

Bernard FONLON

To Every African Freshman-  
Ten years after:  
An academic Testament

by  
Bernard FONLON

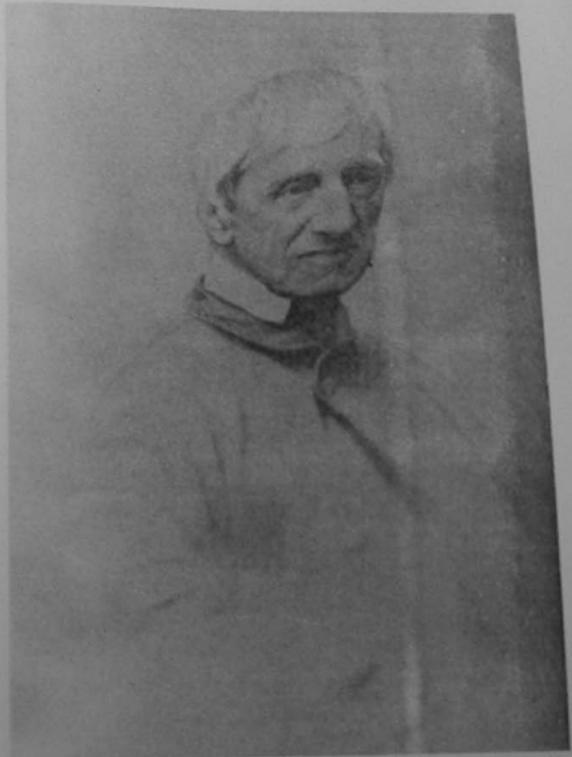
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+ This booklet begun in 1965 was first published by Dr Fonlon in 1969 under the title

To Every African Freshman or  
The Nature, End and Purpose of University Studies.

The Cameroon Times Publishers, Victoria, Cameroon.

*To  
Dr. Pavel Verkovsky  
who  
by his deep erudition  
and his genuine humility  
of mind and heart  
bids fair to become  
Our own Newman.*



*John Henry Cardinal Newman :  
Great Oxford Scholar;  
Eminent Saintly Churchman*

I hold very strongly  
that the first step in intellectual training  
is to impress upon a boy's mind  
the idea of Science, Method,  
Order, Principle and System;  
of Rule and Exception,  
of Richness and Harmony. . .

Hence it is that Critical Scholarship  
is so important a Discipline for him  
When he is leaving School for the University.

Hence it is that Chronology and Geography  
are so necessary for him  
When he reads History  
Hence, too, Metrical Composition  
When he reads Poetry,  
to stimulate his powers into Action  
and to prevent  
a merely Passive Reception  
of images and ideas.

Let him once gain  
this habit of Method,  
of starting from fixed points,  
of making his ground good as he goes,  
of distinguishing  
what he knows  
from what he does not know  
and I conceive he will be gradually initiated  
into the largest and truest  
Philosophical views,  
and will feel nothing but impatience and disgust  
at random theories and imposing sophistries  
and dashing paradoxes,  
which carry away  
half-formed and superficial intellects.

John Henry Cardinal Newman.

If we would know what a University is,  
considered in its elementary idea,  
we must take ourselves  
to the first and most celebrated home  
of European literature, and  
the source of European civilisation,  
the bright and beautiful Athens — Athens,  
whose schools drew to her bosom, and then  
sent back to the business of life,  
the youth of the western world  
for a long thousand years.  
Seated on the verge of the Continent,  
the city seemed hardly suited  
for the duties of a Central Metropolis of knowledge;  
yet, what it lost in convenience of approach  
it gained in its neighbourhood  
to the traditions of the mysterious East and  
in the loveliness of the region in which it lay.  
Hither, then, as to a sort of ideal land,  
where the archetypes of the great and the fair  
were found in substantial being,  
and all departments of truth explored,  
and all diversities of intellectual power exhibited,  
where taste and philosophy were majestically enthroned  
as in a royal court,  
where there was no sovereignty  
but that of mind,  
and no nobility but that of genius  
where professors were rulers,  
and princes did homage;  
hither flocked continually from the  
very corners of the orbis terrarum  
the many tongued generation,  
just rising, or just risen into manhood,  
to gain wisdom.

John Henry Cardinal Newman.(<sup>1</sup>)

This booklet, addressed to Every African Freshman on the Nature, End and Purpose of University Studies, slim as it looks, took me the best part of five laborious years to write — from 1965 — 1969 inclusive. If all the various versions were bound together, they would have made a large volume of some five hundred pages. It was writing and rewriting and writing and rewriting. I had to go back and revise my Metaphysics, Logic and other branches of Philosophy, and History. I wrote it because I was alarmed and distressed at the path our Universities were taking; at student attitude to University Studies. I had to read ancient authors like Plato and Aristotle and the moderns, especially, the Master of whom I can make a modest claim to be a disciple, to strengthen my stand.

(1) *University Sketches*, Brown and Nolan, the Richview Press, Dublin, text of 1856 page 17.

For all the authorities I have read on the University and on University Studies up till now, John Henry Cardinal Newman is the one who has made the deepest impression upon me. He studied in Oxford. He became an Oxford Don. He was the spirit and the leader of the famous Tractarian Movement that shook Oxford and all England as no other movement had shaken or has shaken them before or after. His influence, there, was electrifying. Some have not hesitated to say that he was the founder of the Anglican Church as it is today. He was a Scholar of the highest calibre. His thoughts were so profound, so far ahead of his time, that he was misunderstood and regarded with suspicion by his contemporaries; his ideas had to wait a hundred years to gain currency and impose themselves. He was the most imposing convert to enter the Catholic Church for centuries, and was the greatest Church man of both the Anglican and the Catholic persuasions in modern times. Nobody converted Newman; he wrote himself into the Church of Rome. He was a great educator and founded the Oratory School in Birmingham, and the Catholic University in Dublin. He was a fellow of two of Oxford Colleges, Oriel and Trinity. In spite of this that he was a simple priest, he was raised to the rank of Cardinal, a Prince of the Catholic Church. He was a man of Letters, one of the greatest stylists in English Literature; he was a Poet, he was a Philosopher, he was a Theologian, he was a master Schoolmaster, he was a Universityman to the marrow, he was a Churchman apart. He was a Saint.

Logic says that in philosophical disputation an argument from authority is the weakest argument, that the *ipse dixit* should be accepted only after minute scrutiny.

But when you have an authority with such indisputable and undisputed credentials, the rules are reversed; the word of such a master mind becomes far superior to what ever my mediocre intellect can propound. Thus I am proud that I am able to support whatever I say, *a posteriori*, with Newman's authority; and that is what you will find *ad nauseam* in this discourse — the ideas, the University canons, of John Henry Cardinal Newman.(2)

At the time when I was working on my booklet, I was penning away as students in France were up in arms against the academic Establishment; and their fury almost toppled a powerful, prestigious, political giant like General De Gaulle. In America, students, arms in hand, besieged and stormed the buildings of the University Administration, others blew up huge University computer installations in Canada — the student revolt, a very *saeva indignatio*, was in paroxysm.

But in England (save in the London School of Economics where students rioted for the lame reason that the College gate looked like that of a jail-house) all was calm. All was calm in spite of the fact that Cohn Bendit (if that is how

his name is spelt) was given every chance by the BBC to preach his revolution over radio and television. Students in Oxford and Cambridge were unimpressed, and there were hardly any rumbles or even ripples anywhere.

In France and America the students had good reason for the rising : the absence of Dialogue between Student and Faculty, caused in France by the predominance of the Professorial System, caused in America by the involvement of the Faculty in Big Business research and the consequent neglect of the students. But old England, thanks to a blending of the Professorial and the Tutorial systems, thanks to the wedlock of College and Faculty, thanks to the permanent dialogue that this blending maintained between the students and the University hierarchy, thanks to the share that students had in University government, thanks to this that even the newest freshman had the privilege of a hearing, thanks also to this that the University, by Charter, is independent of Westminster, England remained unruffled by the student insurgency.

Since I was writing about the University I kept a watchful eye, and a keen ear, on what was happening; I listened to every account, read every document I could lay hands on, on these disturbances. I went to France.

Throughout that period, I was an academic on secondment to Government and held, successively, the Cameroon Deputy Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Transport, Post and Telecommunications, and that of Public Health and Social Welfare — a humanist among technologists. And, in the running of these Ministries, I endeavoured to prove that even Politics and Government can be scientific and philosophical, that administration is best when it is subject to reason and principle and not when it is based on scheming and expediency. The deference with which I was treated by the highest specialists and the deep and lasting friendship I won from the best among them, proves, that I was right, by and large.

