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## **John Baptist de La Salle, John Henry Newman, and the Prospect of a Catholic Work College**

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### **Introduction**

Silver Lake College in Manitowoc, Wisconsin recently announced its decision to become the nation's first 'Catholic Work College,' hoping to eventually join the Work Colleges Consortium (WCC). This significant step is intended to help the College better incorporate a level of practicality into its normal liberal arts curriculum while simultaneously allowing students to earn a college degree at a significant discount. The WCC's aim, then, is to help the students keep their college costs to a minimum while also using the mandated work study as an educational tool, supplementing classroom study. Silver Lake intends to begin phasing the new model in beginning in the 2016-2017 academic year, and apply for formal Work College status in 2018-2019. The WCC extols the virtues of its model for higher education, claiming that it "builds character, work ethic, leadership and competence in critical thinking and time management skills."<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, people across the country have taken notice. An article in *The New Yorker* describes how Work Colleges have "found themselves...on the forefront of many trends in higher education, with their traditional benefits dovetailing with growing concerns about student debt, sustainability, community, and employability."<sup>3</sup> That said, the Work College model is not new; Berea College is said to have adopted the model before the Civil War. By having students work between eight to fifteen hours per week at an on-campus job, the results are easy to discern. Students learn and students save. The colleges maintain a steady supply of employees with a vested interest in working hard, and also "(eliminate) significant staff and overhead costs."<sup>4</sup> Though it is unclear precisely how widely the Work College Model could be adapted throughout American higher education, it is hard to deny its potential. It is even harder to imagine that a mandatory work study requirement for all resident students could possibly harm an institution's sense of community.

Silver Lake is rightfully hailing its move to become the first Catholic institution of higher learning to take such a step. Dr. Chris Domes, President of Silver Lake College, has trumpeted both the impact the new model will have on students' bottom line as well as the preparation it will offer for the post-graduation job search. Domes has also expressed his belief that the Work College model "fits our mission exceptionally well, and it allows us to truly educate the whole person..."<sup>5</sup> Speaking specifically to how the Work College Model will fit with the College's Franciscan heritage and liberal arts tradition, Domes posits that "The Work College Model adds an essential dimension to this Franciscan education . . . This education develops a student intellectually, professionally and spiritually."<sup>6</sup>

The desire to fuse the highest ideals of liberal education with the kind of utility that students require is hardly anything new. Truly, Silver Lake's decision should demand attention from others concerned with the identity and mission of Catholic higher education, as it is a step well in line with far earlier attempts on the part of Catholic educators to fuse the liberal with the practical. Silver Lake is taking a step worth taking for all Catholic colleges and universities intent on fostering community, increasing accessibility, enhancing sustainability, and equipping graduates with an ability to think well and marketable job skills. Academic attention is needed to examine the broader applicability of the Work College Model in Catholic higher education. Indeed, one might reasonably ask how, exactly, the word *Catholic* will be modifying *Work College*. More importantly, though, what is needed first is not so much a series of predictions about something new so much as retrieval of something old. How has Catholic higher education ever struck a balance between the highest ideals of a liberal education and the practicality that students require of post-secondary studies? A synthesis of the Lasallian tradition's adaptation to higher education and John Henry Newman's classic contribution to university theory offers a vital apology for a fusion of the liberal and the practical on Catholic campuses.

### **Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the Christian Schools**

Lasallian education began as something eminently practical and far removed from the realm of higher education. The Brothers of the Christian Schools, the creation and life's work of John Baptist de La Salle, began rather modestly as a group of laymen dedicated to educating the poor boys of France. This is not to say that a good education was impossible to find during De La Salle's lifetime (1651-1719), but it was only found if one were rich. De La Salle—himself a product of a wealthy youth's education by a personal tutor—could not see much justice in the educational status quo. Too few could afford tutors, or even the tuition-requiring schools run by local bishops or the guild of writing masters. Charity schools existed, but De La Salle recognized the hopelessness of many of these operations. With no established standards for training teachers, children in the charity schools were destined to fail, perpetuating the cycle of poverty that plagued their families.

