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Essay Two

# The Revitalized College: A Model

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A few years ago, a graduate of New York University brought suit against that institution. He had been induced to enter those halls (so ran his plea) by the promise that through collegiate studies he would obtain wisdom. But after graduation, he found himself as ignorant as before; so he demanded his money back. I am sorry that the courts of New York did not find in his favor; had they done so, some reform of the higher learning in America might have commenced.

I have been asked to present to you a model for a good college of arts and sciences, regardless of whether there appears to be any possibility of such an institution being founded or renewed, and without concern for its prospects of survival, were it founded. Being no gnostic or utopian, and having in mind no Academy of Lagado, however, I venture to outline a reasonably practical scheme for such a college; a model of a college which *could* come into being, and *could* endure,

under favorable circumstances. There exist historical, and indeed some extant, examples of what should be done; in an eclectic manner, I blend some of the virtues of those examples into my model. Change being the means of our preservation, I venture to suggest certain adaptations or improvements calculated to make the traditional American college relevant to the modern age. Bear with me, if you will.

The chief practical obstacle to the success of such a college as I have in mind (and you will understand that I am describing a college of arts and sciences, not a university with graduate faculties and facilities for research) is the low estate to which the American high school has fallen. Albert Jay Nock, in an exercise similar to mine, suggested once that before a really good college could commence its work, a sound high school—nay, primary and intermediate schools, too—must be founded, so that the students meant to enroll in the college might obtain adequate preparation, then and now available in very few schools. Surely that would be a mighty advantage for such a new college. Failing that, however, it might not be impossible to attract first-year college students of tolerably decent preparation by active seeking of them up and down the land; for as Nock (after Isaiah and Matthew Arnold) himself remarked in a different essay of his, there exists always a Remnant, more numerous than any prophet thinks possible, who will hearken to a clear call and promise. A portion of that educational Rem-

nant, aged seventeen or eighteen years, would suffice to form a hopeful first-year class, for the number ought to be kept small. (As Lord Percy of Newcastle wrote, it is not good to be educated in a crowd.)

Since I am not required to remain within the frontiers of the realm of the possible, however, let me pass from such considerations to concerns more theoretical. I propose first of all to suggest the chief end of such a model college of arts and sciences; next to consider the chief approaches to that end; then to discuss the failings, and the hopes for regeneration, within existing colleges; finally, to offer certain concrete proposals for the general frame and conduct of that model college.

### Wisdom as the End

We must begin with first principles, which sound platitudinous. We need to recall, nevertheless, that platitudes are *true*: that is why they have become platitudes. What, then, is the chief end of a college of arts and sciences? Why, to enable a body of senior scholars (the professors) and a body of junior scholars (the undergraduates) to seek after Wisdom—and through Wisdom, for Truth.

The end is not success, pleasure, or sociability, but wisdom. This wisdom is not the same as facts, utility, training, or even knowledge. No college can confer wisdom, but a good college can help its members to

acquire the means to pursue wisdom. Wisdom means apprehension of the human condition, recognition of reality, and the experience and possession of high knowledge—together with the power to apply experience and knowledge critically and practically. Although it is still relatively easy to find learned fools, true wisdom is rare; and so must wisdom always be. Still, in the hope that wisdom may not be extinguished altogether in our generation, I endeavor to present to you a model college that might help to make the acquisition of wisdom less difficult than it is at present; a college some of whose graduates might be philosophers (lovers of wisdom), and many of whose graduates might be, at least, men of right reason, humane inclinations, and sound taste.

There have been such colleges. One (somewhat before my time) was St. Stephen's College—now called Bard College—at Annandale-on-Hudson, when the late Dr. Bernard Iddings Bell was president. He was a good president, as good presidents go. And as good presidents go, he went—and the model college went with him. The Gadarene swine never rooted more widely than they do in our age. Yet we must not despair.

For a literary model of such a college dedicated to *veritas*—to the pursuit of that wisdom which recognizes enduring truth—we do well to turn to the writings of John Henry Newman. The best known of these is Newman's *The Idea of a University*; the most mov-

ing, his discourse "What Is a University?" in *The Office and Work of Universities*. Of course, Newman was describing a university with several faculties, not a liberal college merely; but most of what he wrote may be applied to our present concern. His university never took on flesh: the Ireland of his day was not ready for it, and Ireland seems to be less ready now. Here, however that may be, we are discussing what is desirable, not what is immediately practicable.

