

OPPOSITION NOTES

AN INVESTIGATIVE SERIES ON THOSE WHO OPPOSE
WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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The Cardinal Newman Society

“The most unhappily and inappropriately named society on the planet”

INTRODUCTION

The Cardinal Newman Society (CNS) claims that its mission is “to help renew and strengthen Catholic identity in Catholic higher education,” but there are many clergy, staff at Catholic universities, students and laypeople who don’t recognize themselves in the organization’s vision of Catholic identity. Some, like the *National Catholic Reporter*, have pointed out the striking contrast between Cardinal Newman the man and the society that bears his name: “the most unhappily and inappropriately named society on the planet.”¹

The Cardinal Newman Society devotes its energy to pointing out supposed breaches of dogma within Catholic universities, engineering negative publicity primarily by instigating letter-writing campaigns and posting online petitions. *America* magazine criticized the society’s “watchdog tactics” for employing a negative rather than positive definition of

Catholicism – that is, it aims to prune away perceived deviations from orthodoxy, rather than cultivating a Catholicism that is something more than mere conformism.²

Catholic academia has not always welcomed guidance from the CNS. The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU)

has been the collective voice of US Catholic higher education working with the bishops and the Holy See since 1899. Michael James, former vice president of the ACCU and current director of the Institute for Administrators in Catholic Higher Education, said that the society is “destructive and antithetical to a spirit of unity in our commitment to serve

The Cardinal Newman Society is “destructive and antithetical to a spirit of unity in our commitment to serve society and the church.”

KEY FINDINGS

The Cardinal Newman Society:

- Incorrectly portrays itself as a voice for all Catholics, when its views are substantially to the right of all but the most conservative members of the hierarchy;
- Uses the threat of negative publicity to target schools, calling on them to cancel speakers or dismiss faculty;
- Depicts a Catholic higher educational system that is threatened by heretics in order to justify its narrow worldview and strong-arm tactics;
- Fosters a contentious environment in which instructors and administrators fear they must choose between policing or being policed; and
- Makes judgments on the basis of a short checklist of issues, such as reproductive rights and LGBT rights, rather than encompassing the wealth and depth of Catholic teachings.

society and the church.”³ Fr. John Paris, a professor at Boston College who was targeted by the group, called the CNS “a self-appointed vigilante committee,” and said “they neither represent the church nor the academic community ... and yet they want to censor the academic community in the name of the church.”⁴

The organization also has its critics among the hierarchy. Archbishop John G. Vlazny of Portland wrote a memo on behalf of the higher education committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to the ecclesiastical advisors for the society in 2006. He described the group as “often aggressive, inaccurate, or lacking in balance,” as well as “often objectionable in substance and in tone.”⁵ Vlazny urged the bishops who were identified as “ecclesiastical advisors” to the CNS to examine the group’s methods and tendency for misrepresenting Catholic institutions of higher learning, according to *America* magazine.⁶ The *Chronicle of Higher Education* further stated that in the same letter Vlazny “suggested that the bishops resign from the [advisory] board of the Cardinal Newman Society,” and that “soon after, three of them did.” Subsequently the advisory board disbanded for a time.⁷

There are important debates to be had about furthering Catholic higher education, but healthy debate seems to be the main target of the CNS. The question is—should Catholic institutions be judged by a narrow set of criteria imposed by one self-appointed judge of orthodoxy?

ORIGINS

The Cardinal Newman Society was founded in 1993 to, in its words, “help renew and strengthen Catholic identity in Catholic higher education.”⁸ The organization chose as its patron Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890), whom the *Financial Times* called “simply the most electrifying religious thinker and writer in English of the

past 200 years—subtle, imaginative, deeply learned, at times maddeningly paradoxical and dialectical.”⁹ Perhaps because his work is so complex, two schools of thought have grown up around his writing. Most people see Newman as both Catholic and catholic—broad in tastes and interests. But, as the *Financial Times* documented, in recent years there has been a “papal hijacking”¹⁰ of the cardinal. A minority have sided with Pope Benedict XVI, who called Cardinal John Henry Newman “an example to the world of opposition to ‘dissent.’”¹¹

The reality is somewhat different. This was the cleric who was called “the most dangerous man in England” for his emphasis on the role of the layperson in the church, and was forced out of the editor’s chair of the Catholic magazine the *Rambler* for publishing articles critical of the pope.¹² Papal chamberlain Msgr. George Talbot wrote of the *Rambler* “heresy”:

“None of his writings since have removed that cloud. Every one of them has created a controversy, and the spirit of them has never been approved in Rome.”¹³

It’s easy to see why, judging from Newman’s statements like “[The pope] becomes a god, has no one to contradict him, does not know facts, and does cruel things without meaning it.”¹⁴ Yet, like Pope Benedict, the Cardinal Newman Society has chosen as its freethinking namesake the champion of a circumscribed Catholicism.

NOTRE DAME: A CONTROVERSY WITHOUT CONSENSUS

A good example of the CNS’ typical behavior is the controversy it fanned over the selection of Barack Obama as commencement speaker for the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, in 2009.

On March 20, 2009, Notre Dame

President John I. Jenkins, CSC, announced that President Barack Obama would be the commencement speaker and the recipient of an honorary doctor of laws degree at Notre Dame.¹⁵ Though a campus newspaper poll found 97 percent of the student body backed the invitation, some alumni protested.¹⁶ That same day, the Cardinal Newman Society announced the launch of an online petition site, NotreDameScandal.com, urging Father Jenkins to withdraw the invitation.¹⁷ The petition quoted the “Catholics in Political Life” document from the USCCB, which prohibits Catholic institutions from honoring those “who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles ... [with] awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions.” The petition attracted more than 360,000 signatures.¹⁸

President Jenkins defended the choice, saying that the school had already hosted six presidents as speakers and awarded others honorary degrees.¹⁹ Jenkins especially wanted to honor Obama, the first African-American president, as a healer of racial divides.²⁰ Regarding the president’s stance on reproductive health, Notre Dame’s president said,

“We invited him because we care so much about [reproductive] issues, and we hope ... for this to be the basis of an engagement with him. You cannot change the world if you shun the people you want to persuade, and if you cannot persuade them ... show respect for them and listen to them.”²¹

Several bishops opposed the invitation, but as the *New York Times* reported, not all Catholics were opposed to Obama’s appearance. A poll conducted in April by Quinnipiac University found that six in 10 Catholics supported President Obama giving the speech.²²

Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan of Santa Fe, New Mexico, let the public know that not all members of the hierarchy were opposed to the president’s selection as speaker. Rather, he said that “the majority” of the bishops opposed

the “hysterical” protests of Obama’s Notre Dame appearance by some of their peers.²³ Sheehan said he and others spoke out against the opposition to Obama’s invitation at a bishops’ meeting, but most bishops did not want to speak out publicly about it. He further contrasted the public outcry among the US hierarchy with the pope’s recent invitation extended to Nicholas Sarkozy, then-president of France, who supported abortion rights and gay marriage.

ISSUES

The CNS sees any Catholic institution of higher learning in the US as a potential target and is quick to jump on any perceived heterodoxy on issues including the following: abortion, contraception, LGBT issues, assisted reproductive technologies, euthanasia and women’s ordination. It would be impossible to list

Creating scapegoats is a key part of its work because extreme measures are best justified by alleging extreme conditions.

all of the instances in which the CNS has attacked people and institutions for not embracing the “Catholic” view (read: the Cardinal Newman Society’s view) in these areas, but there are some clear patterns.

Even the organization’s claim that it follows the 2004 “Catholics in Political Life” document from the USCCB²⁴ when judging speakers deserves examination. The CNS’ net is actually much wider than this document’s original scope, which, as the title indicates, was intended to address “Catholic teaching ... misused for political ends.”²⁵ The CNS has raised alarm about everything from speakers and student activities to plays and support groups.