De La Salle was by no means the first education reformer in France, but he may have been the one whose vision was most realistically holistic. De La Salle recognized early on was that “the teacher was the most important element of pedagogy.”<sup>7</sup> What made De La Salle's program successful, then, was his ability to attract the right people with the right devotion. De La Salle's contribution was more administrative than curricular: he created “a stable community of religiously motivated laymen to construct a network of schools throughout France that would make practicable and permanent the best elements from the pioneers who had gone before him.”<sup>8</sup>

With missionary zeal directed not toward foreigners or Protestants but the poor youth of his own country, De La Salle's approach to education had from its beginning a focus on practicality. Both the students' social and spiritual standing were to be improved by the education they received from the Brothers. Seeing that lower-class parents simply did not have the knowledge or skills to properly educate their children, La Salle sought to train his Brothers to fill the educational gap without disturbing the parents' rightful position as the primary educators. Introducing group learning and insisting on carrying out instruction in the vernacular (rather than Latin), De La

Salle “made a lasting contribution to the understanding of the school as a faith community, nurturing the human and religious formation of its students, faculty, and administrators.”<sup>9</sup>

Most lasting, however, will likely be De La Salle’s development of a cohesive spirituality of education “that linked the love for and service to and with the poor to the central mysteries of Christ.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, De La Salle compared the Brothers’ desire to change the lot of impoverished French youth to the actions of God Himself: “for he so loved the souls he created that when he saw them involved in sin and unable to be freed...his zeal and affection for their salvation led him to send his own Son to rescue them from their miserable condition.”<sup>11</sup> Forming his Brothers to be Christian educators with a zealous devotion to the betterment of their students, De La Salle understood that teaching is a grind and that all good teaching is relational. As such, De La Salle urged his Brothers to model the Christian faith for students while he tried to model it for them. The kind of fraternal relationship that the Brothers sought (and seek) to cultivate with students was also what De La Salle tried to maintain between the Brothers and Himself. His program for ‘faculty development,’ based around his spirituality of education, has rightly been lauded by scholars of education. His feat was not small: “De La Salle was an educator of educators, able to develop untrained, undereducated, ill-mannered tradesmen to be effective educators of boys from poor and working class families.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Adaptation of the Lasallian Tradition to Higher Education**

It may not be obvious, at first glance, how De La Salle’s experience (or his thinking, even) might have any bearing on Catholic higher education in the twenty-first century. One does not have to be an astute student of the history of education to notice the significant differences between educating destitute youth in early eighteenth century France and university studies in modern America. Aside from his own stint as a university student, De La Salle did not spend any of his career working on university campuses. There is nothing in his writings to indicate that he foresaw (or wanted) anything resembling a *Lasallian* university. The emphasis on practical studies in the Christian Schools did not square easily with more romantic ideas that a university should be a place of education free from any and all constraints—even the constraints of a future career. As a 2009 study notes, “the Lasallian tradition has emphasized the practical value of education rather than learning for its own sake.”<sup>13</sup>

It will come as no surprise, then, that there is ambivalence even amongst the Brothers themselves regarding the adaptability of the Lasallian charism to higher education. Reacting to questions on the value of Lasallian higher education, former Superior General John Johnston declared that “if our institutions do not manifest characteristics that distinguish them, they are not worth the trouble. Our personnel and financial resources can be better utilized at the primary or secondary level.”<sup>14</sup> Despite such ambivalence, Lasallian higher education has been around for over 150 years. Pressured by American bishops eager to expand collegiate opportunities for American Catholics and help ensure a steady pool of qualified candidates for diocesan seminaries, the Brothers took the step of opening their first college in New York in 1853. Rather than considering this step a violation of the Lasallian charism, Brother Luke Salm notes that “the reasons remained traditionally Lasallian and pragmatic: the educational needs of the immigrant generations of Catholics.”<sup>15</sup>