Newman emphasized that the aim of the formal higher learning is cultivation of the intellect for the intellect's own sake. (In his Irish circumstances at that time it was necessary that he emphasize the claims of the intellect, for the Irish bishops, fearing the modern mind, were all too ready to settle for faith and morals, looking upon the projected university merely as an enlarged seminary.) Yet if we look at Newman's work in general, we come to understand that by "intellect" or "knowledge" he meant no narrow rationalism. He knew that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; he knew, too, that a primary purpose of the higher learning is to develop the moral imagination; he understood that reason may be baneful unless it is dedicated to an ethical end. I do not think that Newman would disagree overmuch with my own object for a true college education. I hold that the higher learning is an intellectual means to an ethical end; that the college is meant to join knowledge with virtue, so helping to develop persons who enjoy some wisdom

because they subordinate private rationality to the claims of what T. S. Eliot called “the permanent things.” The means must be strictly and rigorously intellectual; the end must be ethical, in that right reason is employed to attain moral worth.

In fine, I recommend a restoration of genuinely liberal education within which the natural sciences, in their philosophical sense, are comprehended. By a liberal discipline, says Newman in the fifth discourse of *The Idea of a University*, “A habit of mind is formed which lasts throughout life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what in a former discourse I have ventured to call the philosophical habit.” We should not claim too much for such a discipline: “Its direct business is not to steel the soul against temptation or to console it in affliction, any more than to set the loom in motion, or to direct the steam carriage; be it ever so much the means or the condition of both material and moral advancement, still, taken by and large, it as little mends our hearts as it improves our temporal circumstances.” It cannot directly instill virtue: “Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then you may hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and the pride of man.” At its best, it remains a method, a discipline, for teaching the mind right reason and modesty of intellectual aspiration. “A young man of sharp and active intellect, who has had no other train-

ing, has little to show for it besides a litter of ideas heaped up into his mind any how.” So Newman writes in his *Lectures and Essays on University Subjects*.

Not learning or acquirement, but thought or reason exercised upon knowledge, is the end of intellectual training. The real aim of education, Newman declares, is “the clear, calm, accurate vision and comprehension of all things, as far as the finite mind can embrace them, each in its place, and with its own characteristics upon it.” Amen to that. What higher education, in its formal sense, can accomplish is limited. But if it can confer, or help to confer, this wise vision, it will have done much to enable a man to order his own soul and, thereby, come to a condition of moral worth. And by doing that, it will have contributed mightily toward order in the commonwealth.

### Liberal Learning, Moral Worth, and Defecated Rationality

T. S. Eliot, lecturing in 1950 at the University of Chicago on “The Aims of Education,” made many wise observations, one of which may serve as my apology for discussing the management of American colleges, a work in which I have had little experience.\* “It seems to me that it is the task of educators to think and write

\* Eliot’s Chicago lectures later were published in his collection *To Criticize the Critic* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc., 1965).

about education," Eliot remarked, "but to clarify for themselves the social, philosophical, and theological presuppositions which underlie their generalizations; and it is for the pure theoretician, the philosopher or theologian, to refer his theories to the educator—the man who has had experience of the difficulties of teaching anybody anything." I write here as one of those theoreticians, although not, I hope, as one of Burke's abstract metaphysicians, whose hearts were so consummately wicked.

My thesis is this: a principal achievement of liberal education in America has been the imparting of a sense of moral worth among those who lead intellectually. This apprehension of moral worth, as taught by the liberal disciplines, has been losing ground, throughout the present century, to what Newman called the "Knowledge School"—that is, to utilitarian and pragmatic theories and practices, which tend to regard moral worth (so far as they regard it at all) as merely the product of private rationality and social utility. Success, increasingly, has been substituted for virtue in our curricula; facts, for wisdom; social adjustment, for strength of soul. What, in certain books of mine, I have called "defecated rationality" (that is, the petty bank and capital of private rationality, as distinguished from the wisdom of our ancestors, religion, custom, convention, reverence, and honor) nowadays is generally considered the brightest gem in a scholar's crown. And if this latter-day view of the ends of education is

carried to its logical culmination, we must efface the principle which for three centuries has breathed life into the unwieldy bulk of our system of higher education.

I do not perceive any practical substitute being offered for this old sustaining principle. Therefore, I recommend that we do whatever is in our power to restore a general consciousness that the aim of higher education is the inculcation of an understanding of moral worth, achieved through right reason. Without a proper understanding of moral worth, there is little point in talking about human dignity, education for democracy, adjustment to modern society, training for leadership, preparation for the modern world, or pointing the way to success. For what gives a man dignity, what makes possible a democracy of elevation, what makes any society tolerable, what gives leaders their right to office, what keeps the modern world from becoming *Brave New World*, and what constitutes real success in any walk of life is the attainment of moral worth.