It is safe to say that more liberal points of view are presented in a negative light by the Cardinal Newman Society. Creating scapegoats is a key part of its

**Reproductive Rights —
A selection of individuals targeted by the CNS for their support of abortion and/or contraception**

Marjorie Margolies , former congresswoman	Scranton University	2012	The school declined to withdraw the invitation to be the keynote lecturer for a program that prepares women to run for office, despite pressure from the CNS and the local bishop. ²⁶
Kathleen Sebelius , Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services	Georgetown University	2012	Spoke at a diploma ceremony for Georgetown’s Public Policy Institute. Although the CNS set up the GeorgetownScandal.com petition site, John J. DeGioia, president of Georgetown, refused to rescind the invitation, stating, “We are a university, committed to the free exchange of ideas.” ²⁷ A group of 10-15 protesters showed up at the event. ²⁸
Fr. Robert Drinan , the first Catholic priest elected to Congress, former dean of Boston College law school	Boston College	2011	Was posthumously honored by Boston College although the CNS sent a letter to the school president asking them to cancel the event. ²⁹
Ellen Goodman , Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist	St. Francis University in Pennsylvania	2011	After being disinvited from giving a speech unrelated to reproductive rights, Goodman’s response that her “plea for civility returned with a pie in the face” ³⁰ was widely reported.
Widney Brown , a representative from Amnesty International	Siena College	2011	Disinvited from giving a speech about “The Prognosis for Human Rights in a Politically Changed World.” ³¹
Jeanne Flavin , a professor of sociology at Fordham	Fordham University	2011	The CNS suggested Flavin should not be working for the school because she is president of National Advocates for Pregnant Women, which advocates for reproductive rights. ³² The CNS did not receive a response from the school. ³³
Roxanne Martino , former member of Notre Dame’s board of trustees	University of Notre Dame	2011	Resigned position despite support from the school ³⁴ under scrutiny about her prochoice views, though her actual views on reproductive rights are unclear. ³⁵ The CNS also questioned her donations to charities that had ties to Planned Parenthood. ³⁶
International Human Development and Solidarity to Partners in Health (PIH) , a nonprofit that provides healthcare for the poor ³⁷	University of Notre Dame	2011	Received an award. The CNS criticized the decision because they found mentions of family planning on the PIH website, ³⁸ which, in their view, outweighed the organization’s work towards “providing a preferential option for the poor.” ³⁹
Stephen Sundborg, SJ , president of Seattle University	Seattle University	2011	Criticized for internships, scholarship and counseling referrals linked to Planned Parenthood; a spokesperson countered the CNS attack by citing academic freedom. ⁴⁰
Bob Casey, Jr. , (D-PA) US Senator	Villanova University Catholic University of America	2011 2006	Was the commencement speaker despite a two-person protest. ⁴¹ Gave a lecture despite protests about his support for contraception. ⁴²
Stephen G. Breyer , US Supreme Court Justice	Fordham University	2008	Received Fordham-Stein Ethics prize despite the CNS petition. ⁴³
Dr. Nancy Snyderman , surgeon and news correspondent	University of St. Francis in Chicago	2004	Speaking engagement canceled because the antichoice doctor said on “Good Morning America” that when a woman is pregnant with septuplets, some doctors will recommend “selective reduction.” ⁴⁴

work because extreme measures are best justified by alleging extreme conditions. The CNS proposes surgery—cutting off Catholics who profess prochoice, feminist or LGBT-friendly views, to name just a few—to save what they depict as a university system about to expire.

In addition to reproductive rights, the Cardinal Newman Society has chosen two other signature issues to use for rallying “Catholic” ire. The amount of energy expended on expurgating the play *The Vagina Monologues* from Catholic campuses is significant not just because the CNS rejects frank discussions of sexuality, but also because it reflects a circumscribed view of art and literature—one that doesn’t allow room to discuss the paradoxes in life that have no easy answer. The second subject that frequently makes the CNS see red is LGBT issues, an area where the Society, and particularly president Patrick J. Reilly, exhibit a notable animus. One of Mr. Reilly’s first campaigns was against the student LGBT group at Fordham when he was an undergraduate.⁴⁵

The Vagina Monologues

The Vagina Monologues is a play about women’s sexuality that is widely performed on college campuses as part of a fundraising event known as “V-Day,” which works to increase awareness about violence against women and girls.⁴⁶ The play contains some controversial vignettes dealing with underage sexuality and lesbianism, especially one true story about a teenage girl’s sexual experience with an older partner.⁴⁷ The Cardinal Newman Society has worked hard to see the play banned on many American Catholic school campuses.⁴⁸ In 2004 they took out an ad in *USA Today* encouraging readers to contact Catholic college presidents and demand that the play be banned.⁴⁹ In 2006 it launched its “V-Monologues Campaign” to stop performances, claiming a reduction in the number of performances in that year to 22, from the previous year’s 27.⁵⁰ Regarding the word vagina, “Reilly feels that the word is ‘a

technical term’ and one that is ‘not always used in polite conversation.’”⁵¹

The opinions of those in favor of the play are just as strong. Students at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, organized sit-ins to protest the suppression of a performance.⁵² Some Catholic schools, like St. Mary’s College in California, have distanced themselves from aspects of *The Vagina Monologues* while affirming students’ right to perform it based upon academic freedom. Brother Craig Franz, FSC, former president of St. Mary’s, said, “While I might not have chosen this play to spur conversation on campus regarding women’s rights, I respect the academic freedom of our women’s studies program to select this play.”⁵³

In response to the CNS campaign against *The Vagina Monologues*, Ashley Oliverio, public relations coordinator for Carroll College in Montana, wrote an op-ed in the *Queen City News* calling the Cardinal Newman Society the “Catholic Taliban.” Sr. Mary Ann Flannery, organizer of a production at John Carroll University, was similarly quoted in an article about objections to the play as saying that the Cardinal Newman Society is the “closest organization in the Catholic Church to the Taliban.”⁵⁴

LGBT Issues

When it comes to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, the CNS displays a perplexing combination of hard-nosed opposition and thin-skinned sensitivity.

Responding to the presence of LGBT students is one of the diversity challenges the modern-day Catholic campus must face. While some schools, like Notre Dame, have balked at including sexual orientation in the school anti-discrimination statement,⁵⁵ others like Villanova,⁵⁶ Fordham,⁵⁷ Georgetown⁵⁸ and Loyola⁵⁹ do have LGBT centers or ministries with missions indicating that LGBT people are not rejected by the community. The CNS includes these ministries on their list of infringements against orthodoxy, however.⁶⁰

The Cardinal Newman Society called out the pro-LGBT Unity Week at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia for, among other things, featuring a movie with a scene depicting a same-sex wedding that a school website said may make students "rethink [their] values."⁶¹ The CNS neglected to mention that the movie also raised awareness about bullying of gay teens.⁶² One of the speakers for Unity Week was Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan, retired Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn, longtime minister to the gay community and chair of the Ad Hoc Committee for Pastoral Care to Gay and Lesbian Catholics and Their Families in the Brooklyn Diocese.

Strangely, the CNS objects to allegations of homophobia, particularly those directed at the church, as if hurt feelings belonged more properly to institutions than individuals. The Cardinal Newman Society deemed it "church bashing" when University of San Francisco Associate Professor Vincent Pizzuto said on a radio program that "systemic homophobia is rampant throughout the church,"⁶³ though Reilly frequently points to church teaching that calls homosexuality intrinsically disordered.^{64 65 66} The CNS also objected to Canisius College's "Tunnel of Oppression" diversity initiative, designed to help students experience oppression as a way to cultivate diversity awareness, because it included homophobia.⁶⁷

On LGBT issues the CNS is even farther to the right than some of the USCCB's conservative vanguard. For example, Archbishop William E. Lori is the head of the USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Liberty, which lists one of its purposes as combating same-sex marriage. Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan expressed sorrow after a same-sex marriage bill was passed in New York⁶⁸ and again when President Obama endorsed same-sex marriage.⁶⁹ Yet neither cleric responded in the way the CNS had hoped when the organization expressed its outrage about students from Fairfield University, a Jesuit school

in Connecticut, being bused to Union Theological Seminary in New York to hear a lecture by Dan Savage, a well-known sex columnist who is gay. The press release from Dolan and Lori stated,

"Both Presidents helpfully assured us that these conferences, while sensitive to the experience of the participants, will not be a vehicle for dissent.... We now must trust that the conferences will turn out as intended: not as a criticism or questioning of the faith and morals of the Church, but as a sincere attempt to listen to those who are trying their best to believe and live it, and who have some positive ideas about pastoral strategy to present it even better."⁷⁰

That these high-profile opponents of gay marriage would have the civility to allow an open discussion about LGBT issues is a notable difference from the CNS. If the Cardinal Newman Society is more conservative than two of the most conservative members of the US hierarchy, can they honestly claim to represent the views of any significant sector of the Catholic public?