There were, to be sure, bumps in the road. The French Superiors were not at all pleased by the foray into higher education by the Brothers in America. Mandates came down attempting to restore a stricter understanding of a Brother's vocation (which included a reinstated prohibition on the teaching of Latin, rendering the Brothers largely incapable of providing a cornerstone of the liberal arts education of the time). As Salm notes, the Superiors even went so far as to reassign "the Brother Presidents of the American colleges, together with some of the best classical scholars, to teaching duties in elementary schools in Egypt and in France."<sup>16</sup> Though the Brothers' early ventures into the liberal arts were rather reluctant, they eventually found a way to provide a liberal education without losing sight of De La Salle's desire to provide means of improving the impoverished state of poor families. Speaking specifically of La Salle University in Philadelphia, Salm notes how "the pursuit of learning for its own sake in the courses in the arts and physical sciences becomes practical and applied in programs in business, nursing, and teacher preparation, and in the professional offerings at the master's level."<sup>17</sup> No less a thinker than Jacques Maritain noted this ability of the Lasallian tradition to fuse the liberal and the practical ideals of higher education, calling the Brothers "neither idealists despising matter nor technocrats despising disinterested knowledge." The goal of this linkage was, in Maritain's eyes, quite simple: "(the Brothers) have understood that . . . education must equip youth with a genuine and efficient professional training and the means of making a living. And they have understood at the same time that the formation of the soul and the intellect, the bringing up of a human being as human, remains the highest and indispensable aim of education."<sup>18</sup>

The lessons have apparently been handed down to today's stewards of Lasallian higher education. A simple review of the mission statements of Lasallian universities in the United States reveals a vision that involves fusing practical studies to learning for its own sake. La Salle University claims to offer "a rigorous curriculum and co-curricular experiences designed to help students gain theoretical and practical knowledge."<sup>19</sup> Manhattan College pursues its mission "through programs that integrate a broad liberal education with concentration in specific disciplines in the arts and sciences or with professional preparation in business, education and engineering."<sup>20</sup> Perhaps most clearly, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota "offers an innovative combination of liberal education and professional preparation such that our graduates prosper in today's knowledge economy and are prepared to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century."<sup>21</sup>

A commitment to helping poor students of today is very much in keeping with De La Salle's hope for the future of his Brothers, and remains a guiding principle for Lasallian higher education. As Johnston has stated, "Our Lasallian commitment to the poor . . . impels us to make every effort to welcome the economically poor and members of minority groups, who have been deprived of the opportunity of higher education."<sup>22</sup> Might this commitment to making post-secondary studies accessible to the poor imply a level of compatibility with the Work College model? If so, the Lasallian heritage of educating educators might be particularly relevant for any institution considering any adoption of the model. Work Colleges do make significant demands of their faculty: "Members of the faculty and staff suddenly have extra roles: in addition to teaching a full course load, a chemistry professor might also have to supervise and mentor student workers."<sup>23</sup> The Brothers, like all of the Catholic religious congregations involved in higher education, have worked hard to pass their unique charisma on to the lay associates now doing the bulk of the teaching in Lasallian colleges and universities. If this charisma can prosper

without the presence of Brothers on campus, it is a charism well worth spreading to educators throughout Catholic higher education. This is especially true if Catholic universities must continue seeking ways to preserve the best of the Catholic liberal arts tradition while equipping students to succeed in the workforce of the twenty-first century. If American academe is truly accustomed to a ‘publish or perish’ mentality, the Lasallian approach is an exceedingly countercultural one: giving “concrete expression to the value of the teaching vocation as worthy of the commitment of one’s total self and even for a lifetime.”<sup>24</sup>

### **John Henry Newman: The Cardinal’s Context**

Despite being the patron saint of teachers, John Baptist de La Salle’s impact on the whole of Catholic higher education pales in comparison to that of John Henry Newman. Indeed, even secular higher education has not been untouched by Newman’s shadow. The great historian of Christianity Jaroslav Pelikan felt comfortable declaring Newman’s *The Idea of a University* “the most important treatise on the idea of the university ever written in any language . . .”<sup>25</sup> Within the Catholic sphere alone, one would be hard-pressed to overemphasize his legacy. In 1990, Pope John Paul II promulgated his Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. A simple perusal of the notes reveals three quotations of Newman’s work (one in the body of the document and two in the footnotes). A more thorough comparison of Newman’s work with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, however, reveals significant agreement over the identity and mission of a (Catholic) university. One commentator was even moved to ask, “Was Newman the ghostwriter for *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*?”<sup>26</sup> Though Newman himself has not yet been canonized, his work on the idea of a liberal education in a university, in some sense, has.

Unlike De La Salle, Newman was a university man on an essential level. He arrived at Oxford as a teenager, and would not depart until over two decades had passed. Indeed, there is no reason to suspect he would have ever left had he not converted to Catholicism. Recalling his departure from his beloved Oxford in February 1846, Newman remembered that “There used to be much snapdragon growing on the walls opposite my freshman’s rooms there, and I had for years taken it as the emblem of my own perpetual residence even unto death in my University.”<sup>27</sup> Called to become rector of the Catholic University of Ireland nearly a decade later, Newman would articulate his vision of the proper function of a university by drawing from his own extensive experience as a student, pastor, scholar, and teacher.