Our colleges cannot undertake the whole task of conveying to the rising generation an understanding of moral worth. If a student comes to college with no morals or (what is much the same thing) with bad morals, it is improbable that the college can do much to improve his understanding of moral worth, whatever it may do for his sheer intellectuality. The mission of the college is to reconcile moral principle with right

reason, rather than to undertake some eleventh-hour program of ethical exhortation. What a college can do, nevertheless, is to remind its students that intellectual achievement and moral worth are not incompatible, and that intellectual attainment does not grant to young people a license of emancipation from the claims of moral worth.

I am inclined to agree with Socrates that virtue cannot be taught. Such is the conclusion to which that philosopher comes in the course of conversations with his disciples. Yet Socrates was a great moralist; his aim was to make philosophy an ethical study once more, rescuing it from the pit of abstract speculation, on the one hand, and from the slough of the sophistical pursuit of power and success on the other. Virtue cannot be taught formally and abstractly. Yet, Socrates and his pupils agree, the wise man is the good man, and the good man is the wise man. I do not propose to pursue here the various merits and difficulties of this latter doctrine. I am only pointing out that Socrates believed the end of learning to be ethical, and that right reason would support the cause of virtue; yet he thought that the identification of the virtuous life with the wise life was to be attained by indirection and subtle processes, rather than by formal indoctrination. Nor was Socrates unaware that intellectuality of a high order, if undirected by conscience or habit, may lead men into evil courses—indeed, into consummate folly. Socrates' daemon is a guide to private reason and yet a

prompter (like conscience or an "inner check") somehow above and beyond private judgment and immediate motive. In Plato's *Apology*, when Socrates was confronted with the charge that Alcibiades and Critias, among his pupils, had not been eminent examples of moral worth, he implied that there are men whose light is darkness, and whom no teacher may improve morally, no matter how much he may sharpen their rational faculties.

Thus it is with our colleges. They cannot make vicious students virtuous or stupid students wise. They can, however, endeavor to prove to their students that intellectual power is not hostile toward moral worth, and they can aspire to chasten intellectual presumption. In his first discourse on the idea of a university, Newman makes it clear that the higher learning improves intellects, rather than consciences. Yet Newman's was a profoundly ethical concept of higher education, with theology reigning supreme over all studies. I repeat that the college's ultimate achievement is moral, but that its method is intellectual. And at no time is the work of a college purely intellectual or yet purely moral.

We cannot set up a course of instruction called "Moral Worth 101" and expect to confer upon students, along with three credits, an apprehension of what man is and wherein his duties lie and in what his dignity consists. Far more than through formal instruction or through processes directly rational, we learn

through the faculty that Newman calls "the illative sense"—illation, the educative process, rather than the institutionalized educational process. Colleges cannot adequately compensate for deficiencies in the understanding of moral worth in the family, in the church, in the elementary schools, or in society at large. Nor do formally schooled persons enjoy any monopoly of the appreciation of moral worth. Prejudice and prescription, by which "a man's virtue becomes his habit," can and often do make the unlettered man as morally worthy as the scholar, or make him even the scholar's moral superior. Yet I believe that if the intellectual leaders of a society deny the value of traditional morality, or are ignorant of that morality, then the mass of men will not long remain obedient to the moral dictates of prejudice and prescription. I do not ask, then, that our colleges should undertake the task of moral instruction directly, or assume burdens which other organs of society ought to perform. I am asking only that our colleges should acknowledge the primacy of moral worth, and that they should not set their faces against moral learning as being somehow archaic, authoritarian, and unscientific.

Unaided, our colleges cannot restore or maintain among us the concept of human dignity, as expressed in standards of moral principle. But our colleges do possess the negative power of discrediting the whole idea of human dignity by consigning the great intellectual tradition of moral worth as the crown of wisdom—that

belief which inspired the Roman *humanitas* and which obtained fuller expression in Christian teaching—to the Kingdom of the Fairies, along with some other old notions presumably exploded.

I am afraid that some educators have been working this rejection in words, if not in deeds. They have been ready to profess that defecated rationality is better than moral authority or that success, adjustment, and positivistic social improvement (rather than imparting of moral imagination) are the only concerns of an institution of higher learning. If they accomplish this rejection generally, they will alienate themselves from the principal achievement of higher education in America, and will expose us all to the probability of an accelerated decline of American thought, character, and public order.

