

Devine, Luke, OSB, "Always Forward: Religious Studies at Benedictine Universities in the U.S."

"Always Forward: Religious Studies at Benedictine Universities in the U.S."

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Luke Devine, O.S.B.

Director: Margaret E. Guider, O.S.F.
Second Reader: Francis X. Clooney, S.J.

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The thesis that I propose is that religious studies from a phenomenological perspective could significantly benefit Benedictine universities of the United States. This is proposed within the context of the Catholic and Benedictine educational tradition. It is proposed in consideration of its benefits for students and faculty of Benedictine universities. It is proposed as a supplement, not as a replacement, to the teaching and study of theology at Benedictine universities.

Overview

The topics addressed in the major sections of the paper are: 1) the historical development and characteristics of religious studies in church-affiliated, public, and Catholic/ Benedictine institutions of higher education in the U.S., 2) the first part of an analysis of religious studies at Benedictine universities that considers how religious studies fits into the Benedictine educational tradition that stands between the *paideia* and *Wissenschaft* models of education, 3) the second part of this analysis that addresses three particular fears of religious studies in Catholic higher education- the fear of the phenomenological *epochē*, the fear of pluralistic relativism, and the fear of loss or compromise of Catholic and Benedictine identity.

The Limitations or Focus of My Paper

Because the topic of my thesis touches upon a variety of large topics upon which there already exists a lot of material, it is necessary for me to designate the limits of my topic. My focus will be on the Benedictine universities as a more specific category than Catholic universities. Thus, I will draw my examples from and address my proposals to Benedictine universities even if these will inevitably overlap, reflect and be relevant to other American Catholic universities.

I also limit this thesis to religious studies in Benedictine universities, and not on the study of theology. Certainly, to do some research on that topic is just as necessary; there is an entirely different set of issues on that topic. I only mention the teaching and study of theology tangentially and in order to define a contrast with religious studies. In this, I propose that an assessment of the past, present and future of religious studies at Benedictine universities deserves attention. Because I am focusing on religious studies in contrast to theology, I will not attempt to directly address the issue of the U.S. Catholic bishops' *mandatum* requirement stated in their application of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* to the U.S. Conversely, I do not directly address the flip side of this issue, academic freedom.

Certainly, I cannot list all of the related topics that my thesis will not cover, but here, I have mentioned a few themes that are often associated with my topic of concern that I have chosen to exclude in order to more completely address other areas.

I also conducted interviews with faculty at religion departments at selected Benedictine universities including the one at my home abbey, Saint Martin's University, Saint Vincent College, Saint John's University/ College of St. Benedict, and the College of St. Scholastica. The choices of school and faculty were determined by an interest in finding departments that were strong in religious studies and faculty that was focused in that area. I was able to interview five faculty members at Saint Martin's University in person. At other institutions, I e-mailed questions and received e-mailed responses, with one faculty member offering to be interviewed over the phone, which I accepted. These interviews ultimately gave me a general sense of the opinions currently at Benedictine universities; however, because my interview methodology was rather informal, I do not present the results here as sociological data in any systematic way. Brief quotations from these interviews may be interspersed throughout this thesis and, in most cases, I have chosen to leave the interviewee anonymous.

Terminology

My topic concerns a field distinct from theology called religious studies. Cady and Brown use these terms in a book that specifically addresses, and thus seeks to clearly define, the two fields in *Religious Studies, Theology and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain*. "Religious studies" has become the primary term used by most scholars in public universities to distinguish their field from theology: "Religious studies, sharply differentiated from theology, is construed as a social science that belongs within the university. Theology, on the other hand, is viewed as a form of spiritual instruction that belongs within an ecclesiastical or religious community concerned with personal formation. The presumption is that religious studies (or more accurately, perhaps, should exclusively be) an objective, empirical form of study, and theology a subjective, religious activity (Cady and Brown 2002: 2)." Rather than the terms "objective" or "subjective," I will use terms "confessional" or "non-confessional" to describe the approach of the teacher. Theology has always assumed a confessional approach to teaching, whereas religious studies has adamantly insisted on a non-confessional approach based on the *epoché* of the phenomenological method.

Closely related to religious studies are the terms the "study of religion" or the "study of religions." Either one of these terms has in some cases been used interchangeably with religious studies. When a pianist says that she is going to play "music," those who know her as a pianist can assume that by "music," she means that she will play piano. Within contexts where one religion is dominant, a teacher of "religion" at a Christian school could be assumed to mean that by "religion," he will be teaching on Christian topics. Also, the study of music can mean the study of music without pertaining to a particular instrument. In this way, the student of music learns notation, time signatures, harmonies, scales and other elements of music theory. Likewise, neither is religion synonymous here with Christianity or any specific religion. To study religion is to study elemental components of religion, such as myth, ritual, scripture, religious communities, and other religious phenomenon, without studying one specific religion comprehensively, but possibly drawing from examples from a variety of religions. Distinct from the term, "religious studies," I use the term, "the study of religion" to refer to the academic field that encompasses both religious studies and theology, two subfields that concentrate on the same general subject matter, but differ in taking either non-confessional or confessional approaches.

Since I am using the term, "religious studies," I will not use the term, "study of religions" although that is the phrase closest to religious studies. In the example above, the scholar of religion (a religious studies scholar) studies the phenomenon of ritual as it is found in various religions in comparative analysis and in this sense, he is not only a scholar of the core elements of religion (myth, ritual, and so on), but also a scholar of more than one religion in order to make the comparative analysis.

Sam Gill uses another method of distinction between the "academic study of religion" and the "religious study of religion" (1994: 966) corresponding to religious studies and theology respectively; however, I find these terms awkward to use and less accurate.

In my original proposal, I used the term "phenomenological approach to the study of religion" in part because I doubted whether the term "religious studies" was strong enough to be asserted as distinct from theology. This was of concern particularly because the potential audience of this thesis will be those in Benedictine institutions or in the broader Catholic academia where there could be the residual association of religious studies as synonymous with theology; certainly the "phenomenological approach to the study of religion" does not sound like theology. But the "phenomenological approach to the study of religions" is not synonymous with religious studies either. The former implies something more specific within religious studies. There are a variety of interdisciplinary approaches to religious studies such as the anthropological, sociological, historical and so on, and the phenomenological approach has come to be one of the more widely accepted approach. Ultimately, my topic of study had to do with the broader field of religious studies that includes within it phenomenological approaches to religion, rather than the specific phenomenological approach itself.

Finally, I will occasionally use the term, *Religionswissenschaft*, to refer to religious studies. This term was most commonly associated with the History of Religions School of religious studies of which Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) was a major figure, particularly in founding, along with Joachim Wach, the "Chicago school" of religious studies at the University of Chicago. I use *Religionswissenschaft* to accentuate religious studies roots within the *Wissenschaft* model of education, not specifically to the *Religionswissenschaft*/ History of Religions school.

Audience

I am particularly conscious of an immediate audience, that of my director and reader: one a Franciscan sister teaching at a Jesuit school of theology and the faculty member who often directs projects in the area of interreligious dialogue or other topics “off the beaten path,” and the other a Jesuit scholar in the Hindu-Catholic dialogue who has taught at a Catholic university and now teaches at one of the key institutions in the development of American religious studies. Optimistically, I keep in mind as potential future readers the members of my own Benedictine abbey and university’s religious studies department (as it is called), faculty, administrators and perhaps even students at other Benedictine and Catholic universities. More optimistically, I keep in mind as a potential audience religious studies scholars at public universities, the ones who are most significantly contributing to the field of religious studies.

This entails a delicate balance in tone as I attempt to appeal to a broad base by adopting a mode of expression that is not as piously assertive of a confessional, religious perspective that some might expect and yet not as dispassionately non-confessional as others might expect. This may be perceived as an attempt to be all things to all people; indeed, my hope is that there can be greater understanding and appreciation of both confessional and non-confessional approaches to the study of religion. But this is predicated on a mutual acknowledgement of the boundaries between religious studies and theology in a manner recalling Robert Frost’s observation, “Good fences make good neighbors.”

In the early stages of my project, while under the working title, “Phenomenological Study of Religion at Benedictine Universities,” on the topic of funding for universities, I stated to one of my interviewees that my paper is on “what ought to be over what is,” to which he responded, “That’s not very phenomenological!” I replied, “I’m not saying that my paper takes a phenomenological approach, even though it’s about phenomenology!” Even if I keep in mind a diverse audience, my proposal calls for more action on the part of Benedictine universities than for religious studies scholars elsewhere. And, by appealing to a diverse audience, I do not mean to conceal my own bias. Benedictine universities have been quite timid in the incorporation of authentic religious studies into their curricula and this is one area that I advocate the approach of the founder of the first Benedictine monastery in the U.S., Boniface Wimmer: “Our motto must be: Forward, always forward!” (Rippinger 1990: 37).

I. Religious Studies in American Universities

This first section will provide a sketch of religious studies in the universities- public, Protestant, Catholic and Benedictine-Catholic, of the U.S. This is the core topic of this thesis that will be analyzed in the following two sections. The standard journalistic questions regarding who, what, where, why, when, and how will be addressed here. Who started religious studies in the U.S.? What is religious studies specifically? Where is religious studies found? Why did religious studies come into Catholic and Benedictine universities? How and when did religious studies develop in American higher education?

Religious studies in the U.S. developed in public universities primarily through Protestant efforts to make a Christian presence in the public universities. These efforts were a necessary step in bringing the study of religion to these institutions at a time when it was non-existent due to the separation of church and state that disallowed the teaching of religion at publicly funded institutions. Of the three religious traditions regarded as the major religions of the U.S. at the time of Will Herberg’s *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* in 1960, it was the Protestants who were the primary religious force behind the establishment of religious studies in the U.S. One of the methods employed was “the Bible chair pattern” of Protestants (Hart 1992: 57). Around the turn of the 20th century, the Disciples of Christ established a pattern of founding churches in college towns and then offering their ministers to become Bible chairs at the local universities. This method led to their presence on the campuses of the Universities of Michigan, Virginia, Texas, Kansas, and Missouri. Their Bible classes were not in the curriculum, but could be taken for credit in some cases (57). The departments of religious studies that developed at state universities grew out of these efforts by Protestants to impact the institutions of higher education in the U.S., and so the curricula resembled those at Protestant divinity schools and seminaries with courses in the Old and New Testaments, church history, systematic theology, and Christian ethics. In order to justify these studies of religion at public universities, the role given to such programs was that of providing an understanding of Western civilization (Hart 1992: 63).

Two universities with church affiliations, Harvard and the University of Chicago, were also two of the most influential in the development of religious studies in the U.S. Robert Shepard’s *God’s People in the Ivory Tower* describes the roles of William Rainey Harper and Charles Eliot, presidents at the University of Chicago and Harvard, respectively, who provided academic structures for religious studies at their institutions (1991: 42). Subsequently, these universities defined the field of religious studies through the work of major scholars: Mircea Eliade at Chicago and Wilfred Cantwell Smith at Harvard.