It would be forgivable to assume at the outset that Newman would build his conception of a university on an entirely theological foundation. Newman was, after all, one of the most prominent Catholics of his time, and remains among the most famous converts to Catholicism of all time. Newman, whose thinking always had a strong grounding in history, had an understanding of the Church for which “the existence of a lively and educated laity” was fundamental.<sup>28</sup> What is more, Newman’s rigorous study of the Patristic Era had led him to the conclusion that, even in the age of such giants as “Athanasius, Hilary, the two Gregories, Basil, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine,” the authentic faith of the Church “was proclaimed and maintained far more by the faithful than by the Episcopate.”<sup>29</sup> The university was therefore, in Newman’s mind, an absolute necessity for the health of the Church. An intellectually impoverished laity could only leave the Church hamstrung.

Nevertheless, in articulating his idea of a university, Newman preferred to “rely upon reasoning which would not be linked with the tenets of Catholic theology,” so as to appeal to a wider audience.<sup>30</sup> The challenges to liberal education in Newman’s lifetime were also such that Newman was not defending theology as such so much as learning worthy of being its own end. As Douglas Woodruff noted on the centenary of Newman’s conversion to Catholicism, what he faced in nineteenth century England was not so much a frontal assault on religion as a proliferation of distractions which seemed poised to push the influence of the Christian faith out of English society altogether.<sup>31</sup> Of these distractions, the most significant (and resilient) may well have been the idea that utility should be the sole measure of the quality of an education.

### **Newman’s Idea of a University**

There was, of course, a kind of utility in Newman’s idea of a university. There were, in his assessment, significant limitations on the kind of study undertaken by an individual working alone. “You cannot have the best of every kind everywhere,” Newman wrote. “. . . a University is a place of concourse, whither students come from every quarter for every kind of knowledge.”<sup>32</sup> It was largely Newman’s notion of the scope of the knowledge proper to a university, as well as its desired result, that made his thinking so antithetical to contemporary proponents of a university education guided primarily by its applicability in a professional setting. The very first sentence of *The Idea of a University* thunders that the university “is a place of teaching universal knowledge,” and that its goal is “the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement.”<sup>33</sup> As for the desired result of a university education, Newman believed firmly that “Knowledge is capable of being its own end.”<sup>34</sup>

On this point, Newman was steadfast. It would have been contradictory to the ideals of a liberal education to subject university studies to the demands and constraints of the workforce and economy. Newman was aware that a perceived lack of usefulness would be a major criticism of his vision; there were, after all, plenty of poor people in Ireland in the 1850’s, and they might very reasonably have questioned the value of investing in an education that would not promise some chance of ascending to more stable ground, socially and financially. Part of what Newman feared, though, was that a person schooled entirely within a course of study streamlined toward the successful pursuit of a particular profession might come to think of his profession as the sum total of who he is as a human being. Believing as he did that universities ought to educate the whole person, Newman quoted a contemporary extensively on the actual utility of a liberal education:

But the professional character is not the only one which a person engaged in a profession has to support. He is not always on duty. There are services he owes, which are neither parochial, nor forensic, nor military, nor to be described by any such epithet of civil regulation, and yet are in no wise inferior to those that bear these authoritative titles; inferior neither in their intrinsic value nor their moral import, nor their impression upon society. As a friend, a companion, as a citizen at large; in the connections of domestic life; in the improvement and embellishment of his leisure, he has a sphere of action, revolving, if you please, within the sphere of his profession, but not clashing with it; in which if he can show none of the advantages of an improved understanding, whatever may be his skill or proficiency in the other, he is no more than an ill-educated man.<sup>35</sup>

With this caution against a strictly utilitarian concept of university education in mind, Newman rejected the idea that men “who embrace in their minds a vast multitude of ideas, but with little sensibility about their real relations toward each other” could be said to have truly received a liberal education.<sup>36</sup> The responsibility of a university to teach students universal knowledge found as its logical end, in Newman’s mind, “not Learning or Acquirement, but rather . . . Thought or Reason exercised upon Knowledge.”<sup>37</sup> And since Newman believed that all knowledge formed one whole, no student could focus entirely on any single discipline and graduate with a truly liberal education, either. Newman’s faith told him that faith and reason could not contradict each other, and therefore believed a liberally educated person would be able to achieve a synthesis of knowledge: “That only is true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence.”<sup>38</sup>

