sectors' (I, 2). Such a mindset, it continues, has its origin in the difficulties of an evolving society and in the demands of the economies (I, 4). It adds that, although such demands may bring undeniable technological benefits, still, there is concern that what is supposed to be a 'community of students and teachers in search of truth' may become a mere instrument in the hands of the State or the dominant economic forces, the only aim of which is to assure the 'technical and professional training of specialists, without giving of education of the person the central place it has by right' (I, 6). Finally it states that there is the further danger that teachers and students will 'close themselves within their specific field of knowledge, seeing only a fragment of reality' (I, 8). In sum, a '"utilitarian" formation takes precedence over integral humanism, tending to neglect the needs and expectations of persons, to censure or stifle the most basic questions of personal and social existence' (I, 9).

Perhaps most surprising, this triumph of utilitarian professionalism over an integral humanistic education, the document appears to imply, is by no means the result of creeping secularism or some fiery eyed atheistic conspiracy or dictatorial act of oppression. (If only reality were so easy to comprehend…) Rather, the document appears to place the blame for the imbalanced university education squarely at the feet of the believer. 'Too many teachers and students', it says, 'consider their faith a strictly private affair, or do not perceive the impact their university life has on their Christian existence' (I, 15). In other words, the privatization of religion without a balanced view of its impact on every facet of society, the document appears to say, leads even some of the most committed Christians to reduce university education to professional, technical training without any sort of attempt at a higher integration of knowledge.

Addressing themselves to socio-politico-economic conditions rather than the university setting, the social teachings of the church appear to make a similar appeal as ECE and the 'Presence of the Church' to a higher integration of knowledge, over and above a practical pursuit of what appears to be 'doable' today. The Second Vatican Council's address to the world in *Gaudium et spes* (GS) is particularly enlightening in this regard (paras. 4-9). Composed in the mid 1960s, this 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World' begins with a brief but quite passionate introductory statement on the 'signs of the times'. It speaks of a 'new stage in history', of 'profound and rapid changes', of a 'true cultural and social transformation' wherein humanity has extended its power in every direction (4). Nevertheless, it continues, as humanity 'lays bare the laws of society', it is 'paralyzed by uncertainty about the direction to give it' (4). Never has the human race enjoyed such abundance, wealth, resources and economic power, it adds, yet at the same time a 'huge proportion of the world's citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty' (4). At the same time that one cannot help but marvel at advances in communications, technology and even space exploration, a great many nations are left behind in the pursuit of development and freedom, and traditional values are jettisoned with only a crude consumerism to take their place.

Gaudium et spes appears to put the blame for this world 'buffeted between hope and anxiety' on an imbalance in individual formation (8). Certainly, it says, there is a growing disparity between 'a concern for practicality and efficiency, and the demands of moral conscience'. But such a moral immaturity is rooted in a deeper discrepancy as well, GS appears to claim, 'between an intellect which is modern in practical matters and a theoretical system of thought which can neither master the sum total of ideas, nor arrange them adequately into a synthesis', that is, between 'specialized human activity and a comprehensive view of reality' (8).

This imbalance between practicality and a synthetic worldview comes into play in a very concrete way when *Gaudium et spes* takes up the theme of development. GS makes it clear that 'progress arises and grows above all out of the labor and genius of the nations themselves because it has to be based, not only on foreign aid, but especially on the full utilization of their own resources, and on the development of their own culture and traditions' (86).

To this idea of the 'genius of the nation' as the key to development, the 1967 social encyclical *Populorum progressio* (PP) repeats the call for a 'higher synthesis' or 'integration of knowledge', although it refers to the concept now as a 'new humanism' (14, 20, 21). Authentic development, PP insists, cannot be restricted to economic growth alone but must include the development of the whole individual. In paragraphs 20 and 21 it lists a hierarchy of values integral to this new humanism that must be a part of the authentic development of any nation: It begins, of course, with life's necessities, the elimination of social ills, and the broadening of the horizons of knowledge; at higher levels it includes the awareness of human dignity, an active interest in the common good and the desire for peace. The values do not stop there, however. There are still the highest values of a taste for the spirit of poverty, love, friendship, prayer and contemplation. The fullness of humanity, in other words, means the greatest growth possible of one's physical, emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual potential. The purpose of development, then, is to create a society wherein the full potential of each individual and community can be realized. If society is made up of 'structures of sin' (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 36), then, among other things, development would mean a reordering of the economic, social and political order in such a way that it would be easier for all to attain the entire hierarchy of values. Ultimately, then, all development must have as its final value God, the author and end of all (PP 21).[9] In other words, the goal