FINANCES

According to its 2010 990 form, the latest available, total revenue for the Cardinal Newman Society was just over \$1.5 million.⁷¹ A 2006 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* titled "Bully Pulpit" said that "for most of its history, the society has existed primarily as letterhead. No meetings, no office, no employees."⁷² L. Brent Bozell III, a right-wing leader known for his extreme statements,⁷³ counseled Reilly to use a direct-mail marketing company and the business grew to seven employees in 2006. The article went on to describe the incendiary fundraising letters that led to this growth. It also quoted Fr. John J. Paris, one of the Boston College professors targeted over the 2005 Terry Schiavo controversy in Florida, who

called Reilly a “snake-oil salesman” and described the CNS fundraising strategy as “whipping up right-wing types to open their checkbooks.”⁷⁴

Earlier, a 2005 article in the *Boston Globe* said that a Cardinal Newman Society fundraising campaign promised that donations would “finance a major effort to expose the heretics within our Catholic colleges.”⁷⁵ The *Globe* depicted the organization “por[ing] over statements by professors at the nation’s Catholic colleges in an effort to find ‘heretics and dissidents,’” and that these activities were successful enough to “help the group raise hundreds of thousands of dollars, mostly from small contributors.” These contributors might have been surprised to learn that the reality of Catholic higher education in the United States is somewhat different than the vision depicted by the CNS.

CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

The community of students and faculty in Catholic higher education is just as diverse as the Catholic intellectual tradition. The Cardinal Newman Society’s patron came from the European scholarly tradition, but the US has its own rich history.

Georgetown University in Washington, DC, opened its doors as the first US Catholic institution of higher learning in 1792. The university had some Protestant students almost from the beginning, along with its share of student rebellions.⁷⁶ Georgetown established itself at the forefront of social change with the appointment of Patrick Healy in 1873 as the first African-American to head a university. The first female students began attending Georgetown’s medical school in 1880, at a time when most women’s opportunities for medical education were in women-only schools.⁷⁷ Some of the country’s major medical schools, such as Yale and Harvard, did

not begin admitting women until well into the 20th century.⁷⁸

Beginning around World War II with the introduction of tuition programs for veterans, federal funding became an important force driving the growth of Catholic higher education.⁷⁹ As public funding sources wove schools into larger

This diversity on campus presents a challenge, requiring schools to balance their Catholic identity with an environment that is equitable and welcoming to students of all faiths and no faith.

society, a parallel cultural development was occurring on Catholic campuses.

Today, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) recognizes 251 degree-granting Catholic institutions of higher learning in the US.⁸⁰ Of these, 28 are members of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.⁸¹ Catholic higher education is growing—between 1990 and 2005, enrollment increased by more than 60 percent,⁸² and between 1980 and 2005, 10 new colleges and universities were founded.⁸³

As Catholic universities have grown, their student bodies have become more diverse. Richard A. Yanikoski, then-president of the ACCU, stated in 2010 that there has been a downward trend in the proportion of Catholic students enrolling in four-year Catholic institutions, and that those “who self-report being Catholic declined from 82 percent in 1979 to 73.2 percent in 1989 to 66.2 percent in 1999 to 55.4 percent in 2009.”⁸⁴ This diversity on campus presents a challenge, requiring schools to balance their Catholic identity with an environment that is equitable and welcoming to students of all faiths and no faith. Some conflicts include an ongoing legal dispute over worship space for Muslim students at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC,⁸⁵ and the elimination of on-campus space for Protestant student groups at Georgetown.⁸⁶ Since 2006, Protestant

ministries at Georgetown have been run by “external organizations.”⁸⁷

CATHOLIC IDENTITY ON CAMPUS: IN DECLINE?

Perhaps the biggest point of contention is whether Catholic institutions are doing enough to keep students who identify as Catholic within the fold. A Cardinal Newman Society subsidiary, the Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education, released a report in 2008 alleging that Catholic students were becoming less Catholic over their four-year stay at Catholic-run universities.⁸⁸

Subsequently, a number of sources have contested this claim. One of these, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) program at Georgetown University, published its own data indicating that Catholic students at Catholic schools were more likely to stay connected to their faith than those who attended secular schools. CARA linked an overall drop in Mass attendance to the fact that young people across the board attend Mass less frequently after leaving home. The study also measured students’ Catholic ties based on more criteria than the CNS study, which relied heavily on students’ views on abortion and homosexuality.⁸⁹

An important aspect of judging the impact a Catholic school has on its students relates to who attends and why. A 2008 study of prospective students at Catholic universities conducted by the National Catholic College Admission Association found that choosing a school because the “institution is Catholic specifically” is at the bottom of the list of possible reasons for a student’s choice of school.⁹⁰ The most important reason was to acquire transferable skills. Those who chose to attend a Catholic institution were slightly more likely to attach a higher score to life purpose and spiritual goals, but academic standing, reputation and making money are the most important factors motivating students

who choose to attend Catholic schools.⁹¹

While “enhancing my spiritual life or developing a spiritual life,” was cited by few students, “developing moral principles that can guide actions” rated higher.⁹² This emphasis on moral principles was reflected in a companion study of what alumni from Catholic schools got out of their education. Eighty percent of alumni said their college was effective in helping them to develop moral principles. Seventy-five percent of prospective students said it was important to them to develop moral principles that can guide actions.

HOLDING ON TO RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS

These studies beg the question—how exactly do you measure a school’s Catholicity? By the proportion of Catholic students; by the curriculum; by students’ beliefs or Mass attendance; or some other criteria? These are important questions, because there is a kind of circular reasoning at work in some recent court cases between the National Labor Relations Board and some Catholic schools. For example, Belmont Abbey in North Carolina has been under investigation by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for its refusal to include contraception coverage in the school’s employee health plan.⁹³ A school that is very different (which may mean, one that has mostly Catholic students or a heavily religious curriculum) is sometimes allowed, by law, to play by different rules.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, however, those schools that are not that far away from the mainstream, as most are not, are increasingly expected to have the same practices as state-run or secular schools. The CNS has been keeping a close eye on labor issues that might act as a gateway for requirements that school insurance must cover contraception or same-sex partners.

“Reilly [said] that affiliating with a

government-sanctioned union could force Catholic schools to comply with anti-discrimination laws that require them, among other things, to disregard same-sex relationships in the hiring process, a clear conflict with Catholic teaching, he said.”⁹⁴

The CNS subsidiary, the Center for the Advancement of Catholic Higher Education, produced a publication titled “Protecting Catholic Colleges from External Threats to their Religious Liberty” that reads like a recipe for how to discriminate and retain federal funding:⁹⁵ Kevin Theriot of the Alliance Defense Fund, a right-wing Christian group, writes in the publication,

“It must be noted, however, that any available exemptions for religious institutions will not apply if a college that was founded as a religious institution has become largely secular.”⁹⁶

In his 10 steps for keeping an institution of higher learning Catholic, Theriot cites the example of a Protestant school in Hawaii that the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals deemed to be not religious in nature because its instruction had changed “from providing religious instruction to equipping students with ethical principles that will enable them to make their own moral judgment.”⁹⁷ The alternative is “consistent compliance with religious beliefs,” which Theriot takes to mean a legalistic compliance with the Vatican’s apostolic constitution on Catholic universities, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*.⁹⁸

EX CORDE ECCLESIAE

The first attempt to define the place of the Catholic university in the US came about as a reaction to Vatican II and “The Church in the Modern World” document.⁹⁹ In 1967, 26 leaders in Catholic higher education gathered in Land O’Lakes, Wisconsin, to prepare for the International Federation of Catholic

Universities meeting in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo the next year. The document

“clearly recognized that the presence of and active participation by persons who are not Catholics in the Catholic university community are most desirable and, indeed, even necessary to bring authentic universality to the Catholic university itself.”¹⁰⁰

The next big statement to shape US Catholic higher education came straight from the Vatican and was published in 1990 after five years of consultation and an international congress. *Ex corde Ecclesiae* was a watershed in Catholic higher education, requiring a change in mindset as well as practice for professors and university administrators. Article I

“The term ‘Catholic’ will never be a mere label either added or dropped according to the pressures of varying factors.”