Among democratic peoples, Alexis de Tocqueville writes in the second volume of *Democracy in America*, materialism is a disease particularly dangerous. "Democracy encourages a taste for physical gratification; this taste, if it becomes excessive, soon disposes men to believe that all is matter only; and materialism, in its turn, hurries them on with mad impatience to these same delights; such is the fatal circle within which democratic nations are driven round."

In the past, American colleges often strove to hold us back from that fatal circle. They clung, however feebly, to Newman's conviction that literature and science, unaided, cannot give the answers to the great

They had  
scripture



questions of modern life. They were, in some degree, conservators of moral worth. My model college would renew that function; indeed, would fulfill it more adequately than it was fulfilled in the past.

Colleges have been drifting away from their old moral and intellectual purposes. They have been accepting assimilation to what is called "business civilization"; or devoting themselves to training an intellectual and technological elite intended to govern some future gorgeous domination; or employing their facilities to teach the notion that "everybody belongs to everybody else." It is high time to revitalize the college. "What irony there would be in having learned to control matter," George Santayana writes, "if we thereby forgot the purposes of the mind, our sense, fancy, and pictorial knowledge." It would be still more ironic if, in the triumph of organization and technology, we should forget the understanding of moral worth, achieved through an intellectual process.

Prudent change is the means for conserving the continuity of any institution. Whether that prudent change ought to be "forward," in a bold new direction, or "backward," to a restoration of old essentials neglected, depends upon particular circumstances and the temper of the age. In general, our society seems to require a reform that is reactionary, rather than innovating. For while there is little risk that our generation may cease to hanker after new things, there exists danger that our generation, or at least the rising generation, may

break the contract of eternal society, forgetting that we are wise in our generation only because our modern intellectual edifices rest upon ancient foundations, the moral and intellectual achievements of our ancestors. Those who ignore the past, as Santayana says, are condemned to repeat it. But also, understanding the past of the American college, we should find it possible in a model college to work certain improvements over the college of a century ago, say.

I think that the peculiar conditions of our time and our society demand now, more than ever before, a reinvigorating of truly liberal learning. This hour is favorable to the restoration or establishment of a college with principle. A representative of a charitable foundation once observed to me that any college that believes in anything still is in a state comparatively healthy, so far as support goes, no matter how silly or how sound that particular belief of the college may be. If that college clearly has faith in orthodox Christianity, in militant atheism, in oldfangled *laissez-faire*, in revisionist socialism, or in some venerable discipline of the mind, then that college does not lack for a vigorous faculty, a lively student body, or a generous group of patrons. Commitment to principle brings success as a by-product. And my own visits to several hundred campuses, over the years, tend to confirm that gentleman's thesis.

Most colleges today, however, seem terrified of commitment to principle; indeed, they seem opposed to

principles on principle. Their trustees and presidents and professors tend to think of doubt as a good in itself, of "ambivalence" as identical with the liberal understanding, and of faith as bigotry. Thus, those colleges are left with merely quantitative standards or (at best) a vague aestheticism. What a rudder in a sea of troubles!

It is the college that can boast justifiably of its commitment to principle and of its high standards and its humane scale which will attract the better senior scholars, the better junior scholars, and the benefactions of industry, the foundations, and the private patron. The college can survive and prosper not by imitating the mass-schooling methods of Brummagem University but by offering a discipline of intellect, ethical in aim, which mass education neglects. So permit me to suggest succinctly how the typical American college has gone astray before I proceed to some regenerative recommendations.

### Decline and Survival

The aim of the oldfangled college education was ethical, the development of moral understanding and of humane leadership; but the method was intellectual, the training of mind and conscience through well-defined literary disciplines. A college was an establish-

ment for the study of important literature. It was nearly that simple.

Through an apprehension of great literature, young men were expected to fit themselves for leadership in the churches, in the law, in politics, in principal positions of public responsibility. This was what the late Gordon Chalmers (after Sir Thomas Elyot) called "the education of governors." Whatever the faults of this system, it did produce a body of sound-principled and literate men to be the leaders of the American democracy. They learned to govern themselves and to serve the republic, through strict attention to great literature: the poetry, philosophy, and history of Greece and Rome, especially; the Bible, with the history of the Jews; something of modern thought and languages; and something of the literature of science. The subjects of study were few, and the course of study was uniform.