*Then I returned to peaceful groves of academe.  
And I have been there for the past six years.*

The question that readers of my booklet, *To every African Freshman or The Nature, End and Purpose of University Studies* would ask, is whether the ideas I propounded ten years ago, on University Studies, on the organization of the University, on the characteristics of the sterling intellectual, the genuine University man, still hold good today, have remained firm and unchanged, in my mind.

I make simple answer : From an analysis of the causes of the global student insurrection of the second half of the nineteen sixties, from my experiment with intellectual Government, from my experiences since I returned to the seemingly peaceful groves of the academy — I am becoming daily more entrenched in my position, namely, in my views on the Nature of University Studies, in the overwhelming importance of what Newman called *influence* and organizations in the establishment and running of the University, in my convictions about the genuine intellectual, in the need for enlarging scientific

(2) John Henry Cardinal Newman, D.D.

L. On the Scope and Nature of University Education; *Everyman's Library*, N° 723, 1949.

R. University Sketches, Browne and Nolan, Ltd, Dublin, Text of 1856.

dimensions into philosophic horizons in University Studies, in this that, if the University does not teach a student to think, it has taught him nothing of genuine worth, has failed wide of its mark, and lastly, in this, which I know will be hotly contested by many, namely, that the University is not for a mindless mob but for the Talented Tenth.

I fervently endorse Newman's thesis that the University should open its doors only to those who come in search of wisdom; that to offer this wisdom, in all its dimensions, the University should seek to acquire, to develop, and possess, in fullness, the True, the Good, and the Beautiful and the Sublime in substantial being, should strive to explore all departments of knowledge, should exhibit all diversities of Intellectual Power, should enthrone Science, Philosophy and Taste as in a royal court, should recognise no Sovereignty but that of Mind, no Nobility but that of Genius; in other words, in order to promote these exalted aims, it should make perennial war against mindlessness, against mediocrity and ineptitude, against whatever smacks of the shoddy, should allow no room whatsoever within its domain to intrigue and expediency.

Furthermore, I fervently endorse the Newman view that, in the Academy, Professors should be rulers and that, therein, princes should do homage; for, except the said princes are seasoned academics themselves, they are in outland territory.

Such is my idea of what the University should be. And for it to attain these ends, for it to impart this manifold wisdom to the rising youth, for it to avoid prostituting itself, certain conditions are categorically imperative with regard to the choice of teachers, with regard to the quality of student, with regard to University organization.

### INFLUENCE

As regards the *Faculty*, that is, the teaching corps, it goes, as a matter of course, that each should be specialised in one field of learning and that they should possess consummate knowledge, should be skilled in dealing with youth. But, even with these qualities, they are bound to fall of the mark, if these qualities of mind do not blend harmoniously with certain qualities of heart: a professor should be a genuine Father, and junior members of the Faculty should be genuine Brothers, to the students. While judicious firmness should be the rule, there should be no room, whatsoever, in the Academy, for the overbearing bully, whose temper flares into blazes at the slightest misdemeanor, who is intolerant of any opinion that goes against his own, whose every pronouncement is *ex cathedra*, whose attitude to the students is that they are there to be seen, not to be heard, to listen, not to speak. This species of Don lacks that quality which Newman called Influence, that innate power to draw the rising youth athirst for wisdom, to himself, thanks to which influence the earliest Universities took birth and burgeoned and blossomed under eminent Masters like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; they lack that magnetic force, that charisma, by virtue of which a master, with a mind eruditely, and with a heart over-flowing with the milk and honey of human kindness attracts the young as

surely as nectar attracts bees, as surely as water seeks its own level. Such a master can mould minds and hearts, can wield far-reaching influence in the destinies of individuals and that of society at large.

*I repeat, (writes Newman) that contrariwise to Rome, it was the method of influence: it was the absence of rule, it was the action of personality, the intercourse of soul with soul, the play of mind upon mind, it was an admirable spontaneous force, which kept the schools of Athens going, and made the pulses of foreign intellects keep time with hers.*

*In the twelfth century, the impetuosity with which men rushed to that source of what they deemed wisdom, the great University of Paris, did not depend upon academical privileges or eleemosynary stipends, though these were undoubtedly very effectual in keeping it up. The University created patrons, and was not created by them.*

*Two characteristics, as I have already had occasion to say, are generally found to attend the history of science: first, its instruments have an innate force, and can dispense with foreign assistance in their work; and secondly, these instruments must exist and must begin to act, before subjects are found on whom they are to operate. In plainer language, the teacher is strong not in the patronage of great men, but in the intrinsic value and attraction of what he has to communicate; and next, he must come forward and advertise himself, before he can gain hearers. This I have expressed before, in saying that a great school of learning lived in demand and supply, and that the supply must be before the demand. Now, what is this but the very history of the preaching of the Gospel? Who but the Apostles and Evangelists went out to the ends of the earth without patron, or friend, or other external advantage which would ensure their success? And again, who among the multitudes they enlightened, would have called for their aid unless they had gone to that multitude first, and offered to it blessings which up to that moment it had not heard of? They had no commission, they had no invitation, from man; their strength lay neither in their being sent, nor in their being sent for; but in the circumstance that they had that with them, a divine message, which they knew would at once, when it was uttered, thrill through the hearts of those to whom they spoke, and make for themselves friends in any place, strangers and outcasts as they were when they first came. They appealed to the secret wants and aspirations of human nature, to its laden conscience, its weariness, its desolation, and its sense of the true and the divine; nor did they long wait for listeners and disciples, when they announced the remedy of evils which were so real.*

*Something like this were the first stages of the process by which in medieval Christendom the structure of our present intellectual elevation was carried forward. From Rome as from a centre, as the Apostles from Jerusalem, went forth the missionaries of knowledge, passing to and from all over Europe; and, as metropolitan sees marked the temporary*

presence of Apostles, so did Paris, Pavia, and Bologna, and Padua, and Ferrara, Pisa and Naples, Vienna, Louvain, and Oxford, rise into Universities at the voice of the theologian or the philosopher.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Cardinal himself was unparalleled in English University History as a towering example of influence. Newman died in August 1890, but his soul goes marching on, he is more alive today in University and Ecclesiastical circles than he was when he was alive; and, this, to the extent that his spirit so dominated the Second Vatican Council that some have not hesitated to acclaim it as Newman's Council. He was the quintessence of what a dedicated University don should be, what a Scholar should be, what a Churchman of sterling worth should be.

Truth is so difficult to cull from the vastly inscrutable Universe that dogmatism in the Academy should be absolutely anathema. Today the phrase 'Student Power' is in the vogue. And I fervently hold that students should be given a share in University Government, that they should actively vent their views and should not just be reduced into passive listeners; they should not only be seen; they are entitled also to be heard; and, if they have any views to air, these views, however unpleasant they may be, to the authorities, should be aired dispassionately, aired with the seasoned cogent reasoning of penetrating minds; not with the noise and fury of a rowdy mindless mob; aired without fear of reprisals; *alias verbi*, this freedom should be exercised scientifically and philosophically. Thus the student will win respect. Emotions in paroxysm, wild demands that University Government should be handed over to greenhorn freshmen, that the student should *dictate* what he is to learn, that the examination system should be scrapped, and any such strange and senseless clamours are absolutely anathema in the Academy, and should be held up to scorn as a startling irrelevance, worthy only of babbling mindless children.

Notice that I have used the word *dictate*. For today, some of the students in the University are far from minors. Some are even married men with heavy responsibilities, some come straight from such professions as teaching, administration, and have exercised authority, have tasted power, some are widely read persons, some are even writers! Therefore as firmly as I assert that students have no right to *dictate* to the Faculty, thus so firmly do I assert that they are entitled to air their opinions on what they need to be taught and on how they should be taught. But, as for the abolishing of exams, I will entertain such a view only when I am convinced beyond all shade of doubt that we have discovered a superior system for evaluating student success or failure.

Furthermore, just as I maintain that the attitude of the Teacher towards the Student should be that of Father or that of an Elder Brother, just as I maintain that all haughtiness and brow-beatings and shoutings—down and overweening airs of superiority, on the part of the University Teacher towards the student, should be anathema; just as I maintain that cringing obsequiousness on the part of Student towards Teacher is a degrading, mean, unmanly, baneful form of emasculation, and despicable sycophancy; just so do I hold that sincere, manly deference, genuine respect, is a duty rightfully due to the Teacher from the Student, in the tradition of healthy African mores. In the part of the country

from which I come, no personality is more loved, more eagerly obeyed, more sincerely revered than the Fon; he is held in awe, not in fear; his is a healthy rule, not a reign of terror. And if he goes wrong he can be criticised in his face; he may even be severely disciplined—but always with deference.

