



Science/Technology Education in Church-Related Colleges and Universities

Publication Year: 1989

ID: BK022

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Foreword

ID: BK022-002

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FOREWORD

Thanks to the administration of Saint Louis University, especially the President, Father Lawrence Biondi, S.J., ITEST has been able to sponsor this very important Workshop. I also thank the essayists and the participants who shared their experience and wisdom with us. Although many of the comments during the discussions involved local or national situations, I feel confident that the underlying themes are important for Christians worldwide as we all cope in varying degrees to help the church in a technological (and increasing secular) cultural age.

The papers and discussions are a mixture of the local and international, the theoretical and practical. It would take far too much space here to try to summarize the Workshop. But as I was editing the discussion material, I noticed that, despite the seeming lack of focus, there was a deep-running coherence to the meeting. There are interrelationships between the purpose and goals of science/technology education in church-related schools and such seemingly mundane issues as curriculum and the role and importance of undergraduate research, between professional competence and service, between the pursuit of science and our belief in our Creator and Redeemer.

Drs. Gerard Magill, John Cross and Charles Ford of Saint Louis University have captured the more profound issues involved in the meeting. This volume begins with their essay, *Imaginative Learning in Theology, Science and Technology*. That excellent theoretical summary stands on its own and needs no comment from me. I will comment on the more practical issues of the Workshop.

Dr. Charles Ford of New York furnished us with the data base needed to begin our conversation. Note that I have designated "Ford of New York." This meeting furnished both the moderator, Dr. Robert Bertram, and myself with the challenge continually to distinguish between the Drs. Charles E. Fords, one from New York and one from St. Louis, one an educationist turned Dean and the other a mathematician deeply immersed in the faith/science encounter in the Soviet Union. Dr. Ford (NY) devised an instrument designed to give us a view of the state of science/technology in church-related colleges and universities. With that data, and our own local experiences, we were able to consider issues as they actually exist.

Father J. A. Panuska, SJ accomplished what all good keynote speakers are expected to do, namely, discussing the issues at hand in a way that encourages the exchange of ideas. There is no doubt that he accomplished this task exceptionally well. His talk effectively combined the ideas of the essayists and his own reflections in a manner to provoke further discussion.

Dr. Chase of Wheaton College eloquently described the excellent faith/science connection in one college. That essay complemented Dr. Ford's evaluation of the more general situation, showing what can be done by the students, faculty and administration working together in an atmosphere of cooperation, dedication and trust. Comments throughout the meeting confirmed the existence of such qualities in other schools.

The other essays ranged over questions (and answers) about church-related schools' involvement in science/technology education. Conventional wisdom (usually more conventional than wise) separates science from religion. In the assumptions (and in some cases, the conclusions) of all the essays there is a recognition that Christianity must remain incarnate in the world if it is to be faithful to its incarnate Lord. That *demand*s an intimate involvement in the scientific search for understanding. From this assumption, the essays and discussions ranged from models of knowing to the need for more scientific publication, from the nature and content of the core curriculum to the need for undergraduate research. Equally wide ranging were discussions of the vow of chastity taken by religious to the clear indications that the Christian laity will be carrying more of the burden (and joy) of Christian higher education.

Discussions on the "uniqueness" or "special characteristics" of church-related colleges and universities revealed some of the riches of our educational legacy and the challenges we have and will have in the foreseeable future. One of the manifestations of this "special character" of church-related institutions was seen in the freedom to

discuss seriously the interaction between faith and science. As I listened to the tapes and then edited the discussions I noted a strong sentiment (perhaps stronger among the scientists than the theologians) for a serious *faithful* search for meaning.

Underlying the entire weekend was the question of the advisability and the need for some future meeting on this whole question. I think there is a clear consensus (approaching unanimity) that there should be such a meeting or meetings. Beyond that the consensus fades when it comes to the practical questions of who should be included or what the topic or theme should be. A multitude of possibilities was offered; unfortunately they are sometimes contradictory. Some suggested a general meeting for all science educators in church-related schools, K through graduate. That, however, I would classify as definitely a minority position. More support surfaced for inclusion of high school teachers. That too, in my opinion, represents a minority (though larger) opinion. The more commonly held view would include only higher education personnel, preferably with a strong representation from the liberal arts faculties.

As editor, I made an initial attempt to edit the discussions strictly along the lines of themes and topics, skipping from one session to another in the pursuit of logical connections. After doing this for two or three themes, I concluded that I was seriously disturbing the rhythm and the flavor that were so important in the discussions. Consequently, I fell back on the alternative of a “real-time” edit, following the sequence of the interventions as they in fact occurred. This is not, I admit, satisfying in a logical sense. As Dr. Bertram noted out at one point, many of the provocative statements were not pursued. This can be frustrating to a reader. Nonetheless, I decided to offer the sequence of interventions as they occurred in order better to represent the actual development of the Workshop. Like so many things in life, the Workshop was not an exercise in consecutive logic. To portray it as such is a fatal distortion. These Proceedings then represent a “judgment call” on my part for which I do not apologize.

ITEST is determined to continue to pursue efforts in this area. The Board of Directors, once they have had the opportunity to refresh their memories by reading these Proceedings, will develop a strategy thought to be consonant with the opinions expressed by the attendees at this Workshop. All of you will be informed of the plans that will be developed. This topic is so vast and so crucial that ITEST will have to reach out for help in pursuing it. Should any of you who are reading this book have any suggestions to make or any help to offer, we would be grateful to hear from you.

My own opinion, developed from almost twenty-five years of work in the faith/science apostolate is that this is the most critical issue in church-related education. It subsumes, in one way or another, all the issues that arise in other frameworks. I am not, of course, proposing that science/technology education dominate church-related education. I am proposing that it must be strengthened across the board and at all levels of church-related educational effort. Our students need it; our society and nation needs it; our world needs it; our church needs it. I’ve worked myself up here to the point where I’m almost ready to shout with Pope Urban II, when he called for the Crusades, “God wills it!”

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