The dominance of the Protestant influence is also evident from a glimpse of major figures in the development of religious studies. With a few exceptions such as Mircea Eliade (Romanian Eastern Orthodox Christian); Jean Danielou, Raimon Pannikar and Karl Rahner (Roman Catholic); and Morris Jastrow (Jewish), most of the scholars and theologians cited in Walter Capps' *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline* (1995) are of Protestant affiliation: W. Brede Kristensen, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Max Müller, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Cornelius Petrus Tiele, Ernst Troeltsch, John Hick, and Rudolf Otto. Capps also credits Paul Tillich as the one most responsible for the resurgence of the scholarly study of religion in postwar America: "In institution after institution, from Bloomington to Tallahassee to Missoula to Santa Barbara, many of the scholars and teachers who took the initiative in organizing religious studies were of a perceptible Tillichian mind. Most of them had been trained in Christian theology in seminaries and divinity schools" (289). In making this point, my intention is to give credit, not blame, to Protestants for developing a field of study that will ultimately help people of all religions understand religion and their own religions more deeply.

Factors outside of the academic sphere also impacted the establishment of religious studies programs in the U.S.: an increased interest, indeed a "fascination" with Asian cultures and religions from American troops returning from U.S. military involvement in Asia, from the Pacific theater of World War II, to the Korean and Vietnam Wars (Hart 1992: 69, and Wiebe 2000: 76). Diana Eck, professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies and director of The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, notes the increase in religious diversity in the U.S. that followed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. This opened the U.S. to immigration from Asia, from where immigration had been difficult since the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (2001: 6). Thus, the U.S. would become increasingly diverse ethnically and religiously and the religious diversity offered another reason for the need for religious studies programs.

I.A. American Academy of Religion and Religious Studies Watershed

It was during the decade of the 1960s, that religious studies was established in its present form. Yet within the broader historical context, this was relatively late, as D. G. Hart, adjunct professor of church history at Westminster Seminary California, asks, "...why was it only in the 1960s that the approach taken by scholars since the 18th century [in Europe] was finally incorporated?" (1992: 50). Hart attributes this delay to religious studies' ties to mainline Protestant churches (1992: 51). While it was the Protestant influence that established the field of religion in the liberal arts colleges and public universities in the first place, it was also that influence that prevented religious studies from being the field of study as it is known globally.

Thus, religious studies in colleges and universities broke from the Protestant model and became more religiously diverse in course offerings and more "scientific" in its approach. Scholars of religion thought that there would be greater respectability for the field of religion if it was in the field of the sciences rather than the humanities (Hart 1992: 50). Clyde Holbrook, author of *Religion, a Humanistic Field*, respected member of the National Association of Biblical Instructors (NABI) and a professor at Oberlin College lobbied for the NABI to change its name to the American Academy of Religion in order to open itself to become more pluralistic. While this had the intended effects of increased respectability, it also had the effect that, "[a]s the AAR grew in stature, religion scholars increasingly sought to establish their field upon empirical and objective grounds" (Hart 1992: 64). Part of being scientific in the study of religion meant being less partial, less concerned with the student's personal faith and moral development since this was considered the realm of the humanities (Hart 1992: 65). But religious studies has never made a complete shift into the science; it remains a discipline within humanities.

The Protestant influence on the study of religion in liberal arts colleges and public universities had a major decline after a shift in the approach of the American Academy of Religion started to define the course that religious studies would take, but the Protestant presence would not disappear entirely (Hart 1992: 51). The title of Part III of Hart's *The University Gets Religion* shows the significance and impact of this institution, "The Age of the American Academy of Religion, 1965- Present." The questioning of the values of American and Western civilization and its Protestant associations manifested in protests against the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement had the impact in universities of challenging of the Protestant-influenced study of religion (Hart 1992: 70). According to Hart, "...the formation of the American Academy of Religion stemmed from the growing awareness that the older Protestant cultural consensus, despite its claims of tolerance and objectivity, was ill-prepared to accommodate the cultural diversity of American society" (1992: 70).

This serves to explain the roots and development of religious studies in the U.S., but it also presents a foreboding outlook since the zealous Protestants who had labored to make a Christian presence in the public universities

ultimately witnessed the shift away from a Christian presence to a "scientific" and "neutral" religious presence. Surely, this is an unappealing path for Catholic educators to follow after witnessing the demise of Protestant identity in many of their own institutions and in the presences they had established at public institutions. On this issue, George Marsden is helpful; he chronicles the decline of Protestant identity in American higher education in *The Soul of the American University*, tellingly subtitled, *From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*. In an article, "What Can Catholic Universities Learn from Protestant Examples?," he offers some optimism in his assessment of the differences between Catholic and Protestant universities, such as their stronger ecclesiastical connections with a religious order or diocese, that may prevent Catholic universities from secularizing as the Protestant universities have. It is a concern to be aware of, yet it should not become a crippling fear that prevents academic progress within the field of religion so highly valued by all Christian universities.

I.B. Religious Studies at Catholic and Benedictine Universities

If the 1960s were a watershed decade for the academic study of religion, it was also a watershed for the Catholic Church, and consequently for American Catholic higher education. Most notably, the Second Vatican Council held in four sessions between 1962 and 1965 marks a major shift in the approach that the Catholic Church would take in engaging with the modern world, a transition from a stance of suspicion and condemnation to one of dialogue, participation, and solidarity. *Aggiornamento* ("bringing up to date") and reading the "signs of the times," were key phrases that expressed an attitude of acknowledgement of the good and true in areas that had been viewed with suspicion such as secularism, other Christian churches, and other religions. *Nostra Aetate, The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, of 1965 was a breakthrough in its unprecedented level of appreciation for religions other than Christianity: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men (#2)." The document's purpose is more of a denunciation of discrimination and persecution of other religions than an expression of a theology of religions. Yet, by providing an officially sanctioned ecclesial document that provided a much more optimistic view of other religions than in previous church documents, it still had the effect of inaugurating a new era of interest for other religions among Catholics, some of which inevitably manifested in the universities.

For American Catholic higher education, the changes inspired by the council manifested in interrelated trends toward professionalization, laicization, and secularization. These topics will be treated only very briefly here since they have been covered in greater detail in numerous volumes elsewhere. *Independence and a New Partnership in Catholic Higher Education*, by Alice Gallin, O.S.U., documents the process of laicization at seven Catholic universities: College of New Rochelle, Saint Louis University, University of Notre Dame, Mundelein College, University of Portland, Saint Michael's College, and Fordham University. *Adapting to America: Catholics, Jesuits and Higher Ed. in 20th Century*, by William Leahy, S.J., president of Boston College, also includes a section on the rise of laity in American Catholic higher education.

One of the historic events in the process was the meeting of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) in Land O' Lakes, Wisconsin in 1967 that produced the document, "The Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University" (Gallin 2000: 56). One of the most significant implications was the founding of boards of trustees that would include lay members on equal status to religious members. Control of the universities shifted from the sponsoring religious communities to the trustees. "Thus they became church-related rather than canonically Catholic" (Rausch 2006: 67-68). The lay influence and presence in the Catholic universities was not limited to the boards, but increasingly to the faculties and staffs.

Two other interrelated trends moved toward increasing professionalization and secularization. Some of the implications of secularization are a change in student life, now not much different than at public universities (Rausch, 2006: 68) and the reduction in the number of credits required in religion classes as part of the core curriculum. Standard descriptions of this period in American Catholic higher education inevitably use the cliché that James Burtchaell, C.S.C, apparently disapproves of in *The Dying of the Light*, "For several years now Catholics had been berating themselves for maintaining a 'ghetto': the penitential term is as ubiquitous in the educational literature as mosquitoes at a June picnic" (1998: 603).

Thus, the shifts in various aspects of the Catholic universities could not be attributed solely to the way that Catholics were accommodating themselves to the mainstream of American life, but also to the intentional direction discerned by the church itself. The Second Vatican Council, the trends that followed it, and the shift in the study of religion in the wider American academic community in various ways influenced the religion departments at Catholic universities. Most departments never relinquished courses in theology or teaching from a confessional perspective, but many supplemented their programs with courses in religious studies along the lines of the AAR's approach.

In the new ecumenical climate, many departments changed their names from the typical "theology" moniker to "religious studies." Thomas Rausch, S.J., chronicles the name changes at his own institution, Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. In 1962, it changed from Department of Religion to Theology; in 1972, it was renamed as the Department of Religious Studies; and in 1980, it was renamed to Theology; and later a fourth change called it the Department of Theological Studies (Rausch 2006: 72).

In some cases, name changes from "theology" to "religious studies" did not go below the surface as the approach often remained theological and confessional. This was partly to the theological training of the teachers of religion departments, partly because of an inherent suspicion of non-confessional religious studies, but also as an effort to claim greater academic freedom as professors of confessional theology. The process of renaming from "theology" to "religious studies" offered sanctuary from ecclesiastical oversight that is required for programs that claim the label of "theology" even if "in some instances they did not change what they were doing but simply had a new name for it" (Gallin 2000: 107).

Rausch observes the diversity of courses offered in one religion department while on sabbatical at "one of the more prestigious Jesuit universities. Among the plethora of courses on world religions, Asian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, or Islamic religion, feminist and womanist theology, race, gender, and religion, the Church and homosexuality, ritual, comparative mythologies, and psychology and religion was one course on Catholicism and one on the New Testament. There was a God course but nothing on Christology, Church, or sacrament" (Rausch 2006: 75). In this case, Rausch describes a highly diverse curriculum, one that may indeed be too diverse for a Catholic institution that must maintain a strong Catholic theological presence in its religion department. This case exemplifies a trend into one extreme, yet it also represents a rather small minority of Catholic institutions that have gone to this level of extremity. If religious studies are of value, particularly as a supplement to Catholic theology, the other extreme of minimal representation of religious diversity should also be avoided.

I.C. Religious Studies at Benedictine Universities

The distinct style of Benedictine monasticism that developed in the U.S. and engaged in an apostolate of higher education unprecedented in Benedictine history (outside of the seminary form) must be attributed to the vision of Boniface Wimmer, who founded what became the American-Cassinese Congregation of the Order of St. Benedict. He was a monk of the Abbey of St. Michael in Metten, in the Bavarian region where he lived under the vow of stability for sixteen years and where he was first nicknamed "Projektentmacher" for his numerous projects. He became aware of the trend during the 1830s of emigration of Germans to the United States, which had reached about one hundred thousand per year, and he felt a desire to go to America as a "missionary" to serve the needs of German Catholic immigrants in America (Oetgen 2000: 49-53).

He showed incredible tenacity in his desire to accomplish the founding of a monastery in the United States, going as far as to write in a letter to his abbot, "...if I cannot work [in America] [Rippinger's insertion] as a Benedictine, I will to in another habit" (1990: 22). In 1846, Wimmer, along with eighteen prospective candidates, fourteen lay brothers, and four aspirants to the priesthood began a six-week voyage across the Atlantic (Rippinger 1990: 22). Upon arrival, Wimmer spearheaded a highly active style of monasticism that included educational institutions that developed into seminaries and universities.

Wimmer had a very practical outlook that took into consideration the reality of the situation in the New World and their need for financial income. Most of his monks trained for the priesthood in order to work in parishes to earn money for the abbey. His foundation of St. Vincent Abbey in Pennsylvania upon his arrival in 1846 was only the first step in his plan as he began to found numerous daughter houses- St. John's Abbey in Minnesota, St. Mary's Priory in New

Jersey, St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas, and also to Kentucky, Texas, Ontario, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina and Illinois (Rippinger 1990: 37). Not all of these foundations have survived, but others have, and founded monasteries of their own.