In our own school days we stood up with a 'Good Morning Sir' when the teacher walked into the classroom; in University, we stood up in silence, when the teacher stepped into the lecture hall, and took our seats when he had taken his, or motioned us to do so.

I cannot speak for every university in Africa, having visited none. But here (and it is principally to our students that I address myself) discipline seems to have gone to the dogs; with their heads stuffed with new-fangled ideas of emancipation and equality, to suggest to such students that they should stand up, when the teacher enters the hall, would seem to them an old-fashioned, insolent and irrelevant aberration.—Some sit at the back debating between themselves, as the teacher lectures, some (I hear) smoke, boos and cat-calls are not infrequent here in the halls of our academy.

With regard to academic raiment, the gown would be an object of scorn even to some University teachers. The thought seems to be that it is outmoded, especially in Europe whence it came; why insist on it in Africa? There is, and gaining growing currency almost everywhere, namely, the spurious, prevalent idea that whatever is new is good, and whatever is old is out of date and should be dismissed without appeal; and that whatever is discarded, especially in France, should be dumped, *ipso facto*, in Africa.

But my experience and philosophy are different: I notice, for instance, that the books that are used in primary school today are no match to the Atlantis Readers and the Michael West New Method Readers of our time, because the old Readers had a sound pedagogical philosophy behind them: the philosophy that, by and large, every child likes a story and that it is easier to engrave the vocabulary of a new language into budding autland memories through tales and stories, especially when told in verse, than through the use of descriptive or argumentative literature.

Today, it appears to me that writers of readers are motivated more by the insatiate thirst for gold than by any sound pedagogic principle; and they flood the market with a proliferation of books in rapid succession, making confusion worse confounded. This may partly account for the poor and yearly lowering level of standards in School and College nowadays.

The book-sellers exploit to the full the bent to believe that, because it is new, it must be better.

For my part, I would, while looking for improvements, cling to old, time-tested principles and uses until I have proved, to myself, beyond all shade of doubt, that the old should be dumped. For there are certain principles that remain the same everywhere, in every age, because they are embedded in eternal unchanging truth.

(3) *University sketches*, Brown and Nolan, the Richviews Press, Dublin, Text of 1856 pages, 84, 160–161, 158–159.

Thus I hold that deference to authority, on the one hand, and that giving a hearing to the newest greenhorn, on the other, should be part and parcel of the very substance of University mores. They say that the habit does not make the monk. Yet a monk in habit, in public, would be more likely to be conscious of behaving than a monk without one. So would a student in his academic gown. An academic gown, rightly understood, is the symbol neither of obscurantism nor of supercilious conceit; it is an outward sacrament instilling inward humility and outward dignity, instilling inward discipline and outward decorum.

#### THE INSEPARABLE TRINITY

Carlyle believed (and he is not without a following today) that a true University is a collection of books and that the influence of a living, breathing teacher could be done away with altogether.<sup>(4)</sup> Carlyle was not talking airy nonsense. After all, the first University ever, as we know universities today, The Museum of Alexandria, began as a collection of books. To conceive of a University, today, sometimes numbering tens or hundreds of thousands of teeming students, without books, is unthinkable and those who institute universities without making ample provision for books are guilty of a serious, even unpardonable crime.

To my mind, if you intend to create a genuine university and not a glorified secondary school, you must create, with it, this one and indivisible trinity : the University Library, the University Bookshop and the University Press; else you are but throwing dust in the peoples eyes; fooling them, that is, which is an exercise in futility; for, as Lincoln is reputed to have said : you can fool some of the people some of the time; you can fool all the people some of the time; but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

As anybody, who has any notion of the University ought to know, this institution has a twofold task, namely, Teaching and Research. Teaching and Research are the *sine qua non*, the very *raison d'être* of the University. The teacher must be steeped in scientific and philosophical knowledge, if he is to teach effectively and with authority. Yet no teacher is a living encyclopedia even in his specialised field, whatever that field may be. Therefore, he must be engaged in a relentless effort to keep widening the bounds and the horizons of his erudition, and this he can do only by unrelenting research; and if the result of this research is of sterling worth, both to other teachers and to the students, it would need be printed. Thus it is that every university worthy of the name must possess its own printing press. Furthermore, any student seriously committed to intellectual enterprise must begin, even in his undergraduate days, to create the embryo of a library of his own; for the needs not only standard text books but also books for extended reading; and what better guide can he have for this than his chosen field and allied disciplines and others farther afield in which he develops an interest, for general culture; and where else should he find these books than in a University Bookshop? As there will be other books above

(4) Cited by Michael Tierney, President, University College Dublin, in his Introduction to Newman's *University Sketches* Brown and Nolan p. XXXI.

what his little budget can afford, or books out of print, or ancient and rare manuscripts, the University library, well-stocked, well-run, becomes an absolute necessity.

This Trinity of Library, Bookshop and Press should be seen, at a glance, as a categorical imperative. But, is it not true that, in some countries in Africa, universities have come in to being through a political fiat for glossy prestige and not through academic initiative to satisfy a genuine thirst for Learning; is it not true that the running of universities, in the final analysis, is in the hands of persons who are anything you please, but certainly not seasoned academics? Is it not true that some universities are so riddled with political meddling that they have become all but political outfits or worse? Is it not true that in this mess some highly qualified academics prostitute themselves to the point where they lose intellectual integrity and become base scheming politicians, Machiavellians in the Academy? How can intellectual enterprise burgeon and blossom and bloom in such circumstances? Is it any wonder then that a good number of university men are not interested in scholarship, that in certain universities an alarming number of students distinguish themselves by a signal lack of interest in books, that some hardly read anything other than confused notes?

The degree or the diploma for earning a keep, in a remarkable number of cases, has become an end in itself, has become the *summum bonum*; while the student dedicated to Learning for Learning's sake is held up to scorn as a queer.

If the book, as Carlyle preached, does not regain its primacy, if students are not brought up to become dedicated searchers after scholarship, then whatever be the imposing number of universities that rise up in Africa, only those, who will not see, will not see that we are heading for a society riddled with mediocrity and ineptitude.

#### ORGANIZATION

Thomas Carlyle's thesis that a true University is a collection of books, can marshall solid arguments for its defence; but when Carlyle and his followers go on to say that the University can do away, altogether, with the influence of the living breathing teacher, Newman cannot go along with them all the way. For there can be no question about this that the role of men with talent above the ordinary has been primordial in the moulding of individual minds, in the shaping of society, in the creation of institutions. History abounds with eminent examples : the founders of the great religious persuasions : Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and even Newman himself; the promoters of great systems of Philosophy : Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Confucius; the creators of great empires : Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte; the engenderers of great political systems : Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Tse Tung — to cite but a few. It was through the influence of great philosophical geniuses as we have seen, that universities took their rise; and the impact of a great mind on the young is still a factor vivid and alive in School and College; many a man who has made his mark in life, in the world, will tell you : I owe what I am to so and so. Many of us can say the same of our humble selves, that it is thanks to the influence of such and such a person that we are what we are.

Yet the overwhelming importance of *Influence* was very effective alone when Universities consisted of a handful of disciples around an eminent Master. But, as numbers increased from a few students to hundreds and thousands, a new principle had to be found if the institution was to survive; what Newman called *Law* or *Organization*. Newman expounded these principles with the perspicacity that was the marked characteristic of that lucid mind, that sincere soul, that master of diction and style :

Taking *Influence* and *Law* to be two great principles of Government, it is plain that, historically speaking, *Influence* comes first, and then *Law*. Thus *Orpheus* preceded *Lycurus* and *Solon*. Thus *Deioces* the Mede laid the foundations of his power in his personal reputation for justice, and then established it in the seven walls by which he surrounded himself in *Ecbatana*. First we have the *virum pietate gravem*, whose word rules the spirits and soothes the breasts of the multitude — or the warrior — or the mythologist and bard — then follow at length the dynasty and constitution. Such is the history of society : it begins in the poet, and ends in the policeman.