—*Ex corde Ecclesiae*

emphasized the bonds linking a Catholic university with the church’s authority. Far from the church looking to the universities for “continual counsel,” as the Land O’Lakes statement had it,¹⁰¹ *Ex corde* focuses on numerous ways in which the opposite should be true.

On its website, the Cardinal Newman Society says that the CNS “assist[ed] bishops with guidelines”¹⁰² during the negotiations over how to apply *Ex corde* to the United States in 1996. It further claims that in 1999 the final guidelines were “consistent with CNS proposals, including requirements that college presidents and a majority of faculty must be Catholic, theologians must receive a *mandatum* from the local bishop, and colleges must recognize the authority of the bishops over Catholic teaching and the colleges’ Catholic identity.”¹⁰³

Besides the *mandatum* for theologians, *Ex corde* walks the line between greater involvement of the local bishop on

campus and an affirmation of the university's autonomy "within the confines of truth and the common good."¹⁰⁴ The application emphasizes the "distinct, and yet complementary, teaching roles of bishops and Catholic universities" and includes steps to ensure their Catholic identity [that] are to be carried out in agreement with the diocesan bishop."¹⁰⁵ Still, all university activities must respect the freedom of conscience of the individual, while "any official action or commitment of the University is to be in accord with its Catholic identity."¹⁰⁶ "Dialogue," "culture," "cooperation," "openness," "conversation" and "collaboration" are words that figure prominently in the final, 1999 draft of the application.

Tension exists between academic freedom and university autonomy, on the one hand, and doctrinal orthodoxy and the bishops' role, on the other. In fact, *Ex corde* seems to predict that there will be conflicts, and that these conflicts will require valiant thinking.

"If need be, a Catholic University must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society."¹⁰⁷

When individuals take a conscience-based view on reproductive choice or LGBT issues that is different than the hierarchy's stance, it would seem to be a good opportunity for the "dialogue" that *Ex corde* emphasizes.

Ex corde does put some of the burden of deciding what is appropriate for a Catholic university on the local bishop, but as can be seen from the so-called Notre Dame "scandal," there was no monolithic Catholic rejection of Notre Dame's invitation to the president on either the level of the hierarchy or that of laypeople. As Archbishop Sheehan said, there is no unanimity among bishops about speaker policies, and a small, conservative faction of bishops is the most vocal. Each bishop can

make different decisions about what is appropriate for the schools in his area, and the fact that the "truth" can vary so much from diocese to diocese does imply an acceptance of pluralism.

Dan Maguire, a theologian at Marquette University, has critiqued the picture of a bishop's authority as painted by *Ex corde Ecclesiae*. Maguire says that *Ex corde* makes the assumption that "nontheologian bishops will be miraculously endowed with divine inspiration to make up for their lack of expertise in judging all the complex branches of theology."¹⁰⁸

Prominent members of the hierarchy have also affirmed the authority of theologians, a view that goes back much farther than Vatican II. Maguire cites an instructive speech by Cardinal Avery Dulles before an audience at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, in which Dulles sided with St. Thomas Aquinas about the different teaching authorities within the church. Aquinas, who was at one time condemned by his local bishop, distinguished between the teaching office of the theologians and the administrative functions of the bishops.

Scholarship thrives off these types of disagreements, but the CNS sees its job as contracting rather than expanding the free exploration of ideas. In 2012, Reilly claimed that his organization's impact could be understood by the number of Catholic universities with "scandalous" commencement speakers decreasing 50 percent, from a high of 24 in 2006.¹⁰⁹ Learning can be measured in terms other than these figures, however. What is it like for students, faculty and administrators to be under the gun from the orthodoxy squad?

TACTICS: TRICKS OF PERSPECTIVE

Celebrate Life magazine, published by the American Life League, printed an article in 2012 titled "Patrick Reilly and the

Cardinal Newman Society: A Catholic's fervor gets results!"¹¹⁰ Is it fervor, precisely, that results in a narrower version of Catholic identity being popularized as the authentic Catholic higher learning tradition?

Overstatement

As with the CNS' reporting of a supposed decline in Catholic identity on the university level, its version of the truth is designed for maximum impact. In April 2011, the CNS released a report, "A Scandalous Relationship: Catholic Colleges and Planned Parenthood," listing "more than 150 current and past connections" to Planned Parenthood appearing on the websites of Catholic colleges and universities.¹¹¹ While the CNS claimed college administrators were quick to remove links after the publication of the report, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that "officials at five colleges on the group's list denied removing any mention" of Planned Parenthood, while many of the signaled web pages still featured the links.¹¹² Nevertheless, Patrick Reilly said, "We're excited. That's nearly 20 percent. The tide is turning. These schools don't want a bad reputation."¹¹³ Subsequently, the CNS was forced to correct the original report, saying that "some of the pages that were inaccessible on Monday are once again active, and we have located a few pages at different addresses on the college websites."¹¹⁴

Attacks on Reputation

Schools are understandably concerned about their reputations in the eyes of parents and the academic world. According to a *Los Angeles Times* analysis of the commencement speaker controversies, some situations resulted in "embarrassment."¹¹⁵ They pointed to bishops boycotting graduation ceremonies, such as one by Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore, and two by Archbishop Alfred Hughes of New Orleans.¹¹⁶ While a case could be made that the embarrassment fell on one side

or the other, there was a very public discord in those cases, something schools often try to avoid. Reilly asserted that "we do now have colleges that will confidentially contact us and actually vet their speakers with us, because they want to make sure that there won't be concerns."¹¹⁷

The CNS does not just attack the reputation of Catholic institutions; it has also been known to target the reputation of academics. The group accused noted theologian Fr. Richard McBrien, whom it had previously called a "heretic," of plagiarism twice in 2006 over careless citations.¹¹⁸

The Cardinal Newman Society has not always taken care to target the correct individual, however. In April 2012, it decried Georgetown University's selection of "Peter Singer, the pro-infanticide professor," to lecture on campus. Subsequently, the CNS apologized, admitting that the professor who delivered the lecture "was in fact Peter W. Singer of the Brookings Institution. Our apologies for the misinformation."¹¹⁹ The CNS hit squad had originally thought the lecturer was a professor of bioethics at Princeton University by the same name.¹²⁰

Selective Outrage (with a Partisan Slant)

The Cardinal Newman Society displays a clear bias for conservative political values, which often translates into a predisposition against the Democratic Party. The

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that "officials at five colleges on the group's list denied removing any mention" of Planned Parenthood, while many of the signaled web pages still featured the links.

organization sifted through records of donations from employees at 10 leading Catholic universities during the 2004 presidential election. Its complaint was that Catholic universities inappropriately held fundraisers and rallies for the Democratic Party, and thus donated

“more than nine times the amount reported to support President Bush.”¹²¹ This was not a groundbreaking discovery, as what the *New York Times* has called “the overwhelmingly liberal tilt of university professors,” has been documented by an analysis of General Social Survey data, which found that only nine percent of professors identify as conservative.¹²²

Even where Republican politicians espouse views that are different than Reilly’s, he does not hold them to the same standard as Democratic policymakers with similar views. Though President George W. Bush supported embryonic stem cell research and abortion under certain circumstances, the CNS did not protest his invitation to give the commencement address at St. Vincent’s College near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.¹²³ Reilly denies any partisan motives on the part of the organization, however. In 2012 he stated that “the Cardinal Newman Society’s opposition to [Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Kathleen] Sebelius speaking at a Catholic commencement day ceremony has nothing to do with politics.”¹²⁴ The CNS was also opposed to the choice of Sr. Helen Prejean, an anti-death-penalty activist, as the 2004 commencement speaker for Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, California. Ultimately, the school did not rescind the invitation and bestowed an honorary degree on Sister Prejean.¹²⁵

The Slippery Slope

Fr. John Beal, professor of canon law at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, called the CNS’ search for heretics in universities “red-baiting in ecclesiastical garb,”¹²⁶ and the reference to McCarthy-era scare tactics is apt. In an article for CatholicCulture.org titled “The Enemy inside the Gates: The Surrender of Catholic Higher Education,” Reilly claims that “alarm bells should be ringing on most every college campus and in every diocesan chancery.”¹²⁷ He draws a spurious causal relationship between Catholics who “sit on their hands” and

the supposed corruption of Catholic higher education, the destruction of marriage by LGBT activists and the clergy abuse scandal.