The intention of the college was not to confer a vague smattering of every branch of knowledge upon its students, but rather to teach students the fundamental disciplines to logical thought, provide them with a taste and a critical faculty for independent reading and meditation, and then send them into the world with a cast of character and mind fitted for ethical and intellectual leadership. If these young persons remembered no more from college than something of Biblical history and precepts from Cicero and episodes from Plutarch (and some young men retained a great deal besides), still

that knowledge prepared them better for life (the life of their time or of ours) than does the cafeteria-curriculum of many universities and colleges nowadays, whose graduates may not open a single important book after they have snatched their diplomas.

Most surviving American colleges fail to achieve this fairly modest goal because they try to be all things to all men. They promise what they cannot perform, and never could perform. They promise to teach adjustment to the group, social polish, sociability, trades, salesmanship, business acumen, and the art of worldly wisdom—or what you will. They ape the functions of the universities and of the technical schools. With murmured apology and shamefacedness, they consign to a dusty corner of the curriculum their old disciplines; when, that is, they do not abolish altogether the classics, humane letters, languages, moral philosophy, and speculative science. Those arts that teach us what it is to be a man are thrust aside by business science, communications skills, journalism, premedicine, rudimentary sociology, and even “pop culture.” Most of the colleges have abandoned their ethical end and forgotten their intellectual means. The wonder is not that the colleges are in difficulties, but that they survive at all. For when function ceases, form atrophies.

Certain things a college can do very well. It can give the student the tools for educating himself throughout his life. It can present to him certain general principles for the governance of personality and community. It

can help him to see what makes life worth living. It can teach him basic disciplines which will be of infinite value in professional specialization at a university or in his subsequent apprenticeship to any commercial or industrial occupation.

And certain things no honest college can pretend to do at all. It cannot teach the student directly to win friends and influence people. It cannot make him a successful captain of industry, an accomplished engineer, or a specialized scientist. It cannot guarantee him worldly prosperity. It cannot simply enroll him in a survey course in “world culture” and pour the milk of learning into him.

Now it is quite possible that a person who has been immersed in the pseudoschooling and the vocational shams of a corrupted college may enjoy a considerable measure of practical success and, at the same time, be an intelligent and honest man. Two friends of mine, who attend the college that I did, there majored in journalism. One can no more really learn the craft of journalism in college than one really can learn the craft of whaling from reading *Moby Dick*. One may acquire in college, indeed, a knowledge of what current events mean, from studies in history, or some aptitude for writing from steady practice at preparing papers for various courses. But “majoring in journalism” has nothing to do with this. My two friends, despite their college curriculum, came to read good books and fill responsible positions: one a chief project engineer at an auto-

A mobile factory, the other chief underwriter of an insurance firm. They redeemed themselves from the faults of their formal education and, for that matter, learned a good deal during their college years—but not from the vocational training they fondly embraced. The “useful” knowledge, the “practical” instruction, is obsolete almost before the student enters the busy world. A college wastes its resources and its students’ time when it pretends to teach what can be taught only in workaday life, in the trade school, or in the graduate school.

What the college actually ought to do, and can do, was expressed forcefully by Irving Babbitt in a book published at the beginning of this century, *Literature and the American College*. (The study of enduring literature, I repeat, is the primary instrument of college education. When British universities used to consider the possibility of some new chair, they put to themselves this essential question, “To what body of literature does the proposed course of study refer?” Babbitt, then, was not writing merely of courses in the poetry of Keats and Shelley when he gave his little book its title.)

“The best of the small colleges,” Babbitt wrote, “will render a service to American education if they decide to make a sturdy defense of the humane tradition instead of trying to rival the great universities in displaying a full line of educational novelties. In the latter case, they may become third-rate and badly equipped

scientific schools, and so reenact the fable of the frog that tried to swell itself to the size of an ox. . . . Even though the whole world seems bent on living the quantitative life, the college should remember that its business is to make of its graduates men of quality in the real and not the conventional meaning of the term. In this way it will do its share toward creating that aristocracy of character and intelligence which is needed in a community like ours to take the place of an aristocracy of birth, and to counteract the tendency toward an aristocracy of money.”

