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American Catholic Higher Education Essential Documents, 1967-1990, edited by Alice Gallin, OSU

Kevina Keating

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AMERICAN CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS, 1967-1990.

ALICE GALLIN, O.S.U., (ED.). UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS, INC., 1992.

Reviewed by Kevina Keating, CCVI

Sr. Alice Gallin's collection, *American Catholic Higher Education Essential Documents, 1967-1990*, is a significant piece of work. It makes important Catholic identity documents accessible in one well-organized format for reading, study, and reflection, and serves as a valuable reference for use in orienting new faculty and providing ongoing support to the current faculty of Catholic higher education institutions.

Catholic identity has been a major topic in the Catholic education community in recent years. Historically, particularly before Vatican II, the identity concept was associated simply with large numbers of women and men religious staffing and administering Catholic educational institutions, along with external religious symbolism.

This reality has changed, as has the Church's self-understanding. Now we find American Catholic higher education in search of ways to express its Catholic identity. We ask, "What makes us Catholic? How is our mission particularly Catholic? How are we different from State University X down the street?" And we conclude that if we are not distinctively Catholic, we have no ultimate *raison d'être* beyond being any university. As a result, several Catholic institutions of higher education have created a new position on the staff, that is, an office of mission effectiveness, which is usually located in the highest tier of university administration, the president's office, to highlight its importance in the minds of all. Some, including the president of my current institution, refer to the office as mission control.

The questions of Catholic identity and mission effectiveness are haunting for those responsible for Catholic higher education today. The questions go beyond faculty and administration. Recently, for example, the students of the Jesuit institution of Georgetown demanded that crucifixes be returned to the classroom. While none of us want to confuse symbolism and symbolic gestures with the in-depth meaning of Catholic identity, we cannot ignore the different levels of need among people for symbol and ritual related to the substance of identity.

The publication of Sr. Gallin's 1992 volume is a reminder that in Catholic education, as in education in general, elementary schools are usually in the forefront of change, followed by secondary schools, and then higher education. Leaders in preK-12 education, for example, have made noble

efforts to have important Catholic education documents published and readily available to address the issue of Catholic identity, beginning with *To Teach as Jesus Did* (1972). As a result, teachers in Catholic elementary and secondary schools have had more opportunity to study the question of Catholic identity through various forums, such as the NCEA sponsored programs, *Vision and Values* and *Sharing the Faith: A Faculty Program for Catholic Schools*.

As Sr. Gallin's volume reflects so well, clarity regarding the role of Catholic higher education in recent decades has been much more difficult to achieve. While not the only document related to the mission of Catholic higher education, the publication of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* promulgated by John Paul II on August 15, 1990, was unique and provided a common document for dialogue on identity. More importantly, and unlike the documents related to other levels of Catholic education, this document was the result of a 25-year dialogue between university presidents and Vatican officials that took place between 1965 and 1990. Tracing and studying the developmental sequence of the 1990 document, the documents that fed into it, and its various drafts, may well be the key to the true meaning and true limitations of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Therefore, the reference work *American Catholic Higher Education* is a jewel. It puts *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* in a larger context starting with the work of the International Federation of Catholic Universities in creating the 1972 document, *The Catholic University in the Modern World*; addressing subsequent explanatory or modifying statements between 1973 and 1980; presenting the development of the revised Code of Canon Law between 1977 and 1983 to include universities; and ending with the drafts and eventual final document of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Sr. Gallin's interpretive comments and presentation of historical background complement the four-part organization of the book. Her work also chronicles and reflects the important role played by leadership through the inclusion of documents from the National Catholic Educational Association, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, and the Conference of Bishops.

I highly recommend this work. It is a rich reference for those committed to and engaged in Catholic higher education and should be found in each department in every Catholic higher education institution. More importantly, it should be perused, studied, and discussed as a seminal work in clarifying our identity in Catholic higher education today. It realistically portrays the difficult issues and questions underlying Catholic identity in higher education, and it specifies areas of anxiety and tension, making it a more amenable piece for study than simply the final document, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*.

What is the balance between authentic academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the university setting on the one hand, and Catholicism that is "perceptibly present and effectively operative" (United States Catholic Conference (USCC), 1972, p. 6) on the other? When will we more effective-

ly, comprehensively, and corporately "probe the depths and complexity of...modern problems in order to discover their roots and their causes, to bring Gospel principles to bear on proposals which will contribute to a solution" (USCC, 1972, p. 400)? Will Catholic higher education unite in a unique way its research, teaching, and service to address the societal problems of violence, poverty, homelessness, and social and economic injustice to name but a few? Sr. Alice Gallin's volume, *American Catholic Higher Education Essential Documents, 1967-1990*, puts in our hands substantive material to engage in the discussion of such critical questions.

REFERENCE

United States Catholic Conference (USCC). (1972). *To teach as Jesus did*. Washington, DC: Author.

Kevina Keating, CCVI, is associate professor of education and assistant to the vice president for academic affairs at University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio.

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