Universities are instances of the same course : they begin in *Influence*, they end in *System*. At first, whatever good they may have done, has been the work of persons, of personal exertions; of faith in persons, of personal attachments. Their Professors have been a sort of preachers and missionaries, and have not only taught, but have won over or inflamed their hearers. As time has gone on, it has been found out that personal influence does not last for ever; that individuals get past their work, that they die, that they cannot always be depended on, that they change; that, if they are to be the exponents of a University, it will have no abidance, no steadiness; that it will be great and small again, and will inspire no trust. Accordingly, system has of necessity been superadded to individual action; a University has been embodied in a constitution, it has exerted authority, it has been protected by rights and privileges, it has enforced discipline, it has developed itself into Colleges, and has admitted Monasteries into its territory. The details of this advance and consummation are of course different in different instances; each University has a career of its own; I have been stating the process in the logical, rather than in the historical order; but such it has been on the whole, whether in ancient or medieval times. Zeal began, power and wisdom completed : private enterprise came first, national or governmental recognition followed; first the Greek, then the Macedonian and Roman; the Athenian created, the Imperialist organized and consolidated.<sup>(5)</sup>

Even, in the nature of things, the principles of *Influence* alone had its inherent weaknesses. Newman exposed them with his usual keenness of insight and penetration :

A popular Professor will be carried away by his success, and, in proportion as his learning is profound, his talents ready, and his elocution attractive, will be in danger of falling into some extravagance

of doctrine, or even of being betrayed into heresy. The teacher has his own perils, as well as the taught; there are in his path such enemies as the pride of intellect, the aberrations of reasoning, and the intoxication of applause. The very advantages of his position are his temptation. I have spoken in a former chapter of the superiority of oral instruction to books, in the communication of knowledge; the following passage from an able controversialist of the day, which is intended to illustrate that superiority, incidentally suggests to us also, that, first, the speaker may suffer from the popularity of his gift, and, then, the hearer from its fascination<sup>(6)</sup>)

Thus, in the nature of things, as a matter of course, the informal gathering of few disciples round one Master, inculcating into them religious or philosophical principles had to yield place to a well structured institution, with the ever increasing diversification of Learning into new and specialised fields, with the gathering years, and the gathering youth, namely, the University with its Faculties, with its Colleges, with its corps of Professors. Thus, *Law* or *Organization*, came, as an inexorable need, not to oust *Influence*, but to become its intimate and ineluctable ally in the inculcation, and the spread, and the consolidation of Learning.

#### THE MERITS OF THE COLLEGE SYSTEM

With the clear demarcation of Learning into specialised fields came, as I have just said, the Faculties with their Departments, with their Chairs, with their Chancellor, as a distant Superintendent, with their Vice-Chancellor or Rector as their immediate head, with their Deans, Professors, Readers, Lecturers, especially in Oxford and Cambridge, and in other universities organised according to the Oxon-Cantab model.

In the Oxford — Cambridge type of University, in order that the indispensable principle of *Influence* should be reinforced, the Tutorial System of Instruction was introduced to limit or eliminate the deficiencies of the Professional System which continued and continues, to hold sway, especially, in France and in French inspired universities abroad.

I was a student in the Sorbonne towards the tail end of the Nineteen fifties. There, at least at that time, and if my experience was general, contact between student and teacher, virtually, did not exist. At least, this much is certain beyond doubt : such contact, if it could be found here and there, was not established by law, did not become an institution. But in Oxford it was. There, thanks to the Tutorial System, and thanks to that particular Oxford and Cambridge institution, namely, the College, such contact, between the teacher and the student, especially the undergraduate student, still uncertain of himself, and of what he has come up for, is a regular if not a daily phenomenon.

(5) *Op. cit.* page 74-75.

This if so because, there, it is held as a fundamental principle that the University exists not only to dispense knowledge, but also to foster goodness, to nourish religious faith and virtue, and to inculcate discipline; that internal discipline of mind and heart and will which enhances knowledge and forges the University product into what Newman baptized the *gentleman*, but which I have called the genuine intellectual. It was after going through this system that I began to understand, what I did not appreciate as a boy, namely, the motto of our School, Christ the King College, Onitsha, popularly known as C.K.C., namely *Bonitas, Disciplina, Scientia, Goodness, Discipline and knowledge*. I even now appreciate why knowledge was named last; for without Discipline and Goodness, knowledge or Science can become a frightful force of destruction, for the individual as well as for the commonwealth.

If you are not convinced by my feebly argued case in favour of the College System, the testimony of Newman might win you over :

*Now, I have said quite enough for the purpose of showing that, taking human nature as it is, the thirst of knowledge and the opportunity of quenching it, though these be the real life of a great school of philosophy and science, will not be sufficient in fact for its establishment; that they will not work to their ultimate end, which is the attainment and propagation of truth, unless surrounded by influences of a different sort, which have no pretension indeed to be the essence of a University, but are conservative of that essence. The Church does not think much of any "wisdom", which is not "desursum", that is, revealed; nor unless, as the Apostle proceeds, it is "primum quidem pudica, deinde pacifica." These may be called the three vital principles of the Christian student, faith, chastity, love; because their contraries, viz., unbelief or heresy, impurity, and enmity, are just three great sins against God, ourselves, and our neighbour, which are the death of the soul: now, these are also just the three imputations which I have been bringing against the incidental action of what may be called the Professonal system.*

*And lastly, obvious as are the deficiencies of that system, as obvious surely is its remedy, as far as human nature admits of one. I have been saying that regularity, rule, respect for others, the eye of friends and acquaintances, the absence from temptation, external restraints generally, are of first importance in protecting us against ourselves. When a boy leaves his home, when a peasant leaves his country, his faith and morals are in great danger, both because he is in the world, and also because he is among strangers. The remedy, then, of the peril which a University presents to the student, is to create within its homes, "altera Trojae Pergama," such as those, or better than those, which he has left behind. Small communities must be set up within its precincts, where his better thoughts will find countenance, and his good resolutions support; where his waywardness will be restrained, his heedlessness forewarned, and his prospective deviations anticipated. Here, too, his diligence will be steadily stimulated; he will be kept up to his aim; his*

*progress will be ascertained, and his week's work, like a labourer's, measured. It is not easy for a young man to determine for himself whether he has mastered what he has been taught; a careful catechetical training, and a jealous scrutiny into his power of expressing himself and of turning his knowledge to account, will be necessary, if he is really to profit from the able Professors whom he is attending; and all this he will gain from the College Tutor.*

Moreover, it has always been considered the wisdom of lawgivers and founders, to find a safe outlet for natural impulses and sentiments, which are sure to be found in their subjects, and which are hurtful only in excess; and to direct, and moderate, and variously influence what they cannot extinguish. The story is familiarly told, when a politician was talking of violently repressive measures on some national crisis, of a friend who was present, proceeding to fasten down the lid of the kettle, which was hissing on his fire, and to stop up its spout. Here, in like manner, the subdivision of the members of a University, while it breaks up the larger combination of parties, and makes them more manageable, answers also the purposes of providing a safe channel for national, or provincial, or political feeling, and for a rivalry which is wholesome when it is not inordinate. These small societies, pitted, as it were, one against another, give scope to the exertion of a honourable emulation; and this, while it is a stimulus on the literary exertions of their respective members, is changed from a personal and selfish feeling, into a desire for the reputation of the body. Patriotic sentiment, too, here finds its home; one college has a preponderance of members from one race or locality, another from another; the "Nations" no longer fight on the academic scene, like the elements in chaos; they are submitted to these salutary organizations; and the love of country, without being less intense, becomes purer, and more civilized, and more religious.

My object at present is not to prove what I have been saying, either by argument or from history, but to suggest views to the reader which he will pursue for himself. It may be said that small bodies may fall into a state of decay or irregularity, as well as large. It is true; but that is not the question; but whether in themselves smaller bodies of students are not easier to manage on the long run, than large ones. I should not like to do either; but, if I must choose between the two, I would rather drive four-in-hand, than the fifty wild cows which were harnessed to the travelling wagon of the Tartars.<sup>(7)</sup>

As I have said already, I had the good fortune, as a student, to see the inside of, and have a close look at, Oxford and the Sorbonne. To obtain a place in Oxford it took me two years of mighty work, writing to every Master of every College in Oxford and Cambridge, before I was finally admitted into St. Peter's Hall, Oxford.

(7) *Ibid.* pp. 181-184.

When I went to enroll myself in the Faculty of Arts in the Sorbonne, it took me by surprise that my case was treated not by prestigious Masters but by secretaries. The young girls asked to see my degrees — and I have my doubts as to whether they understood what a B.A. Second Class Upper and an M.A., First Class Honours meant. But they put my name in the register, gave me student cards, and all was over! Thanks to the decision of girls I was now a member of the Faculté de Lettres of the ancient prestigious Sorbonne.

The difference was remarkable.

Thereafter, I became one of a nameless, faceless body of students. We trooped from one lecture hall to another but, outside of these, there was no chance of establishing contact with any member of the Faculty. I was in my thirties at the time and proud of my independent spirit. Yet, I felt lost and lonely in this big Sorbonne.