This family of monasteries became the American-Cassinense Congregation that is, along with the Swiss-American Congregation, one of the two major male Benedictine congregations in the U.S. Usually sharing the patronal name of their sponsoring abbey, the ten colleges and universities that are sponsored by American-Cassinense monasteries are Saint Leo University (Florida), Benedictine University (affiliated with St. Procopious Abbey, Illinois), Benedictine College (affiliated with St. Benedict's Abbey, Kansas), St. John's University (Minnesota), Saint Anselm College (New Hampshire), Belmont Abbey College (North Carolina), St. Gregory's University (Oklahoma), St. Vincent College (Pennsylvania), and Saint Martin's Abbey (Washington) and St. Peter's College (Saskatchewan, Canada). Benedictine sisters' monasteries sponsor four institutions of higher education: College of St. Benedict (St. Joseph, Minnesota), the College of St. Scholastica (Duluth, Minnesota), the University of Mary (North Dakota), and Mount Marty College (South Dakota). These are the universities to which this paper is proposed and from which examples are drawn.

A few of the abbeys in the American-Cassinense Congregation have also operated seminaries, of which only a few continue today. Meanwhile, the Swiss-American Congregation founded several successful seminaries that receive seminarians from various dioceses and religious orders- St. Meinrad (Indiana), Conception (Missouri), and Mt. Angel (Oregon). But seminaries have the different mission and focus of providing training and formation for priesthood that the universities do not have; therefore, the place of religious studies in seminaries is an entirely different subject not addressed here.

None of the Benedictine universities' departments of religion are close to the level of diversity that Rausch has described above at the Jesuit institution. That is one extreme in religious diversity that compromises the Catholic theological character of a department. Benedictine universities are closer to the opposite extreme of weak representation in religious diversity. Of course, theology at Catholic universities is normative, while religious studies is not; therefore, Catholic universities will typically have less courses in religious studies, the default will be theology. This should be expected of Catholic universities. The question is whether there is an intention to make a place for religious studies at Catholic universities as a supplement to theology. The evidence shows that religious studies representation at Benedictine universities is mostly minimal. Further, in cases where departments are named as religious studies, it is questionable whether the course offerings and methodology are truly fitting with the label of religious studies.

On the university's website, the department at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas had until recently referred to itself in different places as both theology and religious studies. Their method, according to their website is confessional and theological, "Faithful to the Christian message as it has come to us through the Church, our mission is to introduce students to Catholic theology as an exercise in 'faith seeking understanding.'" This past academic year, they changed their department's name from "Religious Studies" to "Theology." Their new mission statement quotes from *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II's encyclical concerning Catholic higher education: "Catholic theology, taught in a manner faithful to Scripture, Tradition, and the Church's Magisterium, provides an awareness of the Gospel principles which will enrich the meaning of human life and give it a new dignity. (#20)." Their new mission statement also uses the previous one and adds material that had been listed separately as five educational goals: "Faithful to the Christian message as it has come to us through the Church, our mission is to introduce students to Catholic theology as an exercise in 'faith seeking understanding.' Mindful of its ethical obligations to the Church and to the world, the Department also seeks to foster ecumenical awareness and concern for social justice and to prepare student majors for teaching, parish work, youth ministry, and graduate studies." Of interest to the topic at hand is that the previous third goal to "pursue ecumenical theology by noting relationships among Christian denominations and between Christianity and the non-Christian living world religions" is only incorporated into the new mission statement in modified form mentioning "ecumenical awareness" rather than "ecumenical theology" and omitting the mention of non-Christian living world religions. This example highlights the difficulty in implementing religious studies. As religious studies becomes a term ever more sharply distinguished from theology among scholars such as Wiebe and McCutcheon, Catholic universities may be realizing that their religious studies components do not meet such strictly phenomenological approaches. In these cases, Catholic universities that had named their departments as religious studies are changing back to theology to more accurately reflect their confessional approach.

The mission statements of the religion departments at St. Leo University and Saint Martin's University are very secularized, yet the course offerings are clearly of Catholic Christian emphasis. St. Leo University identifies its department as one of "Religion" and its stated mission and understanding of religion contained therein adequately

reflect this, "The major in religion builds upon a liberal education and emphasizes the dignity of the human person and the importance of informed and sustained personal reflection on religious and ethical issues. Religion itself is a field of fields which encompasses philosophical, moral, literary, historical, and psychological approaches to its subject matter." Saint Martin's University also has a Religious Studies Department with a statement of purpose that is accurately religious studies to the extent that it does not include a theological purpose: "The Judeo-Christian heritage is emphasized, yet we foster respect for and understanding of other religious traditions in our approach to teaching. Religious studies faculty members focus on scripture, sacramentality and the moral dimension in human behavior. We are committed to an ecumenical and interfaith spirit." These statements adequately reflect the names of their departments as "religion" and "religious studies" departments; they could be approved of religion departments at public universities. However, this is problematic for Catholic universities which should have a Catholic theological component to their religion departments. In fact, the study of religion at Saint Martin's is not as non-confessional as the name of the department implies. There, one comparative religion course is the extent of religious diversity offered outside of Christianity. And, if the department were to be transplanted to a public university, scholars such as Donald Wiebe and Russell McCutcheon, who advocate a strict distinction between non-confessional religious studies and confessional theology, would not be amused. From a Catholic perspective, this serves as a backhanded compliment regarding the extent that the department teaches confessionally. Saint Martin's is a case of a department that has both confessional theology and non-confessional religious studies even if the confessional Catholic theological aspect is not mentioned in the name of the department or its mission statement.

Another measure of the degree to which religion departments have incorporated the methods and substance of religious studies is in the religious diversity of the courses offered. Phenomenological religious studies demands more representation of a variety of religious traditions than can be presented in one or two world religion or comparative religion courses. Most Benedictine universities now have some courses on Judaism, inspired by the overlap in scholarship between Christians and Jews in the area of Biblical studies. Of the Benedictine universities, St. Vincent College, in their Department of Theology, offers the most impressive array of courses outside of the Christian tradition: Buddhism, Life and Religious Thought of the Dalai Lama, Religion and Reason in Ancient India, Hinduism, American Indigenous Religions, Myth and Ritual in Religion and interdisciplinary courses which typically examine a range of religious traditions, Anthropology of Religion and Psychology of Religion.

Thus, religious studies has made its presence at public universities across the U.S. through the gradual efforts of Protestants to introduce a Christian-based curriculum justified by its importance to all citizens. A major shift in direction to a broader, supposedly scientific religious studies curriculum occurred in the 1960s, marked by the shift in mission of the AAR. Two church-affiliated divinity schools, at Harvard and the University of Chicago, also broke new ground in establishing religious studies in the U.S. At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church underwent its own transitions following the Second Vatican Council. Not long afterwards, religious studies were implemented in Catholic, including Benedictine, universities. However, this phenomenon at Benedictine universities has been mostly minimal and somewhat imprecise regarding the understanding of religious studies as it is understood by the mainstream of the field. The next section will be a description of religious studies to provide a clearer picture of the characteristics of the field in question.

I.D. Characteristics of Religious Studies

Religious studies and theology overlap in various ways, including subject matter, although religious studies will include a broader range of religions including those without theologies per se. One of the ways that the two fields differ is in methodology, particularly regarding the insider/ outsider problem. Russell McCutcheon, professor and chair of the department of religion at the University of Alabama and prolific author of books on religious studies methodology, begins to explain the insider/ outsider problem by quoting Atticus Finch, the hero of Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" (Lee as cited in McCutcheon 1999: 1). Regarding religious studies, the insider/ outsider problem concerns the relationship between a scholar's personal religious convictions and their ability to effectively study religion from a perspective described in the legal language above as neutral. The insider/ outsider problem addresses the issues of 1) a religious practitioner's ability to bracket herself in the context of scholarship in order to analyze religious phenomenon without the biases that might arise from the perspective of her religion and 2) a scholar's capacity to understand religious phenomenon of religious traditions to which he is not a practitioner.

The insider/ outsider problem derives from the concept of the *epoché* that comes to religious studies from Edmund Husserl's philosophical phenomenology. The field of religious studies has drawn from other disciplines, particularly the social sciences and from philosophy, particularly the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. The Dutch scholars of the first half of the twentieth century- Chantepie de la Saussaye, Tiele, Kristensen, culminating in van der Leeuw-

comprise “what Jacques Waardenburg has called ‘classical religious phenomenology’” (Waardenburg as cited in Ryba 2006: 105). One of the major and definitive contributions of phenomenology to religious studies is Husserl’s concept of the *epochē*, (“suspension” [of judgment] or “bracketing”) (Ryba 2006: 103), coming from the Greek verb, *epechō* meaning “I hold back” (Sharpe 1975: 224). In this way, it is intended to refrain from value-judgments to be present to the phenomenon of observation.

In the U.S., with its separation of church and state, the distinction between religious studies and theology based on the phenomenological *epochē* has had significant implications over the question of the study of religion at public, and even Protestant and Catholic, universities. As shown above, the study of religion had little to no presence at public universities until Protestants were able to establish courses using the proposal to teach courses in the Bible or church history as a formative component of western civilization. When eventually the study of religion became more common at public universities, the issue emerged concerning how confessional or non-confessional these courses were. And, in the Protestant and Catholic universities, these questions arose not as a challenge to the place of the study of religion at church-affiliated institutions, but in regard to these institutions receiving federal funds in the form of student financial aid. Although there has yet to be a court case dealing directly with religious studies in public institutions of higher education, there have been a number of U.S. Supreme Court decisions in which it has been stated, “public colleges and universities are free to give courses about religion that are not designated for indoctrination purposes” (Wiebe 1999: 106).

Robert Michaelson describes an interaction between the courts and classrooms that mutually influenced each other, “A look at the record will disclose, then, that court opinions may have considerable bearing on our subject. It will also disclose that the scholarly study of religion has had some effect upon court deliberations” (1977: 292). In cases concerning religion in universities, scholars of religion were called upon to advise lawyers on the methodological distinctions between the confessional and non-confessional approaches to religion. With this closer and more nuanced insight, the court would in turn influence religious studies through case decisions. The position concerning the study of religion in colleges and universities that are supported in some way from tax monies was expressed in the U.S. Supreme Court’s “doctrine on religion and the state” which involves a threefold test of constitutionality: There must be: 1) a clear “secular purpose”; 2) a “direct and immediate” (formerly “primary”) “effect” of neither advancing nor inhibiting religion (“neutrality”); and 3) avoidance of undue “entanglement” of religion and government (291).

For Wiebe, the separation of church and religious studies is more than an academic issue since it is also a legal issue concerning the study of religion in public universities. The *epochē* is at the heart of the distinction between a confessional, “theological” approach and a non-confessional approach to religion, recognized legally as “neutral.” It is the distinction that Gill, Hart, Wiebe, McCutcheon and others seek to establish between theology and religious studies so that religious studies may proceed methodologically in the manner described in the profusion of self-defining articles and acknowledged by the legal system.