Throughout the past seventy years, the average American college has disregarded Babbitt’s admonition, pleading that the college must give the public what the public seems to demand. But now the time is upon us when the college can and must heed the principles which Babbitt himself so well exemplified. The vast state-supported institutions have so thoroughly yielded to the presumed “public demand” for specialization, vocationalism, and intellectual egalitarianism that even the most complaisant liberal-arts college can no longer compete successfully with its enormous subsidized rivals for the favors of those students who desire, or think they desire, a shallow veneer of “culture,” a trade-school discipline with a college diploma, and four years of idleness. If the private college competes with the state-supported institution along those lines, the college will succeed in enrolling only those students who fail to meet even the relaxed academic require-

for public

ments of the state-supported institutions. And no one is going to be passionately interested in keeping alive a college that has become not much better than an intellectual bargain basement stuffed with rejects from the upper floors.

So I set down here, tentatively, some general principles by which colleges might begin to resume their old function—and perhaps to improve upon their old performance. To clothe these principles with flesh would require some courage of the people responsible for a college's policies. But one has to begin somewhere. The American college cannot afford much longer to drift with the current of events. Out of urgent necessity, if from no higher motive, the college policymakers may begin to reexamine the ends and means of a college education.

- ① The college should reaffirm that the end of a liberal education is an ethical consciousness, through which the student is brought to an apprehension of the enduring truths that govern our being, of the principles of self-control, and of the dignity of man.
- ② The college should make it clear that this ethical end is sought through an intellectual discipline, exacting in its character, which regards "useless knowledge" as infinitely more valuable than simple utilitarian skills.
- ③ The college should return to a concise curricu-

lum emphasizing religious knowledge, moral philosophy, humane letters, rhetoric, languages, history, logic, and the pure sciences.

4. The college should set its face against amorphous "survey courses," "general education," and similar substitutes for really intellectual disciplines. Such a smattering produces only that little learning which is a dangerous thing.
- ⑤ The college should turn away from vocationalism, resigning to trade schools and industrial "in-service training" what the college never was founded to undertake.
- ⑥ The college should abandon its attempt to encroach upon the specialized and professional studies which are the proper province of the graduate schools of universities.
7. The college should say less about "socialization" and "personality building" and more about the improvement of the human reason, for the human reason's own sake.
- ⑧ The college should give up as lost endeavor its aspiration to attract those students who desire the "extra-curricular benefits" of Behemoth University, and offer instead its own natural advantages of personal relationships, smallness of scale, and respect for individuality.
- ⑨ The college should not content itself with enrolling those students who cannot obtain entrance to a large university or state college. On the

contrary, it should begin to set its standards higher than those of Behemoth University.

10. The college should endeavor deliberately to keep its student body within reasonable limits, its humane scale being one of its principal virtues.
11. The college should emancipate itself from quasi-commercialized programs of athletics, an expensive and often anti-intellectual pastime in which it cannot compete successfully with Behemoth University.
12. The college should reduce to a minimum the elective feature in its curriculum, for one of the college's principal strengths was formerly its recognition of order and hierarchy in the higher learning, and the undergraduate ordinarily is not yet capable of judging with discretion what his course of studies ought to be.
13. The college should recollect the importance of furnishing society with a body of tolerably well-schooled persons whose function it is to provide right reason and conscience in the commonwealth.
14. The college should inculcate in its students a sense of gratitude toward the generations that have preceded us in time and a sense of obligation toward the generations yet to be born. It should remind the rising generation that we are part of a long continuity and essence, and that

we moderns are only dwarfs standing upon the shoulders of giants. This consciousness lies at the heart of a liberal education.

### Cheerfulness and Practicality Break in

Canon Bernard Iddings Bell once was showing an English visitor about the environs of Chicago. They drove past a handsome Gothic building of stone. "Is that a school?" inquired the visitor.

"Yes—a new one, 'distressed' to appear old," Canon Bell replied.

"Indeed! Who is the headmaster?"

"There is no headmaster."

"Curious! A kind of soviet of teachers, I suppose."

"There are no masters at all."

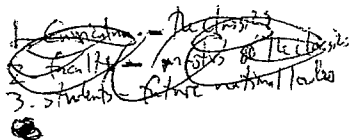
"Really? Then where are the boys?"

"As yet, there are no students. Here in the United States, we proceed educationally in a way to which you are unaccustomed," Canon Bell told his friend. "First we erect a building; then we obtain students; next we recruit teachers; then we find a headmaster; and at last we determine what is to be taught. You begin at the other end in England."

Let it be otherwise with our model college. The first matter to determine is the program of study, some outlines of which I already have suggested, but which will bear more detailed examination. After that, let us

turn to the <sup>(2)</sup>staff, then to the <sup>(3)</sup>students, and finally to the "plant."