None of the Professors made any impact on me.

But, in Oxford, it was another story — completely. In St. Peter's Hall, we were under the fatherly care of a deeply religious Master, an Anglican clergyman, the Rev. Thornton-Jewsbury, who got up (it was whispered) every morning at five and went to the Chapel to pray for the students under his care. We ate together, after grace was said in Latin. Each one had a College tutor whom he had to meet at regular intervals to discuss their problems with him. The Undergraduates lived in the Hall under Spartan conditions.

In the Department of Education, we studied under the guidance of Mr. A.D.C. Peterson, M.A., the Director, one of the most cultured men I have ever met. There were lectures which you could attend or not, at will, according to whether the Lecturer was learned and effective or not.

But the weekly essay and discussion with your tutor was a must.

In Oxford we were not nameless and faceless, we were treated as individuals, each with a personality to be respected. For it was not just a question of being taught, being a passive estate consumer of Oxford Culture. No, you could pit your mind against that of the tutor if you were convinced that you had a point and could marshall arguments to defend it.

Furthermore, although I did my M.A. and Ph.D. Degrees in the National University of Ireland, my late, thanks to the British system of inter-University control, thanks to the tradition of External Examiners, lay in the hands of Professor William McCausland Stewart, M.A., D. Litt., of the University of Bristol, a Normalien, a Scholar in German, into the bargain, and a very fine poet; but one of the humblest men I have ever met. Once I went to consult him in Bristol. He invited me to stay with him, and, the following morning, there was a knock at the door; I got up, and opened the door, and there stood the Professor, tray in hand. He had come to serve me tea in bed! You can imagine my utter confusion at such extreme kindness and courtesy. Towards the close of my work, he paid me a sudden visit in Paris to find out how my thesis was going.

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then, at his invitation, we went out to dinner and, after that, to *Théâtre des Nations* to see a performance of *Antigone*.

Professor William McCausland Stewart influenced me deeply and indelibly.

The McCausland Stewart example may seem out of the ordinary, but I can assert that, in varying degrees, this concern for the student on the part of University Master, this contact, indeed this friendship between Professor and Pupil was, by and large, true of all the Professors under whom I studied in Ireland and in England. In fact it was thanks to the active interest and encouragement of my Professor, Ethna Byrne Costigan, with whom I have kept in contact from the fifties till today, and Professor O'Flaherty, and Dr. Servais of the National University of Ireland, and Professor William McCausland Stewart, that the idea of doing a Doctorate took grip of my mind and will. Today, in correspondence, Professor McCausland Stewart addresses me as 'Dear Colleague and Friend', and Professor Byrne Costigan says simply, 'Dear Bernard'. These are people to whom I owe whatever I may be today, if indeed I can lay claim to have become something.

And all this arises from the British system and spirit of University Organization.

In France I saw the Cités Universitaires at Boulevard Jourdain and Antony from the inside. You rented a room there and came and went as you pleased; there were *Intendants*, but who had nothing approaching the authority and influence and the awe — inspiring presence of an Oxford College Master, or the salutary contact and concern of a Faculty or College tutor.

A *Cité Universitaire* with its *Intendants* of no academic standing and prestige, with no official or personal commitment to the welfare of the student, may be good enough for post-graduate students, but I would seriously doubt its efficiency in the intellectual, moral and social development of freshmen in particular, and undergraduates at large.

And if to inherent deficiencies you add a policy (or a lack of one) which permits the robbing of young boys and girls pell-mell in the same pavilion, at an age when human instincts are very strong, and the said students can receive visitors till far into the night, I would think twice before allowing my son or daughter into such an outfit. And those who, seeing already the break-down of discipline in the secondary schools, knowingly or unknowingly, institute and allow such a system to persist, and go from bad to worse, should be told, in no uncertain terms, that they have instituted, not a system of higher education, but, on the contrary, they have created what Padraig Pearse, the legendary Irish hero of 1916, termed the *Murder Machine* for the moral and intellectual butchery of budding souls. Such authorities have no right, after this, to look forward to intellectual excellence, sterling moral calibre, firmness in the right, and a keen sense of public duty in the rising youth. What they should expect; what they deserve to reap, is mediocrity, ineptitude, moral decadence, a frightening sense of irresponsibility, and utter heartless callousness. And these

are precisely the evils that the discipline of the College System intends to fore-stall, in order to enable talent to burgeon and bloom and sterling characters to be built and a sense of keen responsibility for the commonweal, a keen feeling for others, to be instilled and fostered and steeled.

An Oxford College may look ancient and forbidding, but "stonewalls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage". A *Cité universitaire* may look as luxurious as you like, but it is precisely luxury, licence and *laissez-faire* that are undermining society today and making the prospect of the world of tomorrow a veritable nightmare.

In Nigeria, Ghana and other former British colonies the College System was introduced from the start, only they adopted the more modest name of Hall or House. But the spirit is the same and alive. One has only to look at the galaxy of Scholars and Scientists that Ibadan, alone, has produced in the last twenty years, to be convinced of the merits of this system.

But when I look around me, I am tempted to think that if the University we have does produce scholars and scientists (and we are still waiting for them) it would be, not thanks to the university, but in spite of the university.

An Ibadan alumnus produced the first Nigerian classic exactly ten years after the founding of the University College.

If you want my opinion, here it is straight and clear : I am for a system where undergraduates live under a seasoned fatherly Master, where discipline is fostered and enforced, where salutary pride for the House is furthered, where the spirit of community life and public responsibility is instilled, where the sexes live in separate halls.

I am not for a *cité universitaire* where individualism is rife and rank, where there is no authority to influence and inspire, where there is no discipline, and where promiscuity unfettered, unbridled, may turn the place, in the end, in spite of all its gloss, into a whorehouse.

#### DRILLING THE TALENTED TENTH IN THOUGHT

I am told that there should be no system of selection for entry into the University because in France the University is a democratic institution. I agree that, were the means available, no effort should be spared to create institutes of higher training, in various fields, to give each youth the chance of developing his special talent to the highest possible level; I believe that a university degree should confer no special status, whatsoever, of superiority; I believe that every calling, however humble it may look, has its inherent dignity, has its necessary place in society and that those who excel in that calling deserve the highest respect. Indeed, I believe that before God, the lowly before men may be big men, moral giants, while these who are the object of sycophancy or even of genuine respect among us as big men, may be dwarfs in God's eyes.

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All this I profess and more.

But I cling, unrepentantly, to the conservative view that the University is for the few not for the crowd, that the University is for an intellectual elite, the Talented Tenth, those endowed with the brains and the tenacity for learning and Research; that the University is not for the imparting of mere mechanical skills but for scientific and philosophical studies; that the purpose of the University is first and foremost to train the youth in independent and systematic thinking; that the University is there to create the brains of the community.

For no country can really progress, if, in it, there are lacking those whose principal and primordial duty is to think, for the commonweal. Their absence or deliberate suppression, leads surely, more often than not, to the common woe.

To sum up : I hold therefore that the primordial purpose of the University is not to cram young minds full of undigested information but to lay, in these minds, the foundations of systematic thinking, to drill and forge burgeoning brains in the scientific and philosophical approach to the problems of life.

*If a college doesn't teach a man to think his own thoughts and speak his own mind, it doesn't teach him anything of prime importance. He may accumulate any amount of book learning; he may be fluent in seventeen languages including the Etruscan; he may be able to square the circle. But if he comes out of college without the capacity to form an opinion of the way the world is going and the nerve to stand on that opinion in the face of stout opposition, he remains an ignoramus, though his degrees may take up half the letters of the alphabet.*

Thus spoke a certain Gerald W. Johnson, of the Wake Forest College Class of 1911, in the 1974 spring issue of that College's magazine.

But if you are inclined to dismiss this view as that of a faceless, nameless American, you would, perhaps, give pause and ponder on the convictions of a Master who, ninety years after his death, is as alive today in intellectual circles as hardly before and is studied with mounting awe.

*Mistaking animal spirits for nerve, and over-confident in their health, ignorant what they can bear and how to manage themselves, (boys) are immoderate and extravagant; and fall into sharp sicknesses. This is an emblem of their minds; at first they have no principles laid down within them as a foundation for the intellect to build upon; they have no discriminating convictions and no grasp of consequences. In consequence they talk at random, if they talk much, and cannot help being flippant, or what is emphatically called "young". They are merely dazzled by phenomena, instead of perceiving things as they are.*

*If consistency of view can add so much strength even to error, what may it not to be expected to furnish to the dignity, the energy, and the influence of Truth!*

Some one, however, will perhaps object that I am but advocating that spurious philosophism, which shows itself in what, for want of a word, I may call "viewiness," when I speak so much of the formation, and consequent grasp, of the intellect. It may be said that the theory of University Education, which I have been delineating, if acted upon, would teach youths nothing soundly or thoroughly, and would dismiss them with nothing better than brilliant general views about all things whatever.