[9]Although in different ways perhaps, all the social encyclicals similarly stress that the goal of development is the whole person, beginning at the level of material, but always culminating with the spiritual. John Paul II will underline in this hierarchy of values implicit in all authentic development the importance of an ecological principle as well, or, as he refers to it, a great respect for the cosmos, the ordering principle in nature. He will also speak of human dignity and the common good more in the context of human and economic rights and solidarity both at the national and international levels. See his encyclical letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (27-34). Earlier, John XXIII had spoken of the primary end of all society as spiritual as well. In dialectical fashion, it would appear, just as all 'lower values' lead to the 'higher value' of spirituality, so too the latter 'exerts a guiding influence on culture, economics, social institutions, political movements and forms, laws and all the other components which go to make up the external community of men and its continual development.' Moreover, he adds, when spiritual, as well as intellectual values are in

of all development is not only economics but also faith; material development, though necessary and good, must be conceived within a higher integration of the goal of human existence.

The case of DWU

Until now I have been setting out a series of ideas on practicality and a higher synthesis. I have looked at Lonergan's philosophical understanding of common sense bias, an unconscious, almost universal preference in our age for the practical as opposed to the detached and disinterested quest to seek out the answer to the further answer. I have also looked at two ecclesial documents on the university that point to a similar compartmentalized, professional training in response to the dominant economic forces. Finally I have considered a number of documents on the social teachings of the church that have observed a similar myopia in favor of the practical and material. All of these writings, moreover, I have claimed, come together in their urgent call for a higher viewpoint, a new universal humanism, a higher synthesis of knowledge, culture and faith, a plea for development that includes the entire hierarchy of values from material to intellectual to moral to spiritual. It is now time to consider Divine Word University in the light of these coalescing ideas of practicality and the higher synthesis.

First, like many tertiary institutions throughout the world, in its praiseworthy efforts to meet the demands of the age, DWU would appear to be in danger of inadvertently succumbing to that broad western prejudice that Lonergan has called common sense bias, and to what 'The Presence of the Church in the University' has called a university 'mindset' characterized by a 'high level of compartmentalized information' (I, 2). The evidence I believe is multiple. Even a cursory review of the curriculum in the various departments of the Faculties of, say, Business and Management, Flexible Learning and Health Sciences in the most recent DWU Program Handbook, will show a plethora of courses in the given field, but very few liberal arts courses that may seek a higher synthesis of learning. Would this not be one indication, anyway, that DWU has fallen into the university mindset that 'The Presence of the Church in the University' warned about, that is a 'technical and professional training of specialists, without giving of education of the person the central place it has by right' (I, 6)? Moreover, during the curriculum review process that was underway during my two-year stay at DWU, I often heard that philosophy and theology were not what the students needed; there was no room for these subjects given the practical demand of the fields. Again, I see this argument as

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place, society has 'no difficulty in understanding what is meant by truth, justice charity and freedom' (*Pacem in terris,* 36 and 45). Finally, Paul VI will speak of progress, the common good and faith in terms of morality, solidarity and hope in *Octogesima adveniens*: 'Is not genuine progress to be found in the development of moral consciousness, which will lead man to exercise a wider solidarity and to open himself freely to others and to God? For a Christian, progress necessarily comes up against the eschatological mystery of death. The death of Christ and his resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord help man to place his freedom in creativity and gratitude, within the context of the truth of all progress and the only hope which does not deceive' (41).

an indication of the common sense bias that Lonergan warned was a shortsighted –and ultimately very impractical—approach to a long-range crisis that can only be solved through a higher synthesis.