In fact, the title of this article is reminiscent of the historic speech, “Enemies from Within,” in which Senator Joseph R. McCarthy alleged that the Truman Administration harbored communists. The 1950 speech, with its doomsday tone and vision that sees danger in nearly everything, is startlingly similar to Reilly’s article, down to claiming the unique power to point out the hidden enemy, which in McCarthy’s case was a list of 205 Communists,¹²⁸ and for Reilly was “hundreds of ... recent scandals at Catholic colleges.”¹²⁹

A Love of Scandal

In one of his sermons, Cardinal Newman deplored the “love of scandal.”¹³⁰ But everything is a scandal to the CNS: from a group distributing condoms on the Boston College campus¹³¹ to Chicago’s St. Xavier University hosting a wine and cheese event with Robert Gibbs, whose only sin appears to have been that he worked for the Obama administration for two years.¹³²

As the *National Catholic Reporter* wrote, invoking scandal can be effective: “Catholic college presidents feel the heat generated by the witch hunts” that are Reilly’s “scandal of the day.”¹³³ But as an article from the *Journal of Catholic Legal Studies* points out,

“One must also keep in mind the risk of a different sort of scandal by portraying the culture-transforming scope of Church teaching in misleadingly narrow terms.”¹³⁴

That is, the Cardinal Newman Society may be scouring the internet for speakers it finds objectionable, but at the same time overlooking the scandals it is perpetrating itself by portraying as authentic Catholic identity something that can be evaluated by just a few yes-no questions. Most of the CNS’ tactics can be summed up as tricks of perspective—artificially restricting

academic discussion to just a few points. But the Catholic intellectual tradition, and the society in which it exists, survive on a much more varied diet than the scandal du jour. There is indeed something at stake for Catholic higher education today, but the CNS has a fringe view about what that is.

CRITICISM

One of the CNS' attributes seems to be its imperviousness to criticism. In 2008, Fr. Andrew Greeley called the Cardinal Newman Society's definition of orthodoxy "the same doctrinal formulas that were pounded into ... students' heads before 1960."¹⁴³ Reilly's response to Greeley's critique of the organization was, "There will be many who oppose the message, some who rage at the messenger, but even their anger is a sign that a new springtime is coming."¹⁴⁴ Several themes can be found in the criticisms leveled against the group: there are those who question the CNS' vision of Catholic identity and Catholic higher education; and others who feel the CNS is having a negative effect on Catholic universities. An interesting critique came from a recent graduate of Georgetown and member of the Knights of Columbus.

"There is nothing wrong with preserving the Catholic identity, [as] that's what the Knights of Columbus does, but there are certain actions taken by the [Cardinal Newman Society] that are hostile and counter-productive. We agree with the mission of the society, but not everything they do."¹⁴⁵

What stands out among the critics' reaction to the Cardinal Newman Society is the real sense of love and ownership these people feel for their school, the Catholic intellectual tradition or the church. They serve as a reminder that there is something beyond scandal and heresy to be found at a Catholic school.

Criticism of the Cardinal Newman Society

"The nerve center of the Cardinal Newman Society is a storefront in a run-down strip mall.... From these humble headquarters the organization sends out 'news alerts' castigating Roman Catholic colleges for not adhering to church doctrine.... For most of its history, the society has existed primarily as letterhead. No meetings, no office, no employees."¹³⁵

—A 2006 article from the Chronicle of Higher Education

"They're a self-appointed group of vigilantes. If John Henry Newman were alive, he would ask them to remove his name."¹³⁶

—The late Fr. Paul Locatelli, former president of Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, California, targeted for hosting events like "Can I Be Gay and Catholic?" on campus

"His understanding of a university is extremely narrow and stunted."¹³⁷

—Fr. Joseph A. O'Hare, president of Fordham University during Reilly's undergraduate years and later associate editor of America magazine

"[They are] often aggressive, inaccurate, or lacking in balance," as well as "often objectionable in substance and in tone."¹³⁸

—Archbishop John G. Vlazny of Portland, Oregon, in a 2006 memo from the USCCB committee on higher education

"A self-appointed vigilante committee.... They neither represent the church nor the academic community ... and yet they want to censor the academic community in the name of the church."¹³⁹

—Fr. John Paris, bioethics professor at Boston College, targeted for a statement he made related to Terry Schiavo

"Today, sadly, the academic ayatollahs of the so-called 'Cardinal Newman Society' have too much to say about speakers on Catholic campuses."¹⁴⁰

—The late Joe Feuerherd, former publisher and editor-in-chief of the National Catholic Reporter, comparing present-day scrutiny of commencement speakers to his own Catholic university education

"[T]he society's criticism is almost exclusively limited to church teachings on abortion and gay marriage. This begs the following question: What right do they have to restore Catholic identity on college campuses when they are fundamentally an organization that picks and chooses what it supports?"¹⁴¹

—Robert Byrne, then a student at Georgetown University, on the Cardinal Newman Society's criticism of his school's honoring AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney, a supporter of same-sex marriage and employer coverage of contraception¹⁴²

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom, which is specifically upheld by both *Ex corde* and the US implementation, is at the heart of the debate over the CNS' claims. In 2011 the College of Mount St. Vincent in Riverdale, New York, came under scrutiny from the CNS for a sociology professor, Bianca Laureano, who, after telling the class that her views did not reflect the school's position, discussed her volunteer position as a counselor at an abortion clinic.¹⁴⁶ After an exhaustive account of the adjunct professor's prochoice activities was posted on the CNS blog, the college president, Charles L. Flynn, Jr., sent a letter to alumni defending Laureano's right to express her prochoice views.¹⁴⁷ Saying "there is no subject that is off limits to inquiry at Mount Saint Vincent," Flynn contested the CNS version of Catholic identity. He wrote: "The College's policies and practice are consistent with—indeed, they are a manifestation of—its commitment to its Catholic identity and mission as an academic institution."¹⁴⁸

Academic Standing

Related to disagreements with the CNS' reading of academic freedom, Catholics in academia and the media have questioned the organization's authority to make judgments on universities because of its own lack of academic standing. As David Gibson asked in *Commonweal*, "How is it that a fairly fringe group like the Cardinal Newman Society gets to call the shots on who a Catholic university invites?"¹⁴⁹

Patrick Reilly is on record as describing the CNS as exercising a "concurrent magisterium"—that is, it enjoys a significant level of approval as working within the official teaching authority of the church.¹⁵⁰ This is a tall claim. Yet in the same interview with Catholic News Service, Reilly also acknowledged, "I know some [bishops] don't like us."¹⁵¹

There is reason for Reilly's ambivalence about the CNS' official

reception by the church. In 2006, Archbishop John G. Vlazny of Portland, Oregon, criticized the Cardinal Newman Society on behalf of the USCCB standing committee on Catholic higher education, because he "has found them often aggressive, inaccurate, or lacking in balance," as well as "often objectionable in substance and in tone." Vlazny urged the bishops who were identified as "ecclesiastical advisors" to the CNS to examine the group's methods and tendency for misrepresenting Catholic institutions of higher learning, according to *America* magazine.¹⁵² The *Chronicle of Higher Education* further stated that in the same letter Vlazny "suggested that the bishops resign from the [advisory] board" of the Cardinal Newman Society," and that "soon after, three of them did." Subsequently the advisory board disbanded for a time.¹⁵³

Boston College spokesman Jack Dunn said, "The Cardinal Newman Society has no academic standing.... As a Jesuit, Catholic university, Boston College has never been influenced by them."¹⁵⁴ This view was similar to the one expressed by Fr. John Jenkins, president of Notre Dame, who said in 2008, "The Newman Society has no ecclesiastical standing and no academic standing. For me, it resembles nothing more than a political action committee."¹⁵⁵ Charles L. Currie, former president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, also questioned the CNS' grasp of scholarly topics when he said that the organization had perpetrated "a long trail of distorted, inaccurate, and often untrue attacks on scholars addressing complex issues."¹⁵⁶ Jesuit schools have differed with the CNS many times over the years; for some reason, any Jesuit school criticized on the Cardinal Newman site is always specifically identified as such, while other orders are not.