I.E. *Religionswissenschaft* and *Wissenschaft*

Another characteristic of religious studies is its attempt at a scientific approach to religion. In the end, even after the shifts within the AAR in the 1960s, the study of religion never became fully scientific, even as a social science. But at the roots at the origins of religious studies, the attempt was to approach the study of religion scientifically, in accord with the newly emerging *Wissenschaft* model of education. The *Wissenschaft* type began with the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810 as a new type of school, the research-oriented university. It was founded as part of a reform of the Prussian educational system after Napoleon’s defeat of Prussia and was meant to incorporate educational ideals drawn from Enlightenment principles (Kelsey 1993: 12). The ultimate goal of this kind of university was to do research and to teach students how to do research in contrast to secondary schools that teach students knowledge that is “well-established and no longer problematical.” Research universities would be open to inquiry concerning its subject matter. These universities only gave out doctorate degrees (13).

David Kelsey of Yale University Divinity School describes *Wissenschaft* as more than its misleading translation into English as “science” infers, but as an orderly, disciplined and critical inquiry that defines a research university as such (14). It was orderly in its methodological attempt to place its subject matter into context with the broadest range of related subjects. It was disciplined in its self-consciousness concerning its own methods so that knowledge was not assumed at face value until the methods of achieving that knowledge were rigorously and repeatedly tested. It was critical in its refusal to make assumptions upon authoritatively established truths; all truths were subject to question and authorities that claimed absolute truths were questioned as well (14).

Religious studies has become the most agreed-upon name for the non-confessional study of religion that had in fact incorporated *Wissenschaft* into its original name, *Religionswissenschaft*. This was the term used in 1867 by Max Muller, translator of The Sacred Books of the East series and often-acknowledged founder of the field of religious studies. The phrase is often translated as the “science of religion” (Kitagawa 1959: 17), but Kelsey has shown that translating *Wissenschaft* itself as “science” is misleading. Kelsey has clarified that *Wissenschaft* is disciplined, orderly, and critical and, even if science has these qualities, they are still not necessarily the same. This may have led to suspicion of *Religionswissenschaft* among religious practitioners who rightly questioned how the study of religion could be made scientific. Even if it could be made scientific, it is highly questionable whether that is the best way for religion to be studied. But if the study of religion cannot nor should it be made scientific, it can indeed be made orderly, disciplined and critical to great benefit.

II. Religious Studies within Benedictine Educational Tradition

The Benedictine educational tradition begins with a tension between the academic and spiritual lives. This is a tension that has been a part of Christian educational history at least from the time of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ... For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom...” (NRSV, 1:20-25). This idea was famously expressed by Tertullian around the turn of the second century, “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” (*De praescriptione haereticorum*). Here, Jerusalem represents an immediate and experiential faith in God found in a life of devoted worship. Tertullian’s statement implies that the life of faith represented by Jerusalem has no need of the Greek academia represented by Athens with its established methods of inquiry, reason, and logic. Tertullian raised the question that has been answered over the centuries that, although that relationship between faithful Jerusalem and reasonable Athens has its own problematic areas, Athens and Jerusalem indeed have a lot to do with each other in Christian educational history.

Benedict of Nursia exemplified in his own life the tension between the world of academia and his vision for Christian monasticism. It is ironic but apparently accurate to describe Benedict as a drop-out. In *The Life of St. Benedict*, attributed to Pope Gregory as Book II of his Dialogues, Benedict is described as a young man who left school in Rome to live a life away from society and in devotion to God. In fact, the author suggests that the scholarly life might lead the faithful away from religious devotion since Benedict saw, “many by reason of such learning fall to dissolute and lewd life.” Therefore, Benedict, “drew back his foot, which he had as it were now set forth into the world, lest, entering too far in acquaintance with it, he likewise might have fallen into that dangerous and godless gulf” (www.osb.org). The author continues to portray Benedict as a renunciant of worldly esteem and academic learning, “Therefore, giving over his book, and forsaking his father’s house and wealth, with a resolute mind only to serve God, he sought for some place, where he might attain to the desire of his holy purpose. In this way he departed, instructed with learned ignorance, and furnished with unlearned wisdom.” The critical attitude toward academia cannot be dismissed as merely typical of the hyperbolically pious writings of the time; there remains in Benedict a quest beyond the academic world that has continued to define the Benedictine educational approach throughout its history.

And, while Benedict’s flight from academia cannot be dismissed, neither can or should it be taken to extremes of anti-intellectualism. Commentators on the text attributed to Benedict himself, the *Rule for Monasteries*, a 73 chapter manual for monastic observance, find evidence of his expectations for both manual labor and education. Chapter 48 of the *Rule* prescribes manual labor since, “Idleness is the enemy of the soul” (67). Jean Leclercq lists references in the *Rule for Monasteries* that demonstrate his expectation that monks should be educated in a variety of areas. According to the *Rule*, the abbot and cellarer are to keep accounts of what is expended and received, monks must ask permission to write letters, monks receive writing equipment often translated as a “stylus,” and there is public reading during meals (Leclercq 1982: 17- 18). Certainly Benedict expected the monks to be literate since the monastic structure he established centered around the communal gathering to recite the Psalms and other prayers. He also recommends the reading of the Scriptures, the Desert Fathers, John Cassian, and St. Basil, all of which necessitated a level of literacy well beyond that of most people in Italy at the turn of the 6th century. Anna Falkenberg’s doctoral dissertation at the University of Texas, “Voices from the Monastery: Benedictines in Higher Education Reflect on the Rule of St. Benedict” provides a detailed, systematic survey of opinions on the Rule of St. Benedict as a guide for Benedictine higher education. Hilary Thimmesh, OSB, of Saint John’s Abbey and University, concludes that “Benedict was neither unlearned nor opposed to learning for his followers in those studies that could enrich their vocation.”

Nevertheless, throughout history, the tension that Leclercq describes as, “... on the one hand, the study of letters, on the other, the exclusive search for God, the love of the eternal life and the consequent detachment from all else, including the study of letters” (1982: 29), has never been easily resolved. Like Benedict, Caesarius of Arles

renounced the opportunity given him to study secular subjects with the famous Julian Pomerius (Leclercq 1982: 14-15); on the other hand, Cassiodorus was a contemporary of Benedict's who placed greater emphasis on scholarship than manual labor.

The Abbey of Cluny was a pioneering institution in its approach to monasticism. In 910, William the Duke of Aquitaine and his wife, Ingelborga donated the town and manor of Cluny for a new monastery. The donation stipulated that the monks should be free to retain their possessions (without alienation) and to elect their own abbot without interference from the monarch. Thus, Cluny had an unprecedented level of independence which, in addition to profound advances in liturgy, included a dedication to pagan learning. "Whereas Saint Benedict had sought to segregate his monks from society, the Clunaics tried to integrate monasticism and society" (Bainton 1992: 157). But, the state of monasticism by the 11th century exemplified by Cluny sparked a monastic reform movement with the rise of new orders that followed a more strict interpretation of Benedict's *Rule for Monasteries*. The Clunaic approach was seen as making concessions for scholarship, for extravagance in liturgy, and ultimately to "an excessive involvement with the world" (Knowles 1969: 69). In a manner reflected in the austere beauty of their architecture, the Cistercians, Carthusians, and Camaldolese, in various ways and degrees, sought a return to manual labor and a simplicity of life by fleeing the educational institutions and returning to the fields (Bainton 1992: 178).

II.A. Benedictine Paideia

Thus, Benedictine education oscillated between its involvement with the world and its retreat from the world. When it has integrated these polarities, its educational approach was one that used the intellectual life as a means of forming students in Christian discipleship. This is the *paideia* (παιδεία, the root of "pedagogy") approach to education. *Paideia* was a term that was used by Plato to describe a method of education that was more than the imparting of information or knowledge, but included the formation of character. This method was applied through more than studying texts and ideas, but involved the ascesis of disciplining the whole body through athletics and music. *Paideia* was not simply transmitting information and knowledge to the student, but required the contemplation of the student upon what had been taught and to assimilate it. It also shifted from an emphasis on formation for the public good to the private realm, "from capacitating persons for public and political action to preparing them for inward and religious transformation" (Kelsey: 10).

Crediting Werner Jaeger's three-volume work, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, William Cahoy, Dean of the School of Theology at St. John's University/ College of St. Benedict in Collegeville, Minnesota summarizes the history of *paideia* starting with its roots in the Greek Sophists and Plato in an address to presidents and superiors of Benedictine universities. From the catechetical school of Alexandria, in the educational methods of the desert abbas and ammas, and in Benedict's own description and implementation of the monastery as a "school for the Lord's service," the *paideia* method fit in with the Christian pedagogical methods of developing both the intellect and the person ("The Catholic Intellectual Tradition").

One notable example of the *paideia* model is monastic formation itself. Those in formation to Benedictine monastic life must go through a novitiate period that is no less than the canonically-required one-year period. During this time, the novice studies a variety of monastic topics such as the Psalms, the Rule of St. Benedict, Benedictine history and spirituality. The ultimate purpose of this educational period is to incorporate the Benedictine way of life into one's being, to be formed as a monk. In this way, it may be comparable to an educational model in the broader Catholic Church, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults programs, wherein those preparing for baptism or confirmation as sacramental initiations into the Catholic Church study church teachings in order to be formed as faithful members of the Church. This is not education for jobs or careers, this is education for ways of life.

A document from the archives of Saint Martin's Abbey under files for the university presents a glimpse of a purely *paideia* style of religious instruction. Unfortunately, the document is undated, but its style most likely dates it to before the Second Vatican Council/ Land O'Lakes era. Its heading is merely, "Department of Religious Instruction." It is addressed specifically to the Catholic students, "All Catholic students matriculating at St. Martin's will kindly answer (in writing) the following questions and submit their answers to the Rev. Chaplain." It asks the student questions concerning the students' previous experience (of formation) within the Catholic Church: "Did you attend Catholic School? If so, how long? How many periods per week of Catechism did you have during that time? ... What points of your religion are not clear to you? ...

Have you attended conferences for youths and young men? What subjects were treated in these conferences? Did you in these conferences, or in any other instructions exclusively for young men, receive a full and satisfactory

explanation of what is sin and what is not sin in regard to the sixth commandment in so far as it applies to the unmarried? ...

How long is it since you last received the Sacraments? ...

Do you usually spend some time after Mass in church when you have received Holy Communion? ...

Are both your parents Catholics? If not, who is, and who is not?

Have you read any lives of Saints? If so, what lives did you read? Have you read any other books on your religion? If so, name some of those you can remember." This represents about half of a total of 38 questions asked on the sheet. It provides a flavor of an approach to religious education that is certainly from a confessional perspective and, from the personal nature of the questions asked, certainly according to a *paideia* model of faith and character formation. Presumably, this hand-out is given at the beginning of a course of religious instruction, it would be fascinating to have further archival documentation from this course in order to see how the course proceeded from this starting point.