This indeed would be a most serious objection, if well founded, to what I have advanced in this Volume, and would gain my immediate attention, had I any reason to think that I could not remove it at once, by a simple explanation of what I consider the true mode of educating, were this the place to do so. But these Discourses are directed simply to the consideration of the aims and principles of Education. Suffice it, then, to say here, that I hold very strongly that the first step in intellectual training is to impress upon a boy's mind the idea of science, method, order, principle, and system; of rule and exception, of richness and harmony. This is commonly and excellently done by making him begin with Grammar; nor can too great accuracy, or minuteness and subtlety of teaching be used towards him, as his faculties expand, with this simple view. Hence it is that critical scholarship is so important a discipline for him when he is leaving school for the University. A second science is the Mathematics: this should follow Grammar, still with the same object, viz., to give him a conception of development and arrangement from and around a common centre. Hence it is that Chronology and Geography are so necessary for him, when he reads History, which is otherwise little better than a story-book. Hence, too, Metrical Composition, when he reads Poetry; in order to stimulate his powers into action in every practicable way, and to prevent a merely passive reception of images and ideas which in that case are likely to pass out of his mind as soon as they have entered it. Let him once gain this habit of method, of starting from fixed points, of making his ground good as he goes, of distinguishing what he knows from what he does not know, and I conceive he will be gradually initiated into the largest and truest philosophical views, and will feel nothing but impatience and disgust at the random theories and imposing sophistries and dashing paradoxes, which carry away half-formed and superficial intellects.<sup>(8)</sup>

#### MORALITY SUPREME

Yet I must say that, with growing years, and growing experience, the primacy of morality, indeed of Religion, in University Education, is borne in upon me with a keenness daily on the rise. And how sad and painful and alarming it is to see education policies which not only ignore, or flout, things of such overwhelming importance and awe but have the ignorance or the insolence

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to jeer at them! They would do well to ponder these words of Cardinal Newman addressed to the Irish Hierarchy but which, mutatis mutandis, are aptly, merely and justly directed to any authority which would found or run a University:

Some persons may be tempted to complain that I have servilely followed the English idea of a University, to the disparagement of that knowledge which I profess to be so strenuously upholding; and they may anticipate that an academical system, formed upon my model, will result in nothing better or higher than in the production of that antiquated variety of human nature and remnant of feudalism called "a gentleman." Now, I have anticipated this charge in various parts of my discussion; if, however, any Catholic is found to prefer it (and to Catholics of course this Volume is addressed), I would have him first of all ask himself the previous question, what he conceives to be the reason contemplated by the Holy See in recommending just now to the Irish Church the establishment of a Catholic University? Has the Supreme Pontiff recommended it for the Sciences, which are to be the matter, or rather of the Students, who are to be the subjects, of its teaching? Has he any obligation or duty at all towards secular knowledge as such? Would it become his Apostolic Ministry, and his descent from the Fisherman, to have a zeal for the Baconian or other philosophy of man for its own sake? Is the Vicar of Christ bound by office or by vow to be the preacher of the theory of gravitation, or a martyr for electro-magnetism? Would he be acquitting himself of the dispensation committed to him if he were smitten with an abstract love of these matters, however true, or beautiful, or ingenious, or useful? Or rather, does he not contemplate such achievements of the intellect, as far as he contemplates them, solely and simply in their relation to the interests of Revealed Truth? Surely, what he does he does for the sake of Religion; if he looks with satisfaction on strong temporal governments, which promise perpetuity, it is for the sake of Religion; and if he encourages and patronises art and science, it is for the sake of Religion. He rejoices in the widest and most philosophical systems of intellectual education, from an intimate conviction that Truth is his real ally, as it is his profession; and that knowledge and Reason are sure ministers to Faith.

This being undeniable, it is plain that, when he suggests to the Irish Hierarchy the establishment of a University, his first and chief and direct object is, not science, art, professional skill, literature, the discovery of knowledge, but some benefit or other, by means of literature and science, to his own children; not indeed their formation on any narrow or fantastic type, as, for instance, that of an "English Gentleman" may be called, but their exercise and growth in certain habits, moral or intellectual. Nothing short of this can be his aim, if as becomes the Successor of the Apostles, he is to be able to say with St. Paul, "Non judicare me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi Jesus Christum, et hunc crucifixum." Just as a commander wishes to have tall and well-formed and vigorous soldiers, not from any abstract devotion to the military

(8) John Henry Cardinal Newman: *On the Scope and Nature of University Education*, Everyman's Library, N° 723, 1949, pages 41, 43-44.

standard of height or age, but for the purposes of war, and no one thinks it anything but natural and praiseworthy in him to be contemplating, not abstract qualities, but his own living and breathing men; so, in like manner, when the Church founds a University, she is not cherishing talent, genius, or knowledge, for their own sake, but for the sake of her children, with a view to their spiritual welfare and their religious influence and usefulness, with the object of training them to fill their respective posts in life better, and of making them more intelligent, capable, active members of society.

*It is a matter of deep solicitude to Catholic Prelates that their people should be taught a wisdom, safe from the excesses and vagaries of individuals, embodied in institutions which have stood the trial and received the sanction of ages, and administered by men who have no need to be anonymous, as being supported by their consistency with their predecessors and with each other.<sup>(9)</sup>*

Men who pass through this institution that has withstood the trial and received the sanction of the ages, become genuine intellectuals equipped with a scientific and a philosophical turn of mind, concerned about the lot of man, full to overflowing with the milk and honey of human kindness, strung up that, insofar as the True, the Good and the Sublime are concerned, the dimensions and the horizons of their knowledge shall wider grow still and wider. Yet in spite of this, they shall be ever conscious of their moral weaknesses and their intellectual limitations as frail human beings contrasted with the puissance and the unlimited, almost infinite, vastness of knowledge; and thus shall distinguish themselves by an uncommon degree of tolerance, meekness and humility.

Such a person I have baptised the Thinker-Scholar.

Thus, to my mind, thought, thinking, even for its own sake, should be his principal occupation, because without persistent systematic thought based on sound knowledge of men and of things, neither Science nor Philosophy nor Letters nor Virtue can burgeon and blossom and bloom.

#### THE UNIVERSITY AND SCHOLARSHIP

The big fat Shorter Oxford Dictionary (and I wonder what the full one must be like) tells me that a Scholar is a learned, erudite person; that Scholarship is the attainments of the learned erudite man; that it is Learning, Erudition coupled with proficiency in Language and Literature.

This last point deserves attention, for the Thinker-Scholar must share his knowledge, must become a Teacher at Large, if he is to be effective in his primordial role as Keeper of the Public Conscience. And how can he do this if he does not have an intensive and extensive command of Language and Letters. Therefore, it is highly desirable, yea, it is to be taken as rather in the nature of

things, that the genuine intellectual should be a writer of such skill and power that when he speaks men must listen whether they like it or not. Therefore, the consequent and logically one of the primordial purposes of University Education.

But neither effective thinking nor effective writing is easy. Gustave Flaubert, one of the greatest masters of French prose, complained of *les affres du style* — the agonies entailed in the effort to write finely, forcefully and effectively. This was no empty moan, for he toiled so hard at writing that he died at his desk, in the middle of a sentence. Newman one of the greatest masters of English prose bore witness to the truth of this assertion:

*Most men who have had to do with composition must know the distress which at times it occasions them to have to write — a distress sometimes so keen and so specific that it resembles nothing else than bodily pain. That pain is the token of the wear and tear of mind; and, if works done comparatively at leisure involved such mental fatigue and exhaustion, what must be the toil of those whose intellects are to be flaunted before the public in full dress, and that dress ever new and varied, and spun, like the silkworm's, out of themselves!<sup>(10)</sup>*

Effective writing is far from being an effortless matter of easy grace, yet the Thinker-Scholar, product of the University must brace himself for this anguish, for the pangs, the throes, the travail of thinking and writing with power, if he would influence the generations of his times and those coming after. For this, it is categorically imperative that he must shun delights and live laborious days. It is only through such Scholarship marked by felicity of phrase and pulsing with the power that comes from the possession of the True, the Good and the Sublime in substantial being, that the University can claim that, in it, there is no sovereignty but that of mind, no nobility but that of genius. It is only through this thorough, complete and unswerving dedication to Science and Philosophy and Taste, it is only through Scholarship of the highest worth through dedication to principles; it is only through this horror of expediency, through this intolerance of treacherous compromise; it is through their determination to stand up and be counted for the right even to the death, that Professors can claim sovereign rule in the Academy and expect, therein, homage from the Prince.