Dialogue vs. the "Conversation-Stopper" Method
Dialogue, held at a premium by both

Ex corde and the bishops' application documents, requires listening as well as speaking. With some of the most contentious areas of debate in the church, listening can be difficult, but it is possible. When Speaker of the House John Boehner spoke at Catholic University of America's commencement in 2011, some Catholic academics wrote a letter in protest of the effect his policies had on the poor. They did not, however, challenge the university's decision to ask him, preferring to give Boehner a chance to share his views.¹⁵⁷

Robert K. Vischer, associate professor of law at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis, Minnesota, wrote that one approach to the debate over speakers at Catholic institutions was the "conversation-stopper" method, i.e., "pounding any institution that honors a person who holds views that depart from Church teaching. The Cardinal Newman Society exemplifies this approach...."¹⁵⁸

This, however, is not the only approach, nor is it the method most likely to encourage growth on Catholic campuses. Professor and columnist Fr. Andrew Greeley claimed that

"a sympathetic and restrained approach to students is a far more efficient form of teaching than hit the box, hit the rail, as the emergence of movements such as the Alliance for Catholic Education proves—a group of young people at the [Catholic University of America] fervently dedicated to the Catholic education of the poor. If the Cardinal Newman Society should take over, the alliance would be dead."¹⁵⁹

With so much to draw upon within the Catholic tradition, the CNS' critics are almost unanimous in stating that the dogged pursuit of orthodoxy is not the way to reach or teach students.

Policing the Campus

The *New York Times* described the Cardinal Newman Society's mission as "policing the borders of Catholic

orthodoxy within Catholic colleges and universities,"¹⁶⁰ and the would-be Catholic constabulary can have a chilling effect on campus. Rather than focusing on their mission to educate students, schools must constantly prove their "Catholicity" and justify what the CNS unearths by combing

Learning institutions are sensitive about being portrayed as "anti-Catholic" to alumni and parents, so the CNS can use its ill-gotten reputation as the last bastion of Catholicism and effectively extort schools to give in.

through their websites and their invited speakers' pasts. Learning institutions are sensitive about being portrayed as "anti-Catholic" to alumni and parents, so the CNS can use its ill-gotten reputation as the last bastion of Catholicism and effectively extort schools to give in. Stephen S. Schneck, director of the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies at the Catholic University of America, said, "These conflicts are happening quite often.... And to a certain extent, it makes it difficult for me to do my job with my university program."¹⁶¹

The CNS does not simply wish to spread hypervigilance to the activities taking place at a university—it also advocates scrutinizing a university employee's private life. A 2004 CNS report called "The Culture of Death on Catholic Campuses," instructed Catholic universities to consider "the actions of its employees and representatives outside the workplace" when evaluating job applicants and employee job performance because certain activities could undermine the Catholic mission of the school. The report listed several employees by name who had affiliations with prochoice groups or professed support for stem cell research.¹⁶²

Marginalizing, Rather than Including

With today's diverse student bodies, inclusiveness is an important goal for many Catholic universities. In 2008, Patrick Reilly weighed in on Georgetown University's decision to open an

LGBTQ resource center, which he said might “lead to sinful activity.”¹⁶³ Bill McCoy, associate director of student programs, replied that the center was consistent with Catholic and Jesuit values because “it meets the idea of ‘cura personalis’ – celebrating the whole person and not marginalizing individuals.”¹⁶⁴

Fr. Mike Bayard, director of campus ministry at Seattle University, a Jesuit school, directed his own criticism at the CNS, which had previously criticized the university for a “packed” drag show:

“My understanding of a drag show is that it’s men dressing up as women, now what is wrong with that?... I believe wholeheartedly that Seattle University is thoroughly Catholic. To be Catholic at Seattle University means to be inclusive.”¹⁶⁵

The CNS has also shown little tolerance for other faiths on Catholic campuses. In response to Georgetown’s 2006 decision to remove Protestant religious organizations from campus, Patrick J. Reilly wrote that Georgetown should “encourag[e] non-Catholics to worship privately on campus, and gather publicly with off-campus groups, churches, temples, etc.”¹⁶⁶

This position contradicts *Ex corde’s* directive to foster ecumenical dialogue¹⁶⁷ and the USCCB’s application with its charge to “collaborate in ecumenical and interfaith efforts to care for the pastoral needs of students, faculty and other university personnel who are not Catholic.”¹⁶⁸

Michael James, former vice president of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities and current director of the Institute for Administrators in Catholic Higher Education, said he does not see the CNS as living up to the challenges of inclusiveness. Rather, in his words, the organization is “destructive and antithetical to a spirit of unity in our commitment to serve society and the church.”¹⁶⁹

Trumping the Catholic Social Mission

Ironically, the Cardinal Newman Society’s activities can actually stand in opposition to the social mission proper to Catholic universities because for the CNS, a handful of sexual and reproductive health criteria trump service to others. For instance, the CNS objected to a genital herpes vaccine trial conducted by Professor Robert Belshe at St. Louis University. The CNS admitted that the virus is a threat to the newborn during delivery, and it also affects infected women who become pregnant because a caesarean section is usually recommended. But instead of celebrating the possibility of eliminating these health risks through a vaccine, the Cardinal Newman Society focused on the fact that study participants are required to use contraception. The CNS also claimed that the study recruits “sexually promiscuous participants,” who are apparently judged not worthy of having their health safeguarded.¹⁷⁰

An incident at Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan, illustrates that draconian measures to impose orthodoxy impede spreading even the orthodox point of view. The school’s sign language department had invited an outside speaker to deliver a workshop, “Addressing Sexuality in Interpreting and Deaf Community Settings.” Participants were to learn “the different signs for sexuality.”¹⁷¹ This type of instruction is critical for reaching deaf individuals, who may be underserved due to scarce personnel fluent in American Sign Language and the fact that some people may not have the English literacy needed to read standard medical pamphlets.¹⁷²

Nationwide, there are only a small number of instructors qualified to teach specialized signing, so it seems reasonable that the school would have decided the presenter’s experience overrode the fact that she worked for Planned Parenthood. After the CNS blogged about the issue, Madonna University cancelled the workshop.¹⁷³ The Cardinal Newman Society preferred that students not be able to teach deaf

people about how HIV is transmitted, a clear health issue, or even the signs that could have allowed them to convey church teachings on natural family planning.

A Lack of Nuance

The allegation of a lack of nuance came from Patrick Reilly himself in his 2006 interview with the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The year before, Reilly had published an article in *Crisis* magazine listing the Catholic academics who had signed an amicus brief in favor of the removal of Terri Schiavo's feeding tube. It warned schools against "harboring the enemy and training new spokesmen for the culture of death."¹⁷⁴ According to the *Chronicle*,

"Still, [Reilly] flinches when reminded of the letter calling professors heretics and he says he now wonders whether the Schiavo news release was a mistake. 'In hindsight, I wish we hadn't hit that issue so hard,' he says. 'And the reason is, there is some nuance there.'"¹⁷⁵

This lack of nuance when approaching academic and ethical issues is reminiscent of Cardinal John Henry Newman's criticism of those who impose a "smooth and perfect surface" on the complexities of living a Catholic faith. Newman said that such people did so to then "be able to say to themselves that they have done their duty."¹⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

Towards a Positive Catholicity

Without nuance, the CNS falls into its crucial failing, which is, according to *America* magazine, a negative litmus test for Catholic identity. That is, it judges an institution by "what it does not do: *no* feminist drama, *no* unapproved speakers, *no* heterodox honorees, *no* support for homosexuals and *no* backing of left-

Other Activities

The Cardinal Newman Society website lists the following projects:

- **The Newman Guide** is a list of recommended Catholic universities that has been published since 2007. In the foreword to the guide, the now-retired Fr. Benedict Groeschel tells parents, "You will also not find the degree of moral decadence that pervades our culture at these institutions."¹⁸⁶ It is also available as an app.¹⁸⁷
- **The Newman Legacy Project** was launched in 2010 shortly before the beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman.¹⁸⁸ Its main goal is to build a secure facility to preserve Newman's manuscripts, in addition to sponsoring scholars to study the materials, producing short films about the cardinal and sponsoring lectures. The project aimed to raise \$1 million towards this end, but as of late 2012 there is no evident mechanism for gauging fundraising progress or determining how many of the goals have been achieved.¹⁸⁹
- **Promoting Eucharistic adoration on campus** is one of the components of the AdorationU.com project sponsored by the CNS. It also encourages people to sign an online form agreeing to pray for one hour for the renewal of a Catholic college. In addition, it coordinates bringing the "Eucharistic Miracles of the World" exhibit to college campuses.¹⁹⁰ The exhibit is "sponsored by The Real Presence Eucharistic Education and Adoration Association, a national organization with Vatican approval."¹⁹¹
- **The Center for the Advancement of Catholic Higher Education**, located at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland, is a subsidiary of the CNS. It produces the "Studies in Catholic Higher Education" series, which includes reports like "Crafting Employee Health Plans for Catholic Institutions," "Bioethics Studies in Catholic Higher Education," "Considering Catholic Honors and Platforms" and "*Ex corde Ecclesiae*; Echoes of Newman's *The Idea of a University*." Directed by Msgr. Stuart W. Swetland, the center is composed of a fellow, an ecclesiastical advisor—Cardinal Raymond Burke—and a three-person advisory board.

leaning candidates.”¹⁷⁷

Another way of saying this is: after all the scandals have died down and all the heretics have been rooted out of universities, how will we know which are Catholic? The university is not a bunker from which all forms of change are to be beaten back. *Ex corde* puts forward the view that a Catholic university is something more than a regular university, and that by “being both a University and Catholic, it must be both a community of scholars ... and an academic institution in which Catholicism is vitally present and operative.” But the Cardinal Newman Society seems intent on carving away at Catholic higher education, eventually leaving a nub that will not allow students much room in which to learn or discuss.

One example of positive Catholicism in the classroom is an approach published by Donna Yarri and Spencer S. Stober, professors from Alvernia University in Reading, Pennsylvania, in the fields of theology and biology/education, respectively. They designed a class, God, Science, and Designer Genes, “to meet the requirements of a course in a Catholic institution.”¹⁷⁸

The course made use of a pedagogical tool—two baseball caps, one embroidered with the word “Biology,” the other with “Theology”—meant to signal what metaphorical “hat” the instructors were wearing when speaking. The professors said:

“This technique modeled our efforts to ‘step back’ and look at things from a different point of view, and it allowed us to demonstrate to students the value of considering multiple points of view simultaneously.”¹⁷⁹

The scientist, when wearing that hat, could speak freely, sharing the best of the recent research with students. The theologian, when wearing the other hat, elucidated Catholic teachings on bioethics issues, with an emphasis on developing critical thinking skills so that students can apply what they

have learned about ethics to new developments in the field.

In short, it sounds like a fascinating experiment. The professors are not out to indoctrinate, but to impart to students an ability to think for themselves that will help them for the rest of their lives. This is an active Catholicism, one that is truly in dialogue with faith and science, as *Ex corde* would have schools be. It is worthy of the dialectical school of thought of which Cardinal Newman himself was such a fine example. One can imagine the scholar resisting anyone who attempted to restrict him to a single hat.

Professor Jean Porter of Notre Dame concluded from her study of medieval Catholic universities that “if drawn too tightly, boundaries can strangle the community life they are meant to preserve.”¹⁸⁰ The Cardinal Newman Society’s tactics often run counter to its mission to “renew and strengthen Catholic identity in Catholic higher education,” precisely because it draws the boundaries of orthodoxy too tightly. The trade-off doesn’t seem to be lost on Mr. Reilly, who said in 2006, “I honestly wish that our greatest impact on these schools wasn’t the bludgeon factor,” but in his analysis, “you have to go to the extremes with these things sometimes.” According to many others in Catholic higher education, however, going to extremes is neither necessary nor healthy for Catholic campuses.

Who gets the final word about the present and future of Catholic higher education? The more than 900,000 students enrolled at a Catholic college or university?¹⁸¹ Their parents? The faculty and/or administration of those schools, 53 percent of whom identify as Catholic?¹⁸² Theologians associated with those schools—or only those with the mandate from the bishops? The 270 active bishops,¹⁸³ who have varied academic backgrounds?¹⁸⁴

Admitting that some or all of these people have something valuable to say about Catholic universities is not the same as saying that each of those

opinions is right, that there is no truth—the sort of lazy thinking deplored by Cardinal John Henry Newman. The right path will be determined by strenuous debate, rather than the silencing of debate. This can only happen within a culture of civility, a virtue not modeled by the Cardinal Newman Society. The CNS tries to hold up a mirror to the Catholic university system, asking if a given speaker or activity reflects the Catholic tradition, but the mirror could easily be turned on them—is the contentious Cardinal Newman Society the way we want Catholic higher education to look?

Ex corde Ecclesiae literally means “out of the heart of the church.” A vision of Catholic higher learning with real heart would be something more buoyant and beautiful, closer to Cardinal Newman, that inclusive thinker who believed that “the most insignificant or unsightly insect is from Him, and good in its kind.” The same can be said of all the great Catholic thinkers from Aquinas on down—they are each inspiring in their own way, and each encourages us to think. The Cardinal Newman Society would have us fight, protest and boycott. Given a choice, and there is a choice, who wouldn’t choose the “gigantic nightingales” of the Catholic tradition, to borrow a phrase from Newman,¹⁸⁵ over the “watchdog” group with a loud bark?

People

Patrick J. Reilly, *President and CEO*

Reilly obtained his undergraduate degree in journalism from Fordham University in 1991 and his master’s in public administration from American University in 1993.

While at Fordham, Reilly used his position as newspaper editor to point out “inappropriate” activities such as a prochoice club sponsored by NARAL Prochoice America, a gay and lesbian student group and a freshman orientation class that informed students about contraception.¹⁹² Using what he described as “the simple but effective tactic of exposure,” Reilly mailed more than 2,000 prominent alumni and donors, asking them to withdraw their financial support from the university because of the school’s relationship to prochoice and gay rights groups.¹⁹³ The university rescinded its recognition from Fordham Students for Choice and Fordham Lesbians and Gays later that year.¹⁹⁴

Fr. Joseph A. O’Hare, president of Fordham during Reilly’s undergraduate years and later associate editor of *America* magazine, said, “I think [Reilly’s] heart’s in the right place, but his understanding of a university is extremely narrow and stunted.”¹⁹⁵

From 1993 to 1995, Reilly was a media consultant for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. He was also a board member and chairman of American Collegians for Life and an editor at the Capital Research Center in Washington, DC. Reilly, along with Bill Donohue of the Catholic League and Phyllis Schlafly, serves on the advisory board of Catholic Citizens of Illinois,¹⁹⁶ which publishes statements from extremists like Operation Rescue leader Terry Randall on its site.¹⁹⁷

His other work experience includes: working as executive director of Citizens for Educational Freedom; as a higher education analyst for the US House of Representatives education committee; and as a program analyst for the US Department of Education.

Thomas Mead, *Executive Vice President*

According to his staff bio, Mead previously worked as executive director of Americans for a Strong Defense and was cofounder of a state think tank. He has also worked at the Heritage Foundation in a position called “Missile Defense Program Manager.” He was managing editor of the Heritage publication *The Guide to Public Policy Experts* and co-editor of *The Directory of Public Policy Organizations*, also from Heritage.¹⁹⁸

In addition to Americans for a Strong Defense, which advocated for a strong national missile defense system,¹⁹⁹ Mead was executive director of the Coalition to Protect Americans Now, which the Center for Public Integrity described as the sponsor of “attack ads” that were “funded by wealthy conservative activists,” though they claimed to be “ordinary citizens who want to send a message to our political leaders that it is time to protect Americans from missile attack—now.”²⁰⁰ The *New York Times* quoted a spokesperson from the Democratic National Committee who called the commercials a “‘stealth campaign’ by Republicans to attack [then-presidential candidate Al] Gore without having to reveal the source of the money used to pay for the advertisements.”²⁰¹

People (continued)

Msgr. Stuart W. Swetland *Executive Director, Center for the Advancement of Catholic Higher Education*

Monsignor Stuart Swetland is chairman of the Christian Ethics department at Mount Saint Mary's University in Emmitsburg, MD. Previously, he was director of Newman Centers at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, and the University of Illinois. He hosts an EWTN network television show and a radio show.