Cahoy's presentation refers to the *paideia* type as an expression of the Benedictine wisdom tradition, a tool that may be used in instilling an understanding of the Benedictine charism to newly hired employees. It is important to recognize the value of *paideia* as an essential aspect of the Catholic and Benedictine educational approach. It has been easier to see how courses in areas such as the humanities- theology, philosophy, literature, theater, and music is not merely education for a career, but education for life, development of character. Now that Benedictine universities also have various departments in the sciences, engineering, business, and, interestingly, motorcar race management (at Belmont College in North Carolina), the *paideia* aspect of Benedictine education may continue to be emphasized in order to provide perspective in these potentially more information and career-oriented fields. This is the question that William Graham, a diocesan priest teaching at the College of St. Scholastica, raises when he asks whether a biology graduate from a Catholic university should know what the Church teaches about cloning or artificial insemination, for the sake of argument, even "whether or not she or he subscribes to or embraces the teaching?" (Graham: 1). Here is one way that the Benedictine educational tradition as an integration within *paideia*, focused as it has always been on the development of students not merely to perform jobs, but also to reflectively contemplate life's deepest questions can influence fields of study beyond the humanities. In these ways, the *paideia* model of education is central and indispensable to the Benedictine educational mission.

II.B. Benedictine *Wissenschaft*

Clearly, Benedictine education has utilized the *paideia* model of education that paralleled and intertwined with its own history. The *paideia* model is close if not precisely what Benedict had in mind for a monastery as a school of the Lord's service; here, it is important to note that Benedict did indeed write a rule for monasteries, not for universities, although certainly (as Falkenberg has shown), there are many parallels. If indeed the Benedictine educational tradition is so firmly grounded in the *paideia* model, how does religious studies, as described above as *Religionswissenschaft*, a *Wissenschaft*-oriented approach to the study of religion, fit in to this Benedictine educational vision?

In Hilary Thimmesch's talk on "Benedictine Education- American Style," he does not mention *Wissenschaft* specifically, but he mentions ways that practical-technical and secular subjects fit in with the Benedictine educational tradition. Underlying his presentation, Thimmesch calls for greater appreciation for the *Wissenschaft*-influence in higher education and incorporation of *Wissenschaft* within the Benedictine educational vision. In this, he presents a counterpoint to Cahoy's statements emphasizing *paideia*. This is not to pit the two as opponents of each other as representatives of irreconcilable position. It is evident that both Cahoy and Thimmesch have an appreciation for both the *paideia* and *Wissenschaft* models and have simply chosen to emphasize one aspect over another in their respective presentations. Thimmesch's presentation is useful for putting the *paideia* type, as essential as it is, into a balanced historical perspective.

In reference to the Benedictine educational tradition, Thimmesch provides reminders that most Benedictine educational institutions previous to their founding in the U.S. were not universities. This is an important qualification to keep in mind. In a manner that is typical of the heroic founding stories of many Catholic colleges in the pioneer days, Colman Barry, OSB, describes the founding of St. John's in Minnesota, "With the charter in hand, and little else materially, Father Cornelius set about organizing a Benedictine school in Minnesota. Spiritually and intellectually, however, the community was rich. For there were thirteen centuries of educational tradition to draw upon, and such examples to follow as Reichenau, Jarrow, York, St. Denis, Fulda, Corbie, Bec, and St. Gall" (1980: 56). Thimmesch qualifies this by pointing out, "The Benedictine colleges and seminaries that began to appear in the United States in

the 19th century... had an ancient tradition of monastic learning and pedagogy to draw on but not a university tradition" (Part 2). This approach was not at the university level, but was limited to the in-house formation of their monks or primary level education. Thimmesh notes that there was no Benedictine theological school in Europe until the founding of Collegio Sant' Anselmo in Rome in 1687. Most Benedictine educational endeavors prior to the 19th century were "limited to schools for boys whose teachers did not need to be scholars or learned authorities..." (Thimmesh, Part 2).

Most of the Benedictine universities in the U.S. were founded in the second half of the nineteenth century, "but in those halcyon days before accreditation and state university systems a college was what its founders claimed it to be" (Thimmesh, Part 2). There needed to be some level of education as the monasteries spread out across the country in order to train their candidates through the various stages of formation in monastic life, particularly the canonical one-year novitiate. Most monasteries would also prepare monks for the priesthood "at home." The Benedictine universities can be traced to the time when "the lines between high school and college, college and seminary were somewhat blurred, as was the case, incidentally, with some of the Jesuit schools founded in that era in response to the needs of a rapidly growing Catholic population" (Thimmesh, Part 2). Over time, most monasteries that had high schools, usually all-male boarding schools, closed them in favor of the universities.

Within the schools themselves, the majority of the teachers were monks, who, certainly by twenty-first century standards, stretched the limits of their qualifications. Often, they had "little or no professional preparation to prepare them for the classroom" (Rippinger 1990: 118). Also, heroically but to the detriment of quality, they stretched the limits of human possibility; in the 1888-89 school year, one Fr. Urban Fischer, of Mount Angel in Oregon, was assigned to teach philosophy, Hebrew, Greek, astronomy, chemistry, botany, geology, physics, geography, typing and shorthand (1990: 119-120).

Certainly, some Benedictine educators noticed and lamented the state of affairs, such as Fr. Leo Huebescher who wrote in the 1880s, "Our colleges, I am sorry to say, do not compare favorably with the Jesuits' because they are much smaller. Either we have forgotten how to educate or we have not enough of worldly spirit in our schools to have them patronized by the grandées" (as cited in Rippinger 1990: 123). Beyond appealing to "grandées," Benedictine universities needed to address accreditation. Abbot Alcuin Deutsch led St. John's in Collegeville, Minnesota to accreditation with the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1949, but it was not without significant resistance on his part. He told a local senator, "I don't want to be tied down by a lot of red tape. I want our school to develop freely and not according to direction from outside and distant agencies" (Barry 1956: 286). His move toward accreditation finally began after seeing that graduates of St. John's were not eligible for commissions in officer training programs during World War II because St. John's was not on the lists of officially accredited institutions. Eventually, the Benedictines needed to take actions to professionalize their educational institutions. In 1919, the National Benedictine Educational Association was founded when it held its first meeting at St. Vincent Archabbey. Publishing a bulletin on topics of educational relevance, the organization lasted until 1942 (Rippinger 1990: 125). The leading scholarly organization for Benedictines today, the American Benedictine Academy was founded in 1948, and its scholarly journal, *American Benedictine Review*, appeared in 1950 (1990: 129).

The *paideia* approach to education comes naturally to the Benedictine charism, whereas the transition to provide education in the *Wissenschaft*-oriented world of American higher education has been defined by growing pains and trials by fire. As Cahoy points out, the *paideia* approach is a tremendous asset the Benedictines have that should not be underestimated or neglected. Thimmesh notes the ways in which the Benedictines have struggled to develop an environment of university education in the U.S. that is not as natural to the Benedictines as may be assumed. Beyond what has been noted above, his presentation showed how various practical or technical fields of study were in accord with the Benedictine educational approach. It is crucial for Benedictine universities to embrace both the *paideia* and *Wissenschaft* aspects that can be rooted in the Benedictine educational vision.

II.C. *Paideia* and *Wissenschaft* Synthesis

As noted above, Christian, Catholic, and Benedictine educational history has shown that, in answer to Tertullian's question, the faith of Jerusalem and the formative academy of Athens indeed have a lot to do with each other. In an updated version of this metaphor, Kelsey uses Athens as a symbol of Christian theological education of the *paideia* type in contrast to Berlin as a symbol of the research-oriented, scientific approach of the *Wissenschaft* type in his book, *Between Athens and Berlin*. Now the question may be asked, "What does Athens have to do with Berlin?" Over the past century or so, in the present, and inevitably in the future, the answer is that they also have a lot to do with each other, at all levels of higher education.

Kelsey asserts that "Christian theological education in North America is ineluctably located between 'Athens' and 'Berlin'" (6) and it is "inescapably committed to two contrasting and finally irreconcilable types or models of what education at its best ought to be" (5). He gives equal treatment to both Athens and Berlin without exposing a preference for one over the other; he refers to both as "types of excellent schooling" that "are deeply institutionalized in the practices that constitute American theological education of all sorts" (6).

Paideia and *Wissenschaft* are useful terms to use since they defy typical polarizing labels such as 'conservative' or 'liberal,' although *paideia* is certainly more closely associated as traditional and *Wissenschaft* as progressive. Jon Sobrino, a Jesuit liberation theologian at the University of Central America in El Salvador whose writings have been given a warnings by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, spoke on the role of a Catholic university at Boston College on March 13, 2008. Without using the term specifically, he advocated a *paideia* model by saying that the mission of the university is "to influence society in the right way," and to "bring about the kingdom of God." Although there are many other points that they would disagree upon, the importance of the *paideia* model in Catholic education is a point that a conservative group such as the Cardinal Newman Society and Jon Sobrino could agree.

Benedictine universities and their departments of religion already have deeply rooted qualities of both *paideia* and *Wissenschaft*. Of the various reasons that may be given to exclude religious studies from a phenomenological approach from the curricula at Benedictine universities, at least the overall vision of religious education cannot be one of them. Benedictine universities do not teach religion from a strictly *paideia* model. To be educated in religion at Benedictine universities is not the same as the formation of the novice in the monastery across the yard. Beyond this, but also potentially incorporating this, religious education at Benedictine universities also contains elements of the *Wissenschaft* model by being orderly, disciplined, and critical. With this understanding, religious studies will be of benefit to Benedictine universities in the U.S. in at least three areas: regarding institutional diversity, student diversity, and faculty development.

II.D. Institutional Diversity

Authors such as George Marsden on the topic of Protestant-affiliated universities in *The Soul of the American University* and Melanie Morey and John Piderit, SJ, in *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* argue that church-affiliated institutions must maintain strong identities as Christian institutions in response to increasing hegemony of American higher education. The Christian identities of church-affiliated universities add to the institutional diversity of American higher education. An understanding of the place of Benedictine universities in the context of American higher education is necessary to understand how Benedictine universities can maintain their Catholic identities and provide courses that show their recognition of the religious diversity of the study body. Benedictine universities, like all religiously-affiliated institutions of higher education interested in preserving their religious character, have qualities similar to both of two ends of the educational spectrum in regard to religion-seminaries and public universities.

Seminaries, as the term used here, are any of the array of schools of theology whose purpose is to train personnel to act as leaders, ministers and intellectuals in a particular religious tradition. The point of comparison here will be to Roman Catholic seminaries since this provides a clearer example of a religiously homogenous student body in contrast to Protestant seminaries that have student bodies that are denominationally diverse. Secular universities, as the term is used here, are those institutions that never had or have mostly, irrevocably severed affiliation with a religious sponsorship. These institutions serve to train for employment in any of the fields of science, social science, or humanities and to prepare their student body as citizens of the world. What Benedictine universities have in common with secular universities is a religiously diverse student body, and what Benedictine universities have in common with seminaries is a history and a continued strong presence of Catholic students within the diversity. Although these categories are not so clearly defined, in a general sense, Benedictine universities are institutions in between the *paideia* of seminaries and the *Wissenschaft* of public universities.