For a university to be a university, then, no subject areas could be excluded. Newman believed that the exclusion of any discipline could only warp a student’s sense of the whole of universal knowledge: “. . . if you drop any science out of the circle of knowledge, you cannot keep its place vacant for it; that science is forgotten; the other sciences close up, or, in other words, they exceed their proper bounds, and intrude where they have no right.”<sup>39</sup> Not surprisingly, Newman treats theology as an especially important piece of any authentic liberal education. If God exists, all areas of knowledge are necessarily impacted. Sean Whittle laments the absence in Newman’s writings of a strong epistemological defense of theology as knowledge, but he also asserts that, for Newman, “It is as if theology’s inclusion has a symbolic significance.”<sup>40</sup> No graduate of a theology-infused liberal education could let materialism take root entirely unopposed.

It may be worth pointing out here that Newman’s understanding of liberal arts was not identical to what is commonly understood today: “For him liberal education was about developing the capacity to think and it was closely connected with the traditional liberal arts of the medieval university.”<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, if it can be taken for granted that modern stewards of the liberal arts have discharged their duty admirably in the constructing of curricula, it still has to be remembered that the university experience Newman envisioned was an entire lifestyle rather than simply a series of classes. He understood that no amount of education could take the place of grace and help someone overcome the effects of original sin. Therefore, Newman refused to make virtue a goal of university study. At the same time, though, Whittle argues that Newman assumed students would take place in the liturgical life of the campus. “This means that catechesis and moral formation would in this partial way be a part of the Catholic university . . .”<sup>42</sup> Additionally, Newman suggested what would today be called residential life as an important part of the students’ overall (though perhaps informal) education: “A University residence, then, is in fact a period of training interposed between boyhood and manhood, and one of its special offices is to introduce and to launch the young man into the world . . .” Rather than proposing a strict regimen of discipline for university students, though, Newman desired “a kind mother, an Alma Mater, who inspires affection while she whispers truth; who enlists imagination, taste, and ambition on the side of duty; . . . who superintends the use of the liberty which she gives them, and teaches them to turn to account the failures which she has not at all risks prevented . . .”<sup>43</sup>

With the goals of the university being so lofty, and the place for research on campus being so small, Newman clearly shared with De La Salle a deep respect for the vocation of the teacher. For Newman, the university could not be a place devoted primarily to research, as this would disrupt its genuine function as a place of service to students. As De La Salle reflected on the centrality of the teacher to any effective pedagogy, so too did Newman acknowledge that poor teaching could not help but handicap students and rob a university of its potential: “An academical system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils, is an arctic winter; it will create an ice-bound, petrified, cast-iron University, and nothing else.” Drawing from personal experience, Newman would eloquently describe the futility of teaching not built upon a fruitful relationship between students and teachers:

I have known a time in a great School of Letters, when things went on for the most part by mere routine, and form took the place of earnestness. I have experienced a state of things, in which teachers were cut off from the taught as by an insurmountable barrier; when neither party entered into the thoughts of the other; when each lived by and in itself; when the tutor was supposed to fulfil his duty, if he trotted on like a squirrel in his cage, it at a certain hour he was in a certain room, or in hall, or in chapel, as it might be; and the pupil did his duty too, if he was careful to meet his tutor in that same room, or hall, or chapel, at the same certain hour; and when neither the one nor the other dreamed of seeing each other out of lecture, out of chapel, out of academical gown. I have known places where a stiff manner, a pompous voice, coldness and condescension, were the teacher’s attributes, and where he neither knew, nor wished to know, and avowed he did not wish to know, the private irregularities of the youths committed to his charge.<sup>44</sup>