Second, it appears to me that DWU, as a university culture, is in danger of falling into the very trap that the social encyclicals warned against as well that is of thinking of development as mostly material, and giving little emphasis to the higher values of humanity. In the inaugural volume of the *Contemporary PNG Studies: DWU Research Journal*, Michael McManus posed the question of whether the DWU Communications Arts curriculum reflected the long-term needs of the developing nation of PNG, or whether it was simply meeting the requirements of the mainstream media. Dick Rooney, furthermore, in the same volume examined whether EMTV, PNG's only TV channel, reflected the cultural, informational and development needs of the nation or whether it simply provided entertainment for its viewers. So too one may ask of the departments at DWU: to what degree are they meeting the true, long-term needs of the country relative to the degree in which they are simply meeting the demands of the often large, foreign-owned, companies that have invested in PNG's developing economy? To what extent does education at DWU help its students discover and 'exploit' the genius of the nation (GS 86) relative to the extent in which it simply trains its students to meet the requirements and desires of the dominant economic forces ('Presence of the Church' I, 6)? In other words, to what point at DWU does 'integral humanism' take second fiddle to 'utilitarian formation' ('Presence of the Church' I, 9)?

The second half of each of these questions speaks of the practical necessities of education in, not only a developing nation, but any nation. And practical necessities are never to be disparaged. They are essential; they are necessary. In the long run, however, the ecclesial documents I have looked at thus far would appear to imply that the survival and flourishing of industry, and society in a developing nation such as PNG have just as much, and perhaps even more, need of imagination and creativity, as well as a higher synthesis of faith and culture. My question, therefore, is whether the bias of common sense has hijacked education too far in the direction of practicality to the detriment of the higher viewpoint which would not only help discover and exploit the 'genius of the nation'—the only really long-term solution to development— but also help the students to find a proper balance in their lives between practical education and skills, religion and traditional cultures.

Which brings me to a third point: Through class discussions and written assignments in the various departments and faculties in which I taught at DWU, I came to discern a sort of schizophrenia in my students. They studied more or less hard for their classes on Monday through Saturday and many went to church on Sunday, but most were unable to synthesize these two views of life. Added to this duality of vision was a third, 'traditional' conception of life, death and the spiritual interaction between these two worlds. Students would giggle in recognition of the fact that they did jump from one worldview to the other, depending on circumstances, depending on 'what worked best'. Most, for example, understood the effects of a virus, but would not discount the

workings of sorcery in an untimely death. All of my business students, by way of another example, could balance a ledger, but when asked the question 'Assuming a day is 24 hours long, how many believe that the world was created in six days as recounted in Genesis 1?' some 2/3 answered that they did.

Now although a great shame, it is by no means unheard of for Christians throughout the world to be unable to synthesize Charles Darwin and Genesis 1. But simply because many a university is failing to help their students with this particular example of a higher synthesis of faith and culture, is no reason for DWU to excuse itself from the task. But perhaps my most disturbing discovery –and further illustration of the need to help students with a higher synthesis— was that few of my students had the capacity to analyze such apparently conflicting worldviews. They had been taught to know facts and how to manipulate them to achieve a desired end, but they had not had sufficient training in logic, and critical and systematic thinking to discover their own ideas. In Lonergan's terminology, their education had laid a great deal of emphasis on the accumulation of data, but had seriously neglected the aspect of insight and judgment.

These three examples, then, I believe point to a need for an 'integration of knowledge', as the ECE says (14), aided by the specific contributions of philosophy and theology that will help students to 'determine the relative place and meaning of each of the various disciplines within the context of a vision of the human person and the world that is enlightened by the Gospel' (16). And yet, while that need becomes ever so apparent, DWU, perhaps unconsciously, does not seem to be facing it. In fact, it would appear that DWU has walked directly into the trap that *Gaudium et spes* warned us of some forty years ago, that is, of educating a generation of youth who may be 'modern in practical matters' but who can 'neither master the sum total of ideas, nor arrange them adequately into a synthesis' (8).

Fourth, to its credit, DWU does appear to recognize the great need for professional ethics courses. I can't help but think that the apprehension of this need comes from a sense of practicality— there is, after all the immediate problem of corruption at all levels of society which is holding up development. Still, whatever it's origin, professional ethics must be classified as the pursuit of a higher synthesis of morality and professional training. All ethics begins from a philosophical position. What is needed now, of course, is to continue with the pursuit of this goal by hiring philosophers who can work with the various departments to bring professional ethics to a suitable university level in all departments.