### The Curriculum



The curriculum ought to be designed to rouse the moral imagination: to impart an apprehension of reality through studies which concern the nature of man and the condition in which we find ourselves, it being understood that man is a moral being—the only conscious creature—in whose existence greatness and misery are blended. These studies should be genuine intellectual disciplines, not “surveys” or “rap sessions” or courses of ideological exhortation. You will recall that in our model college, we assume that the undergraduates will be capable of some serious intellectual endeavor, having obtained a decent schooling before they enroll.

There should be only a few subjects taught, but those should be taught thoroughly and well. It would be best to have no one enroll in more than three courses each term. The college year should consist of six months only, after the Scottish fashion. In the month-long vacations at Christmas and Easter, and during summer, the students would have opportunity (and probably necessity) for independent reading, travel, and discussion among themselves.

The primary disciplines ought to be moral philosophy (not the fashionable logical positivism), history,

humane letters (to develop critical power, not mere “appreciation”), rhetoric (perhaps combined with humane letters), political economy (not the amorphous “sociology” and “social science” which afflict most colleges nowadays), physics and higher mathematics (these being most important nowadays for developing the philosophical habit), biological science (also philosophically considered), classical and modern languages, and music and the visual arts (these last being historical and theoretical studies, rather than crafts). Other chairs or subjects might be added, depending upon resources, but they ought not to be added if that would reduce attention to the primary disciplines.

Within these several fields, proliferation of course offerings and intensive specialization of courses ought to be discouraged. There ought to be taught methods of approach to a scholarly discipline, rather than masses of information. Specialization may be arranged *within* a general course, according to the talents and interests of professor and student.

It probably would be unwise to have a separate “department of religion”; the study of religion would occur within the several disciplines, systematic theology and the like being left to separate theological schools. But the whole curriculum, in the phrase of Dr. Philip Phenix, should be “suffused with reverence.”

A bachelor's degree should be awarded at the end of three years, not four. Perhaps an additional year of study, more specialized, would bring an additional

honors degree. Tests and examinations should be reduced to a minimum, perhaps only at the end of an academic year, but then thorough and severe. Those failing would be permitted to take a similar examination before the beginning of the autumn term of the next academic year; those still failing then would be dismissed from the college.

Instruction ordinarily should be by formal lecture, well prepared. The students would be expected to read thoroughly, far beyond the crib called a textbook. Any professor or instructor whose lectures might be merely the equivalent of a standard textbook would be summarily dismissed. A tutorial system would be adopted, permitting frequent conferences between tutors and undergraduates, and private programs of reading and paper-writing. This is very expensive; but we are discussing the *model* college.

### The Staff

The staff should be engaged upon the basis of learning and liveliness, regardless of degrees. Experience of the world, or personal achievement in a particular field, ought often to be given preference over a doctoral degree from a university with prestige, or over a long list of specialized publications.

Every member of the staff should enjoy a high degree of freedom in his own approach to instruction, it being clearly understood that he is to teach an intellectual

discipline, not some impassioned private *doxa*. In a first-year course in history, for instance, he might devote the lecture period to an examination of a particular historical period or problem, thus teaching the historical *method* and leaving historical narrative to the investigation of the students, a great number of books being available to them.

Management of the college's academic affairs should be in the hands of a college senate, in large part. Deans might be chosen by that senate from regular members of the staff, to serve for only a year or two, more or less in rotation. The president might be chosen by the regents or trustees from a number of persons placed in nomination by the senate, ordinarily. This, like other matters touched upon here, is suggested upon the assumption that professors and instructors will be temperate and prudent people chosen only after deliberation.

Only one series of formal lecture classes should be required each year of senior members of the staff, at least; but much time will be spent in tutorial consultations.

### The Students

The students should be admitted upon the basis of genuine intellectual interest and tolerable preparation; they should be made to understand that they are partners in a real educational enterprise, but junior part-



ners. Although serious educational deficiencies would be a bar to admittance to this college, it is unnecessary (indeed, undesirable) that all students should be sobersidedly and consciously intellectual; nor need students necessarily place high on standard admissions tests, have been in the first rank at secondary schools, or furnish proof of possessing some astounding intelligence quotient. What matter most are intellectual liveliness, application to studies, and literary competence.