In Cady and Brown's definition of religious studies previously mentioned, they use the seminary and public university distinction to differentiate religious studies from theology: "Religious studies, sharply differentiated from theology, is construed as a social science that belongs within the university. Theology, on the other hand, is viewed as a form of spiritual instruction that belongs within an ecclesiastical or religious community concerned with personal formation. The presumption is that religious studies (or more accurately, perhaps, should exclusively be) an objective, empirical form of study, and theology a subjective, religious activity (Cady and Brown 2002: 2)." If the university and the

seminary represent opposite ends of the spectrum of religious education and represent religious studies and theology respectively, Benedictine universities, like all Catholic universities, are in between. Their institutional purposes include the purposes of both universities and seminaries 1) ideologically as both “Benedictine-Catholic” and “universities” and 2) practically because of the diverse student body and because of the Catholic student body.

Benedictine universities could offer a unique contribution to the institutional diversity of higher education as potential places for further research and study on the topic of interreligious dialogue, particularly concerning monasticism. Thus far, most interreligious studies have been taking place at public institutions. As the *epoché* is cultivated and an environment of neutrality and tolerance is established, public universities will have a solid foundation for scholars and practitioners of a wide variety of religious traditions to come together in intellectual dialogue. In the future, truly interreligious dialogue will more likely occur in public universities than in any form of religiously-sponsored university since a religiously-sponsored university can never, nor should it, shed its own religious partisanship. Public universities will be the neutral ground upon which representatives from various religions will be able to meet. But the Benedictines also have a strong potential resource for the advancement of interreligious dialogue in the university setting. The Benedictine order has been deeply engaged in interreligious dialogue with Buddhism and Hinduism stemming from the work of Bede Griffiths and Thomas Merton among others and carried on through the organization, Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID). While public universities may provide a neutral ground for interreligious dialogue and studies, Benedictine universities offer an authentically religious environment with a significant historical engagement in and commitment to interreligious dialogue. Regarding institutional diversity, it is not a feigned neutrality that will be advantageous for Benedictine universities, but the assertion of their Benedictine and Catholic affiliation, highlighting aspects of that affiliation that are indeed *hospitable*.

II.E. Student Diversity

Religious studies at Benedictine universities would be of benefit to a student body that is increasingly diverse religiously. Historically, the student populations at Benedictine universities were primarily Roman Catholic in religious affiliation. Throughout *Worship and Work*, Barry unselfconsciously hints at the predominantly Catholic student body, “St. John’s was known as a seminary primarily, but from its inception Catholic immigrants sent their sons to the Benedictines for a Catholic higher education which would at the same time fit them for secular life” (1980: 59). The highly Catholic student population was also considered a potential source of vocations, as Adelhelm Odermatt, O.S.B., founder of Mt. Angel Abbey in Oregon stated, “if we cannot win Catholic youth with Catholic schools, our mission will ultimately fail” (as cited in Rippinger 1990: 117).

The general trend of increase in ethnic and religious diversity among students in higher education has been true for Catholic universities, including those of the Benedictines. Along with the other major trends such as laicization of faculty and trustees, the increase in student diversity has been perceived by some educators as a threat to the Catholic identity. Regarding Catholic secondary education in Canada, an Ontario Catholic school chaplain said, “It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to maintain, let alone deepen, the Catholic character of the school with . . . a large [32%] non-Catholic population” (Mulligan as cited in Donlevy 2002: 102). But, the Church’s official position regarding student diversity is to embrace it, according to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, “In the certainty that the Spirit is at work in every person, the Catholic School offers itself to all, non-Christians included...” (1977, para. 85, as cited in Donlevy 2002: 101).

In the context of student diversity, teaching religious studies at Benedictine universities is particularly significant. At a time when a large majority of the students were Catholic, to teach Catholic theology was to teach the students about their own religion with the presumption that they have an interest in that subject. Certainly there will be non-Catholic students who freely choose to take courses on Catholic theology, but if the student body is comprised of diverse religious affiliations, Catholicism will not always be the first choice of a religious tradition that all students, perhaps not even all Catholic students, freely choose to take a course in.

Students of diverse religious affiliations are attracted to Benedictine universities for a variety of reasons. Some incoming students who are not Catholic will choose the Benedictine school for its religious affiliation even if it is not their own. Others, both Catholic and otherwise, will choose to attend a Benedictine school for completely non-religious reasons such as strong programs in a particular field of study or proximity to their hometowns. Finally, some Catholic (and possibly non-Catholic) incoming students will choose to attend a Catholic school because it is Catholic and they hope to experience a Catholic campus environment and to learn more about Catholicism in religion classes. Therefore, while a Benedictine university could choose to provide religion courses that recognize a religiously diverse student population, this *should not detract* from courses that will be attractive to the Catholic students that have chosen to attend a Benedictine university anticipating the opportunity to take Catholic theology courses.

If indeed the student bodies at Benedictine universities comprise of a number of students who want courses in Catholic theology as well as a large portion of the student population who would prefer courses in religious traditions other than Catholicism or Christianity if offered the choice, it is *ideal* for the religion departments to offer courses that would appeal to *both* student preferences. This ideal would be manifested in a coexistence of religious studies and theology together. This coexistence is in contrast to historical trends that shifted the entire department from one extreme to the other. Certainly, the non-confessional approach to religious studies has become present in religiously-affiliated institutions, but it only becomes a threat to the confessional approach to religion if the institution opts to completely replace a confessional approach with a non-confessional approach throughout the entire department.

II.F. Faculty Diversity

Theology at Catholic universities has traditionally been taught by baptized Catholics whether members of religious orders, diocesan priests, or lay people. But the implementation of authentic religious studies at Catholic universities opens a greater possibility, perhaps a stronger impetus, to hire faculty who are practitioners of Christian denominations other than Roman Catholicism or of religions other than Catholicism. This in itself is a complex issue that each institution must discern the needs and benefits of. Here, I address the question, for those institutions who have hired faculty members outside of the Roman Catholic/ Christian tradition, of their inclusion in the *paideia* mission of Benedictine universities.

I have used the point that Benedictine universities, like all mainstream modern universities, blend, to various degrees both the *paideia* (Athens) and *Wissenschaft* (Berlin) models that David Kelsey describes in *Between Athens and Berlin*. Their Catholic theology courses were historically rooted in the *paideia* approach and would indeed continue to serve the purpose of faith formation to those teachers and students who chose to use Catholic theology courses to not merely study the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church phenomenologically, but to discern how those teachings could be incorporated into their lives of Christian discipleship. And, the religious studies courses would be rooted in the *Wissenschaft* approach that the *Religionswissenschaft* scholars such as Mircea Eliade developed; and these courses would serve the purpose of studying the phenomenon of religion throughout human history and today and its effects on the human experience psychologically, sociologically, or anthropologically. I contend that religious studies is a beneficial *Wissenschaft* complement to Catholic theological *paideia* at Benedictine universities.

Faced with the question of the degree to which religious studies courses and faculty would participate in the *paideia* mission of Benedictine universities, I conceived of a line of separation so that religious studies and professors of non-Christian religions would stay on the *Wissenschaft* side, but when it came to the formative aspects of the *paideia* approach, this would be the exclusive business of the Catholic theology side of the department of religion. The rationale behind this was to preserve the role of the Catholic identity in formation of student character. Upon further reflection, however, this seems to be incompatible with the idea that the Benedictine universities as a whole are institutions promoting a *paideia* approach to education. Benedictine universities hope and must provide the means for all departments, from the humanities to the social and physical sciences, to educate students as whole human persons with spiritual and moral as well as physical aspects. Biology departments should provide education in bio-ethics. Ethical business practices and the understanding of just economic systems should be studied in business and economic departments, and so on. When it comes to *paideia*, and the formation of the whole person, Benedictines do not have in mind that this should occur on an island within the university called the theology department; they have in mind that this sort of formation should occur campus-wide. Indeed, ideally, there should be no part of the Benedictine university that is not in some way participating in the Benedictine *paideia* mission of personal formation. Therefore, courses in non-Christian religions offered at Benedictine universities should not make up an island where the *paideia* approach is absent. Faculty who teach courses in non-Christian religions including those who practice those non-Christian religions must also be welcomed into participation of the *paideia* mission of Benedictine universities.

II.G. Faculty Development

Religious studies at Benedictine universities provides a means for faculty of religion to participate in the broader academic discourse. In this way, it will provide a means to contribute not only to the way that Catholic theology is understood by Catholics and the broader society, but also how religion itself is understood. Without a religious studies presence, Benedictine departments of religion have very little means of participating in the scholarly discourse on religion in the broad sense, even if they are able to study theology in the specifically Catholic or broader Christian

sense. Thus, the broad idea of religion will hardly be studied at Benedictine universities and will be defined for most educated Americans by public universities through courses taken or through books and articles published by faculty at public universities.

Due to the proliferation of religious studies programs at public institutions, scholars of religion and theology at Benedictine universities must foresee that, over time, their colleagues at the public universities will significantly influence the way that religion, even Catholicism, is understood in the American society. Diana Eck began to teach comparative religion with a specialization in Hinduism at Harvard in the mid-1970s and recalls how, at that time, to study the ancient religion of the Indian continent was “exotic, deeply spiritual, perhaps seductive, even dangerous” (2001: 12). By the 1990s, she was amazed to realize that the study of Hinduism by predominantly Caucasian American Christians had taken a different turn when she began to have second-generation Hindu-American immigrants from India in her class. She found herself not only teaching Hinduism to a predominantly Christian student body, but teaching “American-born Hindus about their own religious tradition” (13). Increasingly, Catholic students will be able to take classes in Catholicism at public universities where chairs or programs of Catholic studies are being implemented (Rausch 2006: 79-80). True, these courses on Catholicism will be expected to be taught from a non-confessional approach, which will also expose, by its success or failure, the extent to which the “faith” of the teacher is important to the student. Scholars in the field of theology might assume that to teach from a confessional perspective may be the most appealing to students of religion; however, this is not necessarily the case. Some students may prefer a teacher who is not a practitioner of the religion she teaches, a third-party perspective.

As the field of religious studies gains momentum and becomes increasingly influential, it behooves Catholic academia to be in dialogue with religious studies. It may seem strange to think of religion and Catholicism in this way, but if they are distinct enough, Catholic theology can be in dialogue with religious studies if they are indeed fields that are distinct enough (in approach if not subject matter) from each other. Otherwise, theology is having dialogue with itself, which of course, is not dialogue. In the post-Vatican II Catholic Church, there is a concerted effort on the part of the Church to be in dialogue with science, art, literature, the social sciences. Catholic theology has a longstanding dialogue with philosophy, which has in recent centuries gained independence from its stature as the “handmaid of theology.” Considering this, it seems to be negligent if Catholic theology is not in dialogue with religious studies itself. Catholic universities have the advantage of being able to host this dialogue within the same department, on the same campus. Participation in the discourse on religion cannot genuinely be accomplished without some provision for pure religious studies for this is the only way in which the distinction can be made plainly evident.

Because religious studies is so distinct from theology, it will provide a broader perspective for engagement with those outside of their religion. Using a zoological metaphor, William James stated that “the crab does not see its crustaceousness, but the comparative anatomist does” (as cited in Paden in *A Magic Still Dwells*, 189). It is an imperfect metaphor because a crab will never be able to see its own crustaceousness; whereas, hopefully Catholic theologians will have a better understanding of Catholicism by looking at their religion from the inside (as a crab) and the outside (as a comparative anatomist). Beyond a better understanding, hopefully Catholic theologians will have a better set of tools with which to explain Catholic theology to outsiders by experiencing through the *epochē* what it is like to look at Catholic theology from an outsider’s perspective and to use an outsider’s language.