Fifth, in spite of this recognized need for professional ethics, which is a higher synthesis, there seems to be a growing trend in many departments to no longer see the need for Religious Studies courses. This notion, I believe, is ill conceived for a number of reasons. Inevitably the first reason given to delete Religious Studies from the curriculum fits under the heading of common sense bias, that is, that there is little room in the curriculum as it is to accommodate

all the necessary courses and there is no practical necessity for RS. I think I have referred to the ECE and 'The Presence of the Church in the University' enough already to have made the point that theology should be considered part of the higher synthesis of any university education, especially that given at a Christian university. I'd like to further elaborate on this higher synthesis. At the beginning of his later famous work, *Method in Theology*, Bernard Lonergan asserts that a 'theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix' (p. xi). It should be noted that religion and theology in this statement are not limited to Christianity; they can include, for example, in the case of PNG, traditional religions. I note the all-inclusiveness of the terms because, although PNG is by its constitution a Christian nation, it is well known that traditional beliefs factor largely into a student's being both consciously and unconsciously. Given this understanding of theology and religion, then, one must ask how any university in general could avoid such an obvious issue, or how a Christian university in particular could even contemplate not assisting their students to achieve a higher integration of culture and religion, one that helps them articulate the significance and role of their religious beliefs in their lives and their chosen professions.

Perhaps somewhat surprising at first, I believe the answer to this question lies not in religious but rather intellectual conviction. Hypothetically, highly devout Christians may easily oppose the inclusion of RS subjects in their field of study because of their so-called impractical nature. On the other hand, the not-so-religious, in addition to admitting the need of RS courses to fulfil the mission of the university, may just as easily see in them great benefit for their students. 'The presence of the Church in the University' makes this clear, I believe, when it appears to place the blame for an imbalanced education on those who see religion as a private affair, and not as something that should have bearing on the intellectual formation of the student (I, 15).

In other words, what is called for to admit the importance of religious studies in the university education of a student is not religious, but intellectual conversion; not a commitment to live the Gospel in one's private life, but rather a commitment to a higher synthesis of human knowledge, one that simply cannot deny the importance of the significance and role of religion in the lives of students and the development of a country.

Sixth, this tendency to view religion as a private affair and thus to disregard the importance of a higher integration between religion and culture, it seems to me, becomes apparent at university symposiums as well. In other words, not only must it set up the apparatus so that its students can investigate the significance and role of religion in society, but any university, and especially a Christian university, must include theology in its conferences on culture and development as well. Looking back over the last several years at DWU, there was much discussion of the significance and role of, say, business, health, and even ethics in the developing nation of PNG. And yet, although all will admit that religion plays a huge part in the consciousness of a people, there appeared to be a reluctance to discuss the significance and role of religion in that same cultural matrix of development. A case in point: when DWU organized a

symposium on the Melanesian philosophy of land and development in PNG in 2002 (Sullivan), my one criticism of an apparently otherwise very wide-ranging and full discussion, was that it simply ignored, for the most part, the significance and role of religion in the issue of land. There was very little talk of the meaning of land in the Old Testament, for example, which could have contributed to the discussion. But, more importantly, there was not a single contributor who had the academic background to perceive that there was a (false) theological/metaphysical assumption underlying the very idea of western development itself (Stollenwerk, p. 122). That there are theologians in PNG that could have contributed to the discussion, there is no doubt. But, for whatever reason, they did not present papers and thus their ideas did not become a part of the written record of the symposium. Again, I see here a lack of –not religious conviction, for many were religious, but— academic intellectual integration of all aspects of development. On the other hand, in 2003 there was organized a symposium on *Humanae Vitae* in which the invited speakers were all theologians and catechists –as if economists, politicians and sociologists had nothing to say about the ethics of birth control and population growth. Thus, it appears to me, that even at the level of university symposiums there is little academic integration of the role of religion in society. It is as if the university were saying in its public fora that, just as one studies or works from Monday through Saturday and goes to church on Sunday, so too development has its sphere, religion its sphere; one is practical, the other private and there appears to be very little effort at integration.