### **Newman’s Idea as an Idea; Not an Ideal**

Modern commentators on Newman might generally be expected to either laud his defense of learning for its own sake or decry his vision as unworkable in today’s climate in higher education. A scholar sympathetic to Newman’s continuing relevance, James Heft notes that “what has been happening across the country, especially in major research universities, is the shaping of academic careers primarily by economic factors outside the academy,” while citing a study that found “the gap is closing between what universities value and what is valued in the commercial workplace.”<sup>45</sup> Even at the official levels of the Catholic Church’s thinking on higher education, so very much influenced by Newman, there is an awareness that university studies have to have practical implications. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* asserts that “The education of students is to combine academic and professional development with moral and religious principles and the social teachings of the Church; the programme of studies for each of the various professions is to include an appropriate ethical formation in that profession.”<sup>46</sup>

While this may seem at first to be either a rejection of Newman’s thinking or at the least a significant giving of ground, there is ample reason to suspect that even Newman himself would not be entirely (or remotely) dismayed. For some, that Newman specifically described his concept of a university as an ‘idea’ is the key. Situating Newman’s *The Idea of a University* within the context of his other work, Jaroslav Pelikan reminds readers that *The Idea* “interpreted the problems of university education . . . in the light of the principle of development.”<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Terrence Merrigan posits that “For Newman, an idea, to be ‘real,’ must find



expression in history and culture which, in turn, shape the particular expressions of the idea. What unites these expressions is their claim to represent the original ‘idea’; what distinguishes them is the degree of their approximation to that same ‘idea.’”<sup>48</sup> Thus, Merrigan believes that questions of a university’s function and value are questions that Newman “would have approved of repeatedly asking . . .”<sup>49</sup> And for Pelikan, even a significant reimagining of Newman’s “idea” may still very well be “faithful to his own deepest intuitions and intentions . . .”<sup>50</sup>

An increased emphasis on professional education in Catholic universities may not, then, be in direct opposition to Newman’s thought. To give momentum to his “Reexamination” of Newman’s idea, Pelikan notes the changing nature of human knowledge since Newman’s day in relation to the changing landscape of higher education. “What (Newman) could not have foreseen . . . was the extent to which, in the century and a half that has intervened, it would be specifically the elites in the basic and the applied sciences at the university—thus by his definition and distinction, chiefly in ‘liberal arts’—who would provide much of the leadership for such ‘mechanical arts’ and for the technology by which the ancient imperative to subdue the earth would be carried out . . .”<sup>51</sup> As humanity’s capabilities have grown exponentially, so too has the need for a liberal arts education to temper ability with conviction. Pelikan defines a *profession* as an occupation which “must involve some tradition of critical philosophical reflection, and probably the existence of a body of scholarly literature in which such reflection has been developed and debated.” In so defining what professional studies must entail, Pelikan further acknowledges that a university is likely “the only possible setting in which such reflection on a profession, and therefore the training informed by such reflection, can be carried on in its full intellectual context.”<sup>52</sup> As Newman suspected, only in the midst of a center devoted to universal knowledge could an instructor (and his students) fully recognize his subject in its proper relationship to all others, whereas “out of a University he is in danger of being absorbed and narrowed by his pursuit, and of giving lectures of nothing more than a lawyer, physician, geologist, or political economist.”<sup>53</sup>

Therefore it is entirely unsurprising that Newman would begin to see for himself the need for a fusion of the liberal and the practical within the confines of the university. Indeed, one might say he was not far from being somewhat cutting edge. Arguing that the profession of engineering came into being earlier on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Fergal McGrath contends that “Newman, therefore, showed great elasticity of mind in being prepared to admit engineering studies into the curriculum of the university.”<sup>54</sup> Merrigan chimes in as well, asserting that “Newman never imagined his university to be an oasis for well-heeled toffs engages in genteel reflection amidst the chaos and commerce of the Industrial Revolution. His most successful Faculty was the Faculty of Medicine, a very utilitarian Faculty indeed . . .”<sup>55</sup> Newman spent a good deal of effort trying to define the precise nature of the relationship between professional and liberal studies. However, it should be clear that he was, though perhaps tentatively, in favor of combining the two. Newman was as devoted to the ideal of a liberal education as anyone else, but as a university administrator he did have to take concrete steps to include the professional studies as well. Ultimately, he settled on a two year preliminary course of liberal studies. As Newman said, “Nothing of course can be more absurd than to neglect in education those matters which are necessary for a boy’s future calling . . .”<sup>56</sup>

## **The Mission of Catholic Higher Education: De La Salle, Newman, and the World**

James Heft argues that “liberal education cannot be the cultural frosting on the cake of professional competence—it has be critical of the very structures we are teaching students to succeed in, unless we fool ourselves into thinking our social order is already ideal.”<sup>57</sup> For a school claiming Catholic identity and entrenched in the Catholic tradition, this would seem to be doubly true. Both De La Salle and Newman harbored grave reservations about the world, a testament to their faith in the Gospel’s prescription for redemption and the absolute need for grace.