The independence of the University from the King is entrenched in this law, namely, that the University has no other Sovereign but Truth, — Truth in all its dimensions; — because the University stands for what should be, at all times and in all places, and not for what happens to fit the ephemeral convenience of a particular person or place, in a passing period : — because the University is dedicated to perennial principle and should on no account prostitute itself to transient expediency : — this worship of, this unswerving dedication to Truth, should be the cardinal principle of the University's Charter of Freedom.

(9) Op. cit. pages 34-35; 47.

(10) Op. cit. page 46.

Therefore, it is no excuse that the University is founded by the State, or even by the Church, for that matter, that it should cringe and cower to the accidental, unenlightened, and, sometimes fickle, frivolous, selfish demands of these institutions.

Any university worthy of the name shall guard its freedom with jealous tenacity, for it is the permanent guardian, as I have said, again and again, of Immutable Truth — while dynasties pass.

If this independence is not sanctioned by Charter, if the University is at the mercy of each party that succeeds to power, if politicians, as Bismarck did, usurp the right to dictate what should be taught, if the Ministry of Education has the right to confer state doctorates and aggregations *d'titre étranger*, as is the case in France, then the temptation to impose what pleases them, to impose those who please them, on the Academy, to serve their own ends, will be too strong for human frailty, too strong for human ambition; too strong for mortal fear. And the other temptation to yield to sycophancy, that craving to scheme for power, the social bent to besmirch and betray, to stab colleagues in the back; the temptation to sacrifice principle for expediency, for personal advantage, will be hard to resist, on the part of academics, in a world where the enticements of greed, or the craving for power, is overwhelming; where even what to eat is hard to win. Thus the sacred principle that man lives not by bread alone, that there are things of far greater import than food and raiment, than houses and lands will go by the board. If the king is wise, if the academic is true to his calling and firm in his deference to the prince, then the need will not arise for the state to dictate or even to suggest on whom University degrees should be conferred or what the University should teach; for the king will be fully assured that the academic is as anxious as himself about the commonweal and knows what to teach in order to make sure that the public good is not put in jeopardy.

Yet, winning a Charter from the political authority is only an extrinsic guarantee of academic freedom.

Intellectual integrity, total disinterestedness, a scrupulous adherence to Truth, nobility of character, dignified deference to authority, the cultivation of genius, and, therewith, sterling humility and self-effacement, malice toward none, charity for all, firmness in the right — these are the essential, inherent, intrinsic guarantees of academic freedom; and any rightminded prince will think twice before he attempts to toy with an institution where these virtues are enshrined, religiously.

Runaway ambition for extra-academic power, intellectual dishonesty, academic mediocrities and ineptitude, the arrogance of small minds, intolerance to dialogue, disarray and hostility and hate within the academy — when these run rife, the political authority have no choice but to step in and establish order, lest the corruption of the best should corrupt the rest.

There is no danger so pernicious, so far-reaching so catastrophic to the Academy as a factions, fending Faculty.

The surest way for the University to preserve, enhance and consolidate its freedom is to be unwaveringly and totally dedicated to its intrinsic calling. For, it is sometimes true, especially in countries where the University is young, without a long prestigious history to buttress it, without a time-honored University tradition to inspire it — it is sometimes true, in such circumstances, that the worst enemies of University freedom are the University dons themselves.

But if the genuine Universityman, as he should, strives to acquire Truth and Goodness and Beauty in substantial being, if his time is spent in the relentless exploration of a department of knowledge, if he strives to enthrone Science and Philosophy in his soul and being and life as in a royal court, if to him there is no sovereignty but that of mind, no nobility but that of genius, if he dedicates himself whole-heartedly to the acquisition of this sovereignty and this nobility, then he can be sure of the homage — lovingly or grudgingly given — of the prince. If in addition to this erudition, this share of wisdom that he contributes to the common fund, he possesses the powers of expression above the ordinary, then he has no need, whatsoever, to crave for political power or preferment, which can be given, today and can be taken away, tomorrow, by an overweening short-sighted prince or even by a furious mindless mob. For he possesses power that no one, except God, can take away.

He has the world and the ages for his constituency.

This is power, real, deathless supreme; for as that of the immortal masters, it can continue to enliven the minds, and leaven the lives, of men, even when the dust of ages is thick upon their graves.

Thus with passing time, and mounting evidence and experience, I am becoming daily more deeply convinced about the views I propounded on the Nature, End and Purpose of University Studies about ten years ago.

And if there is any advice I can add, addressing myself to African Authorities ambitious to found Universities, it is this: *Principia obsta*, — nip the evil in the bud; let them make sure that they know what the University is all about before they append their signature to a decree for the creation of one. There is nothing so harmful to a young university, nothing so harmful to a rising nation as hasty improvisation, muddleheaded bungling in its early running of this institution for the highest studies; nothing so pernicious to it as vested interests completely foreign to academic and intellectual enterprise. In this the warning of Aristotle is very pertinent: *Pervus error in principio magnum est in fine*: a slight error at the start can attain staggering proportions in the end.

The likelihood of this perversion and prostitution of the University stems from the very nature of things: random confused thinking is easier than well marshalled reasoning; laziness is, far and away, easier than taxing sustained effort; waywardness is easier than discipline; cruelty is easier than kindness; mindless shoddiness is easier than sound and scientific organization; and, as surely as weeds spring up without effort and a rich harvest is only won by the sweat of the brow, just so surely does vice wax rank and rife whilst virtue is won only by painful striving against the easy bent of man to thoughtlessness, to heartlessness, to lawlessness, to inherent human frailness.

No man, therefore, needs to be lectured on the overwhelming necessity of this, that, to found a university, worthy of the name, needs the best efforts of the best minds, in the selection of students and Faculty, in the elaboration of a system on which a sound tradition can be built and enhanced and consolidated with the passing years and with cumulating experiences; in the laying down of a sound system of Studies and Teaching and Research, in the establishment and the maintenance of standards solid and high. And by high standards I mean that University studies should begin with the laying down and the consolidation of first principles in every discipline, and that from there, they should aim at the attainment of the highest in Science, in Philosophy, in Scholarship. For it can happen that ill-equipped minds can set up a muddle-headed system where students get lost in mazes and labyrinths of confusion even in easy disciplines, and fail yearly *en masse*, while the makers of this state of things this confusion worse confounded, congratulate themselves because few survive as the result of their mediocrities and ineptitude. The test of a sound system, to my mind, is simple: can your alumni face their peers and prove themselves genuine equals at any time, anywhere, in the world?

From the fruit you know the tree.

For this a political fiat is absolutely inadequate, even uncalled for, a mindless irrelevance; the establishment of a sound University system must be, as I have stressed, time and again, the result of the best efforts of the best minds magnetically irresistible in influence, drilled and skilled in University Studies, in University Teaching and Research, drilled and skilled in University Organization.

It is a crime to toy with the founding of the University, a crime to run it lackadaisically. In the University laissez-faire is a crime. So is Despotism. Sane, rigorous logic must be the over-riding Rule.

If I put forth, as I have done, my own opinions about the creation and the running of the University, there may be those who would dismiss me as a starry-eyed idealist propounding the unattainable.

If I call to witness Cardinal Newman, who is unquestionably one of the most eminent men that Oxford has ever produced, the very quintessence of what an academic of sterling calibre should be, who founded and governed the Catholic University in Dublin for about eight years, he may also be dismissed as nineteenth century, and his ideas as a startling aberration in the second half of the twentieth century.

So let us take a look at a University next door, here in Africa, in Nigeria — Ibadan University — founded at five o'clock in the evening on the Second of February 1948, exactly thirty years ago, in three months time.

For those unfamiliar with the British system, it might be instructive to know that Ibadan did not begin with fanfare, as a fullfledged University but, very humbly as a University College under the careful superintendence of the University of London, and with the able and efficient guidance of its first Principal,

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Dr. Kenneth Mellany; and did not become an independent University till ten years after and more, when Nigeria became independent. Notice this also that in creating Ibadan, London University took for model the Oxon—Cantab System.