To assure that students' interests are adequately represented, it might be well for them to elect, annually or for a term of two or three years, a rector, after the pattern of the Scottish universities. Ideally, this representative (exercising almost the power of the tribune in the faculty senate, if need be) should be a gentleman and a scholar of mature years, chosen from outside the college, and willing to serve actively. Often a man of some distinction, retired from public affairs, might be found to stand for election to this office by the students.

Numerous scholarships, awarded without regard to students' individual means, ought to be available. Tuition and fees ought to be kept low, in part through endowments, in part through economical use of the college's funds: the elimination of costly athletic programs, abstinence from grandiose educational designs, reduction of course offerings, and prejudice against bricks-and-mortar expansion. Also it would be well to

encourage, and perhaps to arrange, programs for long-term loans to students, through which they could repay to the college or to a bank, after graduation, the equivalent of their cost of instruction.

### The "Plant"

The college's buildings should be handsome and permanent, but not luxurious. The campus should not resemble a public park or a fun fair: the more cloistered, the better. The administration building should be as small and uncomfortable as possible, to dishearten educational bureaucracy.

Under present circumstances, the college should not enter the housing business, except possibly for residences for some of the professors. Unless the college is isolated, there should be little or no provision of dormitories. Residential fraternities are to be encouraged in some circumstances, however, and should work out satisfactorily, supposing that the college attracts the sort of student described earlier. Similarly, the college should leave food catering to private enterprise, ordinarily. The doctrine of *in loco parentis* should be abandoned, for the most part. Despite this college's dedication to the idea of moral worth and its emphasis upon the moral imagination, the college is engaged in the improvement of intellects, not the immediate cure of souls. (Any students with psychiatric problems should transfer to another sort of institution, or else

obtain assistance privately.) Students who commit unlawful acts, however, or those who systematically endeavor to impede the functioning of the college, should be promptly dismissed.

The first building to be erected (supposing that a college must be built, rather than reformed or acquired by reformers) should be the faculty club or commons, to promote the development of genuine community among the senior scholars and to assure them of the respect in which they are held. Around that center the college could develop, intellectually and physically. (After more than a century of existence, many American colleges and universities still have no faculty gathering place.)

The second building to be erected should be the library, which need not be vast, but which should be a careful collection, with adequate provision of serious periodicals. There should be easy access to the books at all reasonable hours, and the place should not be overheated.

The third building to be erected should be a chapel (whether or not the college has church sponsorship); I put this third only because the faculty commons or the library might be used for such purposes until the college has a body of undergraduates.

The fourth building to be erected should be one of lecture halls. There need not be extravagant provision of lecture halls and classrooms, because on most American campuses nowadays, through inefficient schedul-

ing, there is much waste of classroom space; and there will be fewer classes held at this model college than at the typical American college.

Other buildings will be added, of course. The campus should be compact, the buildings harmonious, and the whole should present the appearance of a distinct, self-contained academic community. It is of the first importance not to employ an architect accustomed to designing public schools. There should be a number of pleasant, quiet gathering places or study retreats out of doors.

One more note: this should be a segregated college —by sex. There might be a model college for men and a model college for women, perhaps not far distant from each other. But one thing to avoid is the dating-and-mating pattern which obsesses the typical American institution of a learning allegedly higher. Wine and beer should be readily available to students in public places, where that is not in conflict with local statutes, and in fraternities and residence halls, on Chesterton's principle that beer does more than Milton can to justify God's ways to man. Recurrent disorderly conduct, however, should not be tolerated; and, of course, any user of narcotics should be expelled, as should any student who engages in cheating or other dishonorable activity. The students will be presumed to be men, not boys, intellectually and emotionally. If they do not justify that assumption, they must go elsewhere. This campus would be a sanctuary for academic leisure, but

not a sanctuary for the fanatic, the criminal, or the psychotic.

Here I have offered merely the bare bones of a model, deliberately inviting full discussion; others may clothe this skeleton with flesh, or with draperies from the wardrobe of a moral imagination. I do not expect that this model college, if ever established, would supplant Behemoth University, even though Behemoth University (and Brummagem University) is far gone in decadence. This model college has no mission to the masses whose parents desire snob-degrees and sham-degrees for their progeny. My only hope is that we might thus leaven the lump of our present unappetizing educational dough. For those intelligent students now deeply discontented with the pabulum they are fed, this model college might be a vision come true; for those senior scholars who still earnestly stand by the works of the mind, and who desire to communicate what they know to the rising generation, this model college might be as attractive as All Souls' College. A college of this sort, governed by the traditions of reverence, learning, and civility, goes directly against the grain of present-day American education. But I attest the rising generation.