Brother Martin Lasa suggests that De La Salle would use the word *world* to mean “anything which is opposed to our salvation.”<sup>58</sup> Brother Gilles Beaudet declares that, throughout De La Salle’s writings, “The spirit of the world is the wisdom, or the philosophy of those people of the world who are the enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ.”<sup>59</sup> Newman could be just as stark, though probably more eloquent. Challenging his congregation to remember that it is the next world that they must work for rather than the present one, Newman thundered that “that confederacy of evil which Scripture calls the world, that conspiracy against Almighty God of which Satan is the secret instigator, is something wider, and more subtle, and more ordinary, than mere cruelty, or craft, or profligacy; it is that very world in which we are; it is not a certain body or party of men, but it is human society itself.”<sup>60</sup> If a Catholic university is to be a place of dialogue between the Church and world, it is clear then that the world is not to be allowed any pride of place in either Newman’s or De La Salle’s view. Perhaps more to the point of this paper, though the university may very well assist students to succeed in this world, it is also its mission to train students to see the limits—and illusions—that attend such success.

### **Newman, the Lasallian Tradition, and a Catholic Work College**

At first, it would no doubt seem that De La Salle’s thinking, particularly as it has been adapted to higher education, would have much more of use to a prospective Catholic Work College. With its longstanding emphasis on practical studies as means of lifting the impoverished out of society’s dregs, the collective wisdom of the Lasallian Tradition does seem a natural fit for a liberal arts college seeking to give students hands-on experience to lighten the financial burden as well as to help cultivate employable skills and habits. And yet, the foregoing reflections have made clear that Newman and the Brothers of the Christian Schools have arrived at similar conclusions regarding university education, despite having had drastically different starting points. De La Salle’s Brothers moved only somewhat reluctantly into the liberal arts. John Henry Newman still represents the most potent voice in defense of the highest ideals of a liberal education: learning for the sake of learning. Nevertheless, Newman’s thinking is conducive to an appreciation of the ever-developing state of human knowledge, and of the ability for some *occupations* to gradually become *professions* worthy of university study over time. In his time as rector of the Catholic University of Ireland, Newman did allow for professional studies to interact with (if not encroach upon) the liberal arts curriculum.

If Silver Lake College’s decision to become a Work College is to enhance, rather than hinder, its Catholic identity, both Lasallian and Newmanian thinking should be allowed to inform the transition. Indeed, if the Work College model has anything to offer Catholic higher education

beyond the confines of small Silver Lake College, it will need to drink from the well of the Church's tradition in order for anyone to see clearly what might separate a Catholic Work College from a non-Catholic one. If the argument of this paper is right, it is Newman and De La Salle who can best substantiate the idea of a Catholic Work College. Before closing with some concluding thoughts on what each might offer an aspiring Catholic Work College, it will be worthwhile to speculate how the Work College model might help enhance an institution's Catholic identity.

### **The Work College Model and its Potential for Enhancing Catholic Identity**

*Ex Corde Ecclesiae* suggests that "every Catholic University, as Catholic, must have the following essential characteristics," listing four.<sup>61</sup> What follows is a brief reflection on how an application of the work college model, to whatever extent possible, might benefit a Catholic institution of higher learning particularly in the area of its Catholicity.

#### **1) *A Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university as such***

Work study programs are not rare in American higher education, but an institution-wide requirement of work study for all students is. The Work College model will require buy-in from everyone in the campus community. It is the administrators who will have to find the best way to structure things so as to ensure a healthy balance between the practical and the liberal. Faculty will have an incredible opportunity to invite students to think of their future careers in terms of the Catholic notion of vocation, as many students will already be working on campus in an area tangential to their major course of study. Faculty will also bear the burden of seeing that students not become one-dimensional, and that they receive a truly integrated education that helps them discern both the limitations of earthly success and the dignity of their labors (academic and otherwise). Support staff will have to keep work opportunities for students plentiful and substantial. Their role may well be more of a teaching role than ever before. Students will have a vested interest in the work they perform, as the respect their degree will someday command depends on the institution's vitality. Clearly, the adoption of the Work College model could have a significant streamlining impact on the university community. If specifically Catholic virtues are articulated within the context of the work program, Catholic identity could be strengthened exponentially.