Institutions wax and wane, and burgeon and bloom, and wither and decay, and die. And Ibadan is only thirty years old. Yet well begun is half done. But if Ibadan has remained faithful to the spirit of its founders, one can say, without fear of erring that Ibadan ought to be, far and away, the most prestigious university in Africa, and should be able to stand the test of time. Still its scholars and scientists are legion already, and, among them, are men of intellect and integrity, men with cultivated hearts, men with a sense of duty and a sense of public service, a sense of self sacrifice, a love of humanity so deep, so keen, so unswerving that they can be the envy and pride of any country, anywhere, in the world; men who, in spite of the fact that their erudition and scholarship and achievements have spread their name around the globe, have remained, notwithstanding, remarkable for their sterling humility and self-effacement.

We have a shining example among us, the venerated, (though I know he will protest with vehemence against the word) the venerable Professor Ngu, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S. (London) F.R.C.S. (Edinborough) M.S. (London) Professor of Surgery Ibadan, Professor of Surgery CUSS, Cameroon, a colonel of the Nigerian Army, Laskar Prize Winner for Cancer Research and, presently, Vice-Chancellor of Yaounde University.

The Nigerian Government, unknown to him, were about to make him Vice-Chancellor of Ibadan University in 1971. I was at the time the Cameroon Minister for Public Health and Social Welfare charged, *inter alia*, with the formation of medical and paramedical personnel; and the Cameroon Medical School was barely three years old. And I needed him very urgently. I got wind of what the Nigerians were about to do and I wrote pleading with him to come back home. "Barring death I am coming," wrote Professor Ngu. And he did. He came home to less alluring circumstances, from every point of view, to those he had, without any illusions, abandoned, in Nigeria. Any person who has had the chance to know him at close quarters will testify with me that his love for this country is completely unalloyed. He is a patriot to the core. And no one will say that Ibadan had no hand in making him what he is.

Another example is that of the now world renowned novelist, Chinua Achebe, whom I know, not out of books, but as a personal friend. His name figures among those of the first students, the 1948 batch. According to the text I have in front of me, Achebe graduated in 1953 with a B.A. General along with the Cameroonian, Peter Efange and the late lamented Eric Dikoko Quan, Minister Plenipotentiary in the Cameroon Diplomatic Service, when he died.

Achebe brought out his first novel, the classic *Things Fall Apart* exactly ten years after the opening of the University. That Achebe today is the foremost African novelist, whose works have become Classics in his own life time (he is still in his forties) is proof of the solidity of even a General Degree in the Ibadan of his day.

It is worthy to note that the Scholars who have put Nigeria on the map for high intellectualism do not come from among those who went to Oxford, Cambridge, London or Harvard; they come from Ibadan, by and large. I did not go to Ibadan, but I taught some of those who went there and two of my former pupils were among the historic batch of 1948, and more went later.

Yet my eulogy of Ibadan is a eulogy by an outsider. And perhaps more convincing would be the matter-of-fact account of an authority who was one of its earliest Principals (1953-1956).<sup>(11)</sup> And I will content myself with citing from his book the passages which ram down the thesis I defend on the Nature, End and Purpose of University Studies. I acquired the book years after writing my essay. On the Nature, End and Purpose of University Studies.

#### THE WITNESS OF DR. SAUNDERS

##### Halls of Residence

The general plan of buildings on the college site envisaged halls of residence which would be arranged on the same plan as the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. Each hall was to be self-contained, with a dining hall and kitchens attached. All the meals were to be served in the dining-room, and for the living accommodation of students bed-sitting rooms were provided. Each student was to have a single room which was to serve both for sleeping and working and was fitted with plain furniture. Besides the bed, there were a wardrobe, a couple of chairs and a desk with some shelves for books. All this was provided by the College, as well as bedding. Decorations, such as curtains and rugs on the floor, were provided by the student according to his own fancy. The blocks of rooms were built in three or four floors and each block was one room thick. The rooms on each floor were approached by a passage which was open to the air and, on the other side, there were small balconies on to which each room opened, and a through draught was obtained by louvres in the walls. Each student, therefore, had the privacy which is so essential for study in a University institution.

Washing facilities and lavatories were provided at each end of a residential block. This design simplified plumbing since there was no need to carry pipes to any of the living rooms. In order to deal with the sewage from the halls a percolating sewage system, the first of its kind in Nigeria, was installed and made of sufficient size to deal with a very large extension of halls. This system depends on bacterial action for the destruction of the solid matter and purification of the effluent.

It was intended that each hall should accommodate between 150 and 200 students, and that, as at Oxford and Cambridge, a certain number of the senior members of the staff would reside in each hall. To

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provide suitable accommodation for members of the staff resident in a hall, small flats were attached, numbering about half a dozen in all, in each hall. A member of the senior staff was appointed to take charge of the hall and to be responsible for the general conduct of the students. He was termed the Master of the Hall and usually had one or two others of the staff to assist him, so that the system of Masters, Deans and Tutors which prevails at Oxford and Cambridge was carried to West Africa and adapted for Nigerian needs.

Until 1957 it had proved possible to maintain discipline without rigorous confinement within a hall after certain hours. No doubt there were infringements of the rules before this, but in the first term of the session 1957-58 these infringements made it necessary to arrange that the only entrance to a hall should be through a gate leading past the porter's lodge. The Principal ordered expanded metal barriers to be erected wherever unauthorised egress was possible. The students tore down these barriers. In the face of this flouting of his authority the Principal was obliged to act firmly and with the support of the Council he rusticated all the student body until the beginning of the second term. They were readmitted on each promising individually to obey the college rules.

#### Growth of the Library

The Library began its work in 1948 in temporary buildings and it was some time before a librarian could be found, but in December John Harris arrived from New Zealand, where he had been University Librarian at Otago. A man of great energy, he soon reduced the collections of books to order, catalogued them and made them available to staff and students. The immediate task of the Library staff at the beginning was to catalogue the available books and to get them on to the shelves. This was done with commendable rapidity and by the beginning of 1949 the essential services of the Library were in operation and assistants had been trained sufficiently to help in the placing of the books on the shelves and in arrangement. Some 28,000 volumes and 200 current journals were available on open shelves to readers. A reference room for staff was also available as was a reading room for students that seated fifty.

It was obvious from the first that the Library would have to be very largely self-supporting and the gaps would have to be supplied by copies such as microfilms or microcards. Microfilm and photographic equipment was therefore installed and its services gradually increased the range of publications which could be made available to readers. The microfilming service is now used to make copies of all the Nigerian newspapers. Besides reducing the bulk necessary for storage these copies will be more permanent than the originals, the paper of which is often of poor quality and the ink fugitive.

(11) J.T. Saunders, C. M. G., D. C. L.: University College Ibadan : Cambridge, University Press, 1960,

The Library now (1960) contains approximately 115,000 volumes and receives over 2,000 separate current journals and other serials. Its final capacity in the present building is 250,000 volumes and space for 250 readers. There is ample room for extension of the building should the need arise. It is open to all members of the College and to any member of the public who can satisfy the Librarian that he has a serious reason for using it. It is open during the term from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays except Saturdays when it closes at 12 noon. During vacations the closing hour is 6 p.m. All except a limited number of books in a reserved class can be borrowed, but they are subject to immediate recall should they be needed by another reader. The library is equipped both for the use and production of microfilms and photocopies.

#### The Printing Press

The necessity for having a printing press attached to the University College was apparent very early and the Librarian undertook the development of what has become known as the University Press; this is now housed in a separate building close to the Library and under the superintendence of the Librarian and his staff. The Press began in 1949 (one year after the College began) with a small platen press for the printing of forms and other stationery; since then a monotype machine and a rotary press have been installed to cope with the growing volume of work. With this machinery the Press can supply all the routine requirements of the College such as the printing of the calendar and reports. The Press has recently become a publisher. The first book to be printed and published by the Press was *A Chronicle of Abuja*, which was published on behalf of the Abuja Native Administration. This book, which ran to a hundred pages and was illustrated, was published in 1952. It was a translation of a Hausa manuscript. Since then several other books have been published, the most important being *Animal Classification* by Webb and Elgood, which was issued as an edition of 1,000 copies, bound in buckram.

#### The Bookshop

When the visitor approaches the main block of the administrative buildings of the College he will see a small one-storey building in a prominent position and may be tempted to ask why this small building is there in such an important position. The answer is that this building is the University bookshop, which developed because the supply of books in Ibadan was far from adequate for the needs of a developing university institution. It developed in connection with the Library but had a separate manager. The aim of the bookshop was to make available to students a comprehensive selection of books and text books such as would be found in a good bookseller's shop in a university town in the United Kingdom. The manager trained a small staff so that the bookshop was able to