Msgr. Swetland signed a letter sent in 2008 from the Vote Yes for Life Committee and the Catholic Voters of South Dakota titled "Voting One's Conscience in Pursuit of Justice." Nevertheless, it contained very specific instructions on what recipients' consciences should say: "As a moral theologian and a priest, I would be the last person to tell someone how to vote." But the monsignor goes on to say that "it is my opinion as a Catholic moral theologian that the most moral choice is to vote 'yes' for this referendum."²⁰²

The other staff are as follows:

David Costanzo, *Director of External Relations;*

Bob Laird, *Director of Programs;*

Cindy Laird, *Director of Finance and Operations;*

Adam Wilson, *Director of Communications;* and

Cindy Hammerstrom, *Administrative Assistant.*

Board Members

Connie Marshner, *Chairperson*

Marshner is a former National Pro-Family Coalition chairperson who has worked at Christendom College in Front Royal, Virginia, Young Americans for Freedom, the Heritage Foundation and the youth branch of the John Birch Society. She was also on the Board of Governors for the Council for National Policy,²⁰³ which has been characterized as "a secretive club" with far-right leanings.²⁰⁴ In the 1970s, Marshner worked with Phyllis Schlafly to popularize traditional definitions of the family and oppose feminism and abortion. While a part of the Heritage think tank, Marshner worked for the Family Protection Act, which aimed to uphold the definition of marriage as consisting of one man and one woman, and to fight gay rights and abortion. Marshner is also an author of books on Christian parenting.²⁰⁵

L. Brent Bozell, III, *Secretary*

Bozell is a prominent right-wing figure and former national finance chairman for the 1992 Buchanan for President Campaign. Bozell was also one-time president of the National Conservative Political Action Committee and founder of the conservative Media Research Center. He is currently executive director of the Conservative Victory Committee.²⁰⁶ Bozell was the initial registered agent on the documents incorporating Human Life International (HLI),²⁰⁷ an antichoice group with a reputation for incendiary statements about abortion, contraception, feminism and other matters related to sexuality.²⁰⁸ HLI is also the subject of a lawsuit brought by a woman who alleges the former president, Fr. Thomas Euteneuer, molested her while performing an exorcism.²⁰⁹

Kathryn Jean Lopez, *Member*

Lopez is a former editor of the National Review Online and currently an editor-at-large. The syndicated conservative columnist writes for, among other outlets, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Our Sunday Visitor* and the *National Catholic Register*. She appears on EWTN and Vatican Radio.²¹⁰

J. Laurence McCarty, *Chairman Emeritus*

McCarty retired from his post as board chairman in 2011 after serving for seven years. According to the society's summary of McCarty's career, his experience included serving on the boards of Christendom College, Human Life International and a local crisis pregnancy center. A member of the Knights of Malta, McCarty also worked for the Diocese of Arlington.²¹¹

People (continued)

National Advisory Council

The CNS' advisory council is made up of leaders in industry and education as well as some prominent members of the clergy. Given the *Boston Globe's* allegations that some advisers were "in name only,"²¹² it is unknown to what extent the current advisory council members' links to the organization are symbolic or substantive.

Fr. Benedict J. Groeschel, Co-Chairman

As of late 2012, Fr. Benedict Groeschel was still listed as co-chairman on the CNS website. This was despite an August 30 press release from the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, stating that he had been "relieved of his responsibilities" within the order due to failing health.²¹³

Groeschel was a therapist with a PhD in psychology from Columbia University. He taught at Fordham University, worked at Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York,²¹⁴ and most recently worked as professor of pastoral psychology at St. Joseph's Seminary of the Archdiocese of New York.²¹⁵ Groeschel was also a speaker and author of many books, with many appearances on the EWTN network.²¹⁶

Robert J. Mylod, Co-Chairman

Robert J. Mylod, a retired businessman, is a speaker to academic²¹⁷ and business audiences.²¹⁸ Mylod is one of the founders of ValuSure, a healthcare insurance consulting company that works with insurers that do not fund abortion or sterilization. The other founder, Michael O'Dea, said that Mylod told him that "he was interested in transforming the culture by reallocating capital in support of the family and away from secular trends that—either subtly or not—sought to undermine it."²¹⁹

Mylod was also chairman of the now-defunct Michigan chapter of Catholic Campaign for America,²²⁰ established in 1992 with one of its principles being "the call for a consistent integration of faith into every aspect of life, including our public life."²²¹

C. Edward Broom

Broom is chairman of Strategic Timber Investments, Inc., and is on the board of the Mount Royal Academy in New Hampshire.²²²

Frederic H. Clark

Retired from the investment management field, Clark is founder and president of Inner-City Scholarship, Inc.²²³

James V. Coffey

Coffey is the vice president for advancement at the Papal Foundation, which helps finance the Holy See.²²⁴

Eileen M. Cubanski

Cubanski is founder and executive director of the National Association of Private Catholic and Independent Schools, which is a national accrediting agency that provides teacher certification for private Catholic schools.²²⁵ She is also author of publications like "The Value of a Catholic Education."²²⁶

Candace U. de Russy

De Russy is a former college professor with a doctorate in French who has been active on several boards. She is an adjunct fellow for the Hudson Institute, an independent policy research organization, and also works as a journalist.²²⁷ In 2005, she joined the Committee on the Present Danger, which is pledged to win the war against terrorism by fighting the ideologies that drive it.²²⁸

At the State University of New York in New Paltz in 1997, de Russy called for the dismissal of school president Roger Bowen over a conference, sponsored by the women's studies program, which explored explicit areas of women's sexuality. Bowen responded, "The real issue is whether some ideologues, however well-intentioned, have the right to dictate what we say and what we do on this campus." He resigned in 2001.²²⁹

People (continued)

Fr. Robert J. Levis

Father Levis is president emeritus of the Confraternity of Catholic Clergy, which is dedicated to the implementation of Vatican II and the “strict adherence to the authentic teachings of the Magisterium.”²³⁰ He is the author of *Jesus, the Catechism and Me*.

Fr. C. John McCloskey III

Father McCloskey is a member of Opus Dei and a research fellow at the Faith and Reason Institute,²³¹ a think tank that aims to “recover the truth that faith lies at the heart of most people’s aspirations and deserves recognition of its crucial role even in a pluralistic nation like America.”²³²

McCloskey is said to have been “instrumental” in the conversion of former abortion provider Dr. Bernard Nathanson to Catholicism.²³³ He also was involved in the conversions of Newt Gingrich, Judge Robert Bork and Lawrence Kudlow.²³⁴

Victor J. Melfa

Melfa received the *Ex corde Ecclesiae* award from the Cardinal Newman Society in 2002 for his role as president of the Holy Cross Cardinal Newman Society (HCCNS), which he founded in 2002 to draw attention to “how far the college had drifted from its strong Catholic moorings.”²³⁵ His biography on the HCCNS site lists other associations and activities, including Opus Dei, Legatus, Regnum Christi and the Thomas More Law Center.²³⁶ Melfa is a former adjunct professor for Boston College and Boston University.

Fr. Michael Scanlan

Father Scanlan, now retired, served as both chancellor and president at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio.²³⁷ In 1989 Scanlan was arrested for illegally blockading the Mahoning Women’s Center in Youngstown, Ohio. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* wrote at the time that under Scanlan’s presidency Franciscan University was “known for its radical orthodoxy and for its many supporters of the Operation Rescue movement.”²³⁸

Fr. Peter M.J. Stravinskis

Father Stravinskis is the executive director of the Catholic Education Foundation, which supports Catholic high school education in the US. He is also the author or editor of several books, including *Understanding the Sacraments*.

Alice von Hildebrand

Dr. von Hildebrand is a philosopher and theologian and a professor emerita of philosophy at Hunter College of the City University of New York.²³⁹

Eugene J. Zurlo

Zurlo is on the board of directors at Christendom College of Virginia²⁴⁰ and was co-founder of the Catholic Radio Association.²⁴¹

No information was available about two other board members, James G. Power and Michael A. Valerio.

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