In the seventh place it appears to me that liberal arts in general at DWU is in danger of losing out to the bias of common sense. The question of the study of theology in a Christian university, I have argued thus far, is not so much a religious, as an intellectual question. Religious Studies units are seen as impractical, not geared to produce the outcome perceived for the department, instead of viewed as a way of achieving a higher integration of knowledge. I would now like to suggest that RS units have been saved thus far only because of the expressed mission of the university. Again, a quick look at the DWU handbook in many departments will show that other liberal arts courses have not been so fortunate. In other words, Religious Studies has become, in a sense, the last bastion in many departments of anything related to a balanced education, a synthesis of knowledge—and it too now appears to be under attack. The argument is already well known: there simply isn't enough time in the four years at the university to train to students to meet the demands of the industry.

Again, I would suggest that such an argument is shortsighted. Four years is plenty of time to acquire both necessary skills and some semblance of a well-integrated education. Georgetown University in Washington D.C., the oldest Catholic university in the United States and a highly regarded tertiary institution by almost any set of criteria, for example, requires of its business students some 18 courses in the humanities (out of a total of 40 courses over a four-year degree). The business faculty at the university of Notre Dame,

another highly respected Catholic tertiary institution, requires a full first year of humanities as part of its four-year business degree.[10] It would seem to me that those course that do not fit into a well integrated university curriculum must simply become incorporated into a one- to two-year Masters' level program.

In the eighth place, this higher integration of knowledge perhaps very reliant upon a good dose of humanities in all departments, it appears to me, is what will make DWU a true university, that is 'a community of students and teachers in search of truth' as 'The Presence of the Church' says (I, 6), instead of, say, a tertiary level polytechnic institute. The true university, as we have seen, is distinguished not only by the teaching of skills, but more importantly by its free search for the whole truth about nature, humanity and God (ECE 4). It dedicates itself to a universal humanism, that is, an impartial and interdisciplinary search for truth in science, technology, ethics, and justice within the context of the Gospel (ECE 4-20). Or, as Lonergan might have it, a university should be a place that recognizes and tries to root out common sense bias, one that has the greatest respect for the 'detached and disinterested intelligence' (*Insight* 230), one that does not shy away from the larger questions of origin and purpose.

In the ninth place, finally, and in sum: I believe that DWU is at a crossroads. It has made great leaps in the last decade as it has transformed itself from a secondary to a tertiary institution, and its growth through the affiliation and amalgamation process with other tertiary institutions throughout the country can only be viewed with great anticipation and hope. With expansion comes planning and reorganization, however, and these in turn must continue to reflect on the mission of the institution for guidance. I believe that these reflections cannot ignore the call from a converging number of ecclesial and theological documents that see a higher integration of knowledge as a constitutive part of a Christian university education. Once this need of a higher synthesis of skills and morality, culture and religion, development and spirituality is recognized –and acted upon with concrete departmental course offerings – the benefits will be numerous. Not only will DWU offer a better education, but it will help to *better serve the nation's quest for long-term solutions to very practical problems*. Moreover, given such clear identity and well-understood mission, it would continue to attract dedicated students and highly qualified lecturers. In other words, it would be a more successful tertiary institution. Finally, in the pursuit of this higher synthesis of knowledge, I believe the university will go a long way toward fulfilling its task within the universal, historic church to witness to Jesus in all its efforts and to prepare its students to do the same in whatever profession they choose.

[10] See the Georgetown and Notre Dame web sites. During the four-year Business Degree at Georgetown, the 18 courses that students take in the liberal arts are divided thus: 2 Economics, 2 English, 1 Math, 2 Philosophy, 2 Theology, 2 Psychology/Sociology, 2 History/Government/Classical Civilization and 5 Liberal Arts Electives.

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Author

Daniel J. Stollenwerk, STD, lectured in Religious Studies at Divine Word University in 2003-04. He previously headed the department of Religious Studies at St. Peter's College, Auckland, New Zealand and lectured in Western Humanities at the University of Puerto Rico. He has published articles on the theology of Bernard Lonergan, the science-religion debate, religious education, and the influence of Christian thought on western literature. He received his doctorate in Systematic Theology from the Pontifical University of Salamanca, Spain. Email: dstollenwerk@yahoo.com