#### **2) *A continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research***

Many have lamented the deterioration of the old Catholic subculture in this country. Far more research needs to be done on the question of how the modern Church might reclaim the best aspects of that subculture without naively trying to turn back the clock. With the wide range of jobs students might be working in within the larger context of a Catholic liberal arts curriculum, there could well be an invigoration in the amount of thinking done on what exactly it means to be Catholic lawyers, Catholic health care workers, Catholic engineers, Catholic computer scientists, etc. With the ethnic neighborhoods of an earlier time gone forever, it is hard to see how an increase in the number of people linking their professional development to Catholic principles could not help a renewal of a distinctively Catholic culture.

### **3) *Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church***

This characteristic may be the least likely to benefit from a wider application of the Work College Model in Catholic higher education. Nevertheless, if more students are encouraged to think of their future professions as part of their God-given vocations, fidelity to the Christian message may well be more likely. It will be harder for students to compartmentalize their lessons in moral theology, for instance, if they are being challenged to consider the ethical ramifications of the careers to which they plan to devote their working lives. Additionally, it may be that the Work College model could also help to shore up the relationships between Catholic universities and local dioceses. Catholic parishes, schools, hospitals, and even diocesan offices could be excellent sites for students to pursue work hours. This could only serve to tighten the bonds between Catholic educators at all levels, and could perhaps better familiarize diocesan personnel with the excellent work being done by Catholic universities.

### **4) *An institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life***

The Work College model can help make a Catholic university education accessible to more people by drastically reducing the cost of tuition. Insofar as Catholic higher education does a good job of helping students find meaning in their lives, to be able to cast a wider net amongst the very people the Gospel requires good Christians to serve cannot be a bad thing.

### **Conclusions: What De La Salle and Newman Have to Offer**

It remains unclear whether Silver Lake College's donning of the Work College mantle will be a success. Indeed, it will be several years before any accurate assessments can be made of the impact on the school's culture. It may take a decade or more before the change's net impact on graduates' careers can be analyzed. What needs to happen sooner, though, is an examination of how the Work College model will enhance the school's Franciscan identity, its Catholic identity, and its liberal arts identity. Presumably, if the College did not feel that each of these three facets of its identity would, in fact, be enhanced, they would not be going forth with the transition. The still highly-visible presence of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity on campus will hopefully help to ensure the strength of the Franciscan charism. As far as the liberal arts and Catholic identity of the school (which is, of course, not unrelated to the Franciscan identity), much can be learned from two of the greatest educators the Church has produced in the past 500 years.

Neither Silver Lake College nor any other Catholic institution seeking to make the Work College model part and parcel of their liberal arts curriculum need to explicitly adopt the Lasallian tradition as part of their institutional identity. They do have the luxury, however, of being able to learn from the experience of Lasallian educators of the past 300 plus years who have sought to impart a practical education to students within the context of a Church-affiliated school. By founding the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, John Baptist de La Salle made a habit of empowering lay people centuries before the Second Vatican Council. If a Catholic Work College hopes to churn out graduates willing to consider their professions within the larger

context of their God-given vocation, the wisdom of the Lasallian tradition may well be crucial. More obvious is the impact that an incorporation of Lasallian-style faculty development could have on a Catholic work college. With an increase in the amount of time students are spending fulfilling work study duties that are intended to be a part of their overall educational experience, there is an added onus on the faculty to ensure that the liberal arts portion of the curriculum offers students an integrated education infused with the Catholic tradition.

No Catholic university that takes its Catholicity seriously can afford to ignore Newman. His thinking, as has been shown, continues to dominate the Church's official articulation of what a Catholic university ought to be. For a Catholic Work College, Newman's experience demonstrates how even the highest dedication to the ideal of a liberal education might also equip students to thrive in their chosen professions. The very idea of a Catholic Work College is best understood in light of the Lasallian and Newmanian experiences. A fusion of liberal and professional studies is firmly in keeping with the best instincts of Catholic higher education.

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