II.H. Coexistence of *Paideia* and *Wissenschaft*

As departments of religions shift the names of their departments between theology and religious studies and back again, the problem is that the entire department shifts from one approach to another. When a theology department becomes renamed a religious studies department, then according to a strict definition of religious studies, there should not be confessional theology; of course, this is entirely against the mission of Catholic universities. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* states, “Because of its specific importance among the academic disciplines, every Catholic University should have a faculty, or at least a chair, of theology” (#19), but it does not state that Catholic universities should *refrain from* phenomenological religious studies. In some cases, it has been seen as an either/or issue rather than a both/and issue.

The Catholic University of America provides an example of a Catholic university wherein theology and religious studies coexist within their School of Theology and Religious Studies. From their website, their mission statement names two goals; here I start with the second: “to provide the professional training of lay and clerical leaders who will serve the Roman Catholic community in the United States and throughout the world,” which is based in a confessional, theological approach necessary for training for various ministries in the Catholic Church. The separation does not have to be impermeable; students preparing for ministry would be free to take courses in religious studies

as far as their interests and the demands of their program permit, but they would primarily be taking theology courses in order to impart theology to those to whom they would be ministering to professionally within the specific tradition of Catholicism. Moving backwards, the first goal applies to both theology and to religious studies, "to promote excellence in teaching, research, and publication in the area of theology and religious studies." Religious studies by its nature is not pastorally-oriented, but is academic and research-oriented, even though religious studies scholars may be ministers of various kinds within the religions they adhere to on a personal level. And, some students study theology as an academic subject without a pastoral career in mind. These two goals acknowledge the various purposes that students come with when they seek to study religion. Religious studies and theology are then both justified in accord with the goals of the School.

As a pontifical institution granting ecclesiastical degrees, theology is well represented at CUA and yet there is also a significant representation of religious studies. The 2008-2009 course schedule lists courses titled World Religions, The Religious Quest, Ways of Peace in World Religions, Taoism & Confucianism, Sects/Cults/New Religious Movements, Hinduism: Religion and Art, Mahayana Buddhism, and introductory courses to Judaism and Islam. A notable Buddhist scholar, Charles Jones, author of *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and the State, 1660-1990* and *The View from Mars Hill: Christianity in the Landscape of World Religions*, is the director of the Religion and Culture program there.

Catholic universities have a particular strength in the ability to provide the coexistence of religious studies and theology courses within the same institution. This idea is challenged by a publication of the Cardinal Newman Society, *The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College*, which presents 20 colleges in the U.S. and Canada with notably strong Catholic identities. Their assessment of CUA's department is: "Whereas the theology courses (and faculty) are faithful to the Magisterium, the religious studies courses mirror the courses taught in religion departments or divinity schools of elite secular institutions. Religious studies courses include those on world religions and comparative religions, and we are told that some are taught by professors who do not support Catholic teachings (181)." Again, this describes a situation in which Catholic theology that meets the criteria of being faithful to the Magisterium is in coexistence with religious studies. If indeed religious studies at CUA mirror the courses taught in religion departments or divinity schools (perhaps referring to institutions such as Harvard Divinity School or University of Chicago) of elite secular institutions, then this meets the criteria for non-confessional religious studies as it has been defined in contrast to confessional theology. But other subjects of study in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities at Catholic universities will also be similar to those at secular institutions of higher education. I must acknowledge that religious studies is indeed a special case that will require some nuance; but generally, phenomenological religious studies need not be more of a threat to Catholic identity than chemistry.

It is not the presence or absence of religious studies that will determine a Catholic university's Catholic identity as much as the presence of theology. Because religious studies scholars such as Wiebe and McCutcheon are asserting that confessional theology has no place in religion departments at public universities, the presence of confessional Catholic theology at Catholic universities becomes a unique aspect offered nowhere else. Confessional Catholic theology at Catholic universities should be offered whether a university decides to have religious studies coexisting alongside or not. In this way, religious studies would be a supplement to theology. Divinity schools such as those at Harvard, the University of Chicago, Duke, Yale, and others have confessional theology and non-confessional religious studies in coexistence. As a Catholic institution, the Catholic University of America, Notre Dame University and others also have this coexistence. It is a strong coexistence that will be unique to church-affiliated institutions since public universities are prohibited by law from having the theological side of this coexistence. In this way, religious studies at Benedictine universities would be of value, although there are warranted fears to be addressed.

III. Fear of Religious Studies

In this post-*Ex Corde Ecclesiae* period, there seems to be a fear of phenomenological religious studies at Benedictine universities. Or perhaps it is merely caution. The reality of limited faculty and financial resources that most private institutions must face is another factor that undermines many academic projects. Whatever the reason for it, the presence of religious studies as a supplement to theology in departments of religion at Benedictine universities, as shown above, is very minimal. Resource issues cannot be evaluated in an academic thesis paper such as this. What can be addressed is the rationale for or against religious studies at Benedictine universities. Outside of resource issues, it is not entirely evident that Catholic Benedictine universities have a desire to establish religious studies programs in their religion departments at all. Here, I address three areas of trepidation that could impact intentions to

provide for religious studies at Benedictine universities: 1) the phenomenological *epochē*, 2) pluralistic relativism and 3) the loss of Catholic Benedictine identity.

III.A. Fear of *Epochē*

At least for the monastic members and for many of the lay members of religion faculties at Benedictine universities, the phenomenological *epochē* is initially unappealing. In the case of monastic members of the faculty, the fact that they are insiders in a religion is a potential strength. These are men and women who have given their lives to the practice of their Catholic religion through a community life centered on prayer. This is a life that has also demanded significant personal sacrifice that is ultimately only chosen by a small percent of the Catholic population. To have this insider status now deemed as a potential disadvantage loaded with biases and something to be bracketed is a significant challenge to those for whom the practice and teaching of religion is inseparable. As noted in the previous section, I propose a coexistence of religious studies with theology; therefore, those who teach confessional theology should by no means bracket the self. The *epochē* will only apply to the religious studies part of the department.

The *epochē* is indispensable to religious studies, but it also does not mean that the practitioner compromises his or her religious beliefs. This is illustrated by the difference between being a teacher and being a practitioner, roughly corresponding to being an outsider and being an insider, and by the acknowledgement that one person can integrally be both a teacher and a practitioner. A religious practitioner seeks holiness, but does not have to be a scholar to live a life of faith and religious discipline. Similarly, musicians are those people who use their voice or other instruments to create music, yet many of them, particularly in popular genres, do not have formal training or the ability to read music. In order to teach religion or music at an academic level, the practitioner and the musician must be able to step outside of their own practices to be able to understand the academic theory behind religion and music, be able to teach it to others and evaluate students' reception of what has been taught. Not all of the holiest religious people or the greatest musicians are able to teach religion or music. Thus, there is a difference between the practice of religion or music and the teaching of it.

The *epochē* is essentially about moving from insider to outsider, from practitioner to teacher. This distinction is not entirely strict because those teaching theology confessionally practice and teach as insiders. Those who do not practice any religion at all or those who teach religions that they are not themselves a member do not have to make this move from practitioner to teacher because they are not a practitioner in the first place, they start and end as outsiders. In these cases, they reverse the process and attempt to move from outside a religion to the inside of a religion in order to understand it empathetically from the perspective of a practitioner. If it is true that not all musicians have the ability to be teachers of music, it must be assumed that some non-musicians with a talent for teaching and knowledge of the subject may indeed be able to teach music better than a brilliant musical performer. With this analogy, some non-practitioners of a religion may be able to teach in religious studies non-confessionally and phenomenologically more effectively than practitioners of that religion in an academic setting. This is logically true and useful to keep in mind, and this reality must be understandably perceived as a threat to practitioners of a religion who feel that their practice of that religion is to their advantage in the classroom.

Practice of a religion or any religion is not *necessarily* an advantage in the teaching of religious studies non-confessionally; however, it is also not necessarily a disadvantage. If it is not *necessarily* an advantage, but this does not mean that it can *never* be an advantage. Theoretically, it is possible for a non-musician to be able to teach music better than a musician who does not know music theory; and yet, there are plenty (and perhaps the large majority) of music professors who are indeed musicians. Paula Cooley convincingly asserts that position against practitioners of religion being too biased to teach from a neutral position "is tantamount to saying that poets and fiction writers should be excluded from teaching English, composers from teaching music, and clinicians from teaching psychology" (2000: 44). The challenge in teaching religious studies, a challenge that does not present itself in the teaching of theology, is to be able to make this move inside and outside one's religious beliefs.

Further, the phenomenological *epochē* in practice is less strict as it appears in definition. Recent scholarship has acknowledged the limited extent to which a scholar can bracket their biases; Alice Keefe declares, "...the feminist critique of academic androcentrism ought to have dispelled for once and for all the myth of disinterested objectivity in scholarship (1998: 124). The idea of the *epochē* may be impossible and unquantifiable in practice since "[s]cholarship is always a matter of interpretation, and interpretation is always conditioned by particular interests and orientations" (Keefe 1998: 124) but what is necessary is to establish credibility "not upon freedom from any interest, but upon the capacity to be as conscious as possible of one's particular standpoint" (124-125). I overheard a fellow theology

student explaining the difference between theology and religious studies by saying that, although the teacher can never completely set aside his or her personal biases or faith beliefs when teaching, in religious studies, “they try really, really, really hard to do so.” In these ways, religious studies demands that a Catholic acknowledge their limited ability to completely approach the field of study without bias, but at least to recognize that bias, and to be able to recognize a distinction and move back and forth across the distinction between practitioner and teacher

III.B. Fear of Pluralism and Relativism

Another aspect of religious studies that can be perceived as a threat to the Catholic Benedictine educational vision is pluralistic relativism. This is a primary concern of the current Pope Benedict XVI who expresses his concerns, among other places, in an address to the Ecclesial Diocesan Convention of Rome at the Basilica of St John Lateran in June 2005: “Today, a particularly insidious obstacle to the task of educating is the massive presence in our society and culture of that relativism which, recognizing nothing as definitive, leaves as the ultimate criterion only the self with its desires. And under the semblance of freedom it becomes a prison for each one, for it separates people from one another, locking each person into his or her own “ego”.

With such a relativistic horizon, therefore, real education is not possible without the light of the truth; sooner or later, every person is in fact condemned to doubting in the goodness of his or her own life and the relationships of which it consists, the validity of his or her commitment to build with others something in common. “Catholicism makes universal truth claims that threaten religious studies’ methodological rejection of truth claims. These stances are reflective of their institutional natures; Catholicism is one of many religions that make universal truth claims and religious studies is an academic field of study, most of which deny universal truth claims. If there is any academic field that makes universal truth claims, it may be Catholic theology, although this is not the place to open that discussion. What is important here is the fact that religious studies is not Catholic theology; therefore, religious studies provides a means of studying religion without predetermined truth claims even if the theology professor a few offices down the hall teaches Catholic theology in accord with the magisterium of the Catholic Church. Caution should still be exercised so that the Catholic theologians are not merely setting up religious studies scholars in their departments only to be knocked down like bowling pins.

Because the field of religious studies must include diverse non-Christian religions as its subject matter, it will inevitably overlap with sensitive areas regarding relativism. As mentioned above, *Nostra Aetate* provided an optimistic assessment of non-Christian religions; however, the brief document served more to open questions and to promote dialogue and cooperation than to provide answers regarding religions in relation to each other. The question of the relationship of Christianity in its Catholic manifestation to non-Christian religions remains a highly contentious field. Jacques Dupris, Roger Haight, and Peter Phan are a few scholars in this area who have been censured or placed under investigation for their opinions and writings.

In the earlier, optimistic years of comparative religion, a subfield and a predecessor to religious studies, there was a belief in and ensuing effort toward finding similarities within religions that could lead to an overarching theory that all religions lead to the same goal, and are, in effect, saying the same thing in different languages. This idea is not entirely absent in the field of religious studies, but as a speculative field, neither this idea nor any other idea is regarded as firmly established. This speculation and questioning of the Church’s position remains as a point of contention. Here again, the role of the university as *paideia*, being taught in a system of established truths and being formed by and within that system and as *Wissenschaft*, speculating on reality in an orderly, disciplined and critical way without acknowledging any pre-established truth, come into conflict. If a Benedictine novice were to question the truths taught by the Church to the point of rejecting their value, the novice would ultimately not become formed as a monk. This is so because monastic formation is a form of *paideia* education. But, while Benedictine universities maintain this valuable *paideia* model, they and their departments of religion are not strictly within this model. They also operate according to the *Wissenschaft* model wherein the practitioner must bracket his or her religious beliefs in order to participate in the academic practice of orderly, critical, and disciplined speculation.

Religious studies as a *Wissenschaft*-oriented field demands a certain degree of relativism; however, this relativism is not taught as Catholic doctrine or as Catholic theology. Again, this is why religious studies complements Catholic theology. It provides a speculative, *Wissenschaft*-oriented context necessary for academic inquiry while distinguishing this from Catholic theology.

III.C. Fear of Loss of Catholic, Benedictine Identity

Since Pope John Paul II's 1990 encyclical, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and the U.S. Catholic bishops' 1999 document on the application of that document to the U.S., there has been a lot of attention throughout the Catholic higher education community to examine issues of Catholic identity, an identity that many have perceived as seriously, perhaps irrevocably, compromised by secularism. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* provides four essential characteristics of a Catholic university:

1. a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such;
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;
3. fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church;
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" (#13).

Cahoy provides a succinct overview of the complex issue of Catholic identity at the universities. In the U.S., Catholic universities were originally founded for two purposes, 1) to provide access to higher education at a time when Catholics were excluded from most institutions of higher learning by either economic limitations or by outright discrimination and 2) to preserve Catholic culture and identity in a nation that was predominantly Protestant. The pursuit of these two purposes resulted in the increasing socio-economic success of Catholics through the education received at these institutions and the ensuing decrease in the distinctively Catholic identity as immigrant Catholics became assimilated into the mainstream, meeting the former original purpose while challenging the latter ("The Catholic Intellectual Tradition"). The Second Vatican Council and the following reforms for laicization and secularization continued and catalyzed these trends.

Alongside the impact of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, another trend has been the founding of new institutions or the shifting of already existing institutions in the direction of more assertive expression of Catholic identity in opposition to the trends of mainstream academia. Institutions such as Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio; Christendom College (Front Royal, Virginia), Thomas Aquinas College (Santa Paula, California), and Ave Maria University (Naples, Florida) are characterized as, "self-consciously Catholic, with an emphasis on fidelity to the papal magisterium, loyalty oaths for the faculty, and a narrowly understood orthodoxy" (Rausch, 2006: 66). Rausch acknowledges that Catholic universities can "be held hostage" to pressure groups such as the Cardinal Newman Society who vigilantly hold institutions accountable to the Society's strict interpretation of the Church's mission and teachings (Rausch 2006: 75). And Graham opines, "it is not clear to me that Ave Maria University or Steubenville provide a better, more Catholic alternative to what I have described above. From my observations, they may offer a nostalgic reconstruction of a worldview frozen in time at about 1960, unable effectively to address the issues of the last 45 years" (Graham: 2).

Observers of these trends, such as Michael Buckley, S.J., and Burtchaell, question whether the process of secularization will lead Catholic institutions to the same fate of many Protestant colleges and universities whose affiliations with their founding church denominations have for all practical purposes disappeared. Referring to Burtchaell, Cahoy cautions, "Whatever we think of his conclusions or his analysis, the question is one that we avoid at our peril" ("Catholic Intellectual Tradition").

One aspect of identity that is of concern is that Catholic students lose their faith within the secular environment of Catholic institutions that are not supposed to be so secular. Along these lines, there is the concern that Catholic students will lose their faith through exposure to other religious views that may appear as more attractive than Catholicism. As one sign of encouragement, devout Catholics and Catholic parents concerned about their children's faith may take consolation in an attitude taken by very high profile Buddhists such as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hahn who have discouraged conversion to Buddhism except for the most profound and serious reasons. The Dalai Lama states: "In general, I am in favor of people continuing to follow the religion of their own culture and inheritance. Of course, individuals have every right to change if they find that a new religion is more effective or suitable for their spiritual needs. But, generally speaking, it is better to experience the value of one's own religious tradition... If you are Christian, it is better to develop spirituality within your religion and be a genuine, good Christian. If you are a Buddhist, be a genuine Buddhist. Not something half- and- half! This may cause only confusion in your mind (1996: 45- 46)." This attitude could possibly be attributed to the experience of Christianity as a foreign and colonial power that had certain detrimental cultural effects in parts of Asia.

These are ways that fears concerning the phenomenological *epochē*, pluralism and relativism, and loss of Catholic, Benedictine identity may be addressed or reconsidered even if they do not promise complete resolution. It is also a sympathetic acknowledgement of such fears. Finally, it is an engagement with these issues. My proposal is that religious studies are and will be of value for Benedictine universities as a supplement to theology. This proposal is made with a consideration of the complexities and fears involved; ultimately, the authentic implementation of religious studies provides an opportunity for Benedictine universities to avoid ignorance of these complexities and fears, but engagement in them.

IV. Conclusion

I can look back on several factors that led to my exploration of this topic. One was when preparing to teach a course, Introduction to Religious Studies, I found syllabi online, looked up several of the textbooks listed and chose to use *Anatomy of the Sacred: an Introduction to Religion* by James C. Livingston. I found myself fascinated by the contents. As one example, when studying Catholic theology, one does not necessarily step back to consider how Catholicism fits into categories of natural or voluntary religions, terms that derive from interdisciplinary studies of sociology with religion. In comparison with other religions, a Catholic realizes that his religion is, at its core, a voluntary religion complete with life-cycle rituals of initiation that occur once in a lifetime such as baptism and calendrical rituals of initiation such as the reception of the Eucharist that are repeated, even on a daily basis. However, over the generations, religions that are essentially voluntary take on many aspects of natural religions which are essentially those into which one is born into. Stepping outside of Catholicism and comparing and categorizing the religion with other religions brought me to reflections on the degree to which my participation in Catholicism is, was, could be, or should be “voluntary” or “natural.”

My topic also began with the question of why there is apparently so little overlap between two major projects of the Benedictines of North America: the university apostolate and the monastic interreligious dialogue (as manifested in the organization, Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID)). There have been several times when I have told people that Benedictines are heavily involved with interreligious dialogue, particularly with monastic religions such as Buddhism and that this is not a recent phenomenon, but dates back to Bede Griffiths and Henri de la Saux. Fascinating events continue to happen in this dialogue such as the Gethsemani Encounter, the Dalai Lama's comments on the Gospels at a John Main Conference in 1996, a Buddhist-Christian monastic interchange and a whole series of annual meetings between Benedictines and representatives from across the spectrum of Buddhism. Often, when I have mentioned these things, I am met with surprise by both Catholics and non-Catholics. I am left to wonder whether the person knows about the Second Vatican Council's document *Nostra Aetate* and I am left to wonder whether *Nostra Aetate* is merely a church document that can be found on the Vatican's website or something that can also be seen and experienced at Benedictine universities.

Certainly, almost all American Benedictines have read some of Thomas Merton's writings, maybe even some of his writings on Asian religions, but otherwise, there is very little evidence of monastic interreligious dialogue on the university campus that is my home, Saint Martin's Abbey and University. From my examination of webpages and limited in-person questioning, it does not appear that there is much evidence of the monastic interreligious dialogue on other Benedictine university campuses either. I hope with further exploration I can be proven wrong. This remains as a question that I have, one of the originating questions of this thesis process; however, I chose not to address that question with this thesis. Rather, I chose to address the question of religious studies at Benedictine universities because this could provide part of the answer to my question concerning the absence of monastic interreligious dialogue on Benedictine university campuses. If authentic religious studies is non-existent, minimal, or mislabeled at Benedictine universities, then monastic interreligious dialogue, even the study of the dialogue rather than the dialogue itself, will have a severely limited and marginal place. It appears that interreligious dialogue (a related yet still distinct category from religious studies), to the extent that it is happening or being studied seriously at the academic level, is happening more vitally at public universities' departments of religious studies where a neutral environment is established. But ultimately, the question of the gap between the monastic interreligious dialogue and Benedictine universities is a question for further research.

Courses in Buddhism would be interesting for Benedictine universities as a means of bridging the gap between monastic interreligious dialogue and the universities, if indeed that in itself was considered a beneficial undertaking (it cannot be assumed that it is). At a more basic level, more necessary and fundamental, without a framework for religious studies at Benedictine universities, there is no sufficient basis for the serious study of Judaism, which must increasingly be seen as long past the optional stage. Merely skimming over Judaism in a world religions course is a very weak representation of the religion from which Christianity emerged. Academic engagement with Judaism should be considered necessary for an academic engagement with Christianity.

Academic papers take on a certain tone, filled with qualifications and hesitations. In this way, the strength with which I present an argument is somewhat moderated. The tone of this thesis settles for weaker language by saying that religious studies is compatible, if not necessary, for Benedictine universities and by merely quelling fears of, rather than promoting, religious studies. However, in actuality, those qualifications and hesitations are accurate and authentic reflections of the tone in which I present my argument. I acknowledge and share concerns particularly

regarding Catholic Benedictine identity. In this way, I do not propose a reckless implementation; however, my observations lead me to conclude that the approach at Benedictine universities has been overly cautious.

As Benedictines, we have the examples of our founder, St. Benedict and his sister, St. Scholastica to look to. In the United States, we also have the example of the one who brought Benedictine monasticism to the U.S., Boniface Wimmer. Even a cursory glance of this founder's life will reveal a man with a fair share of flaws; yet without his flexibility concerning the time-tested Benedictine tradition, his energy for expansion, and his willingness to engage in the world, Benedictine universities would hardly be what they are today, even if they were to exist at all. In this regard, even if my own presentation here proceeds with some degree of academic caution, I finally propose that it is useful to repeat, for the sake of the universities and their departments of religion, Boniface Wimmer's bold statement, "Our motto must be: Forward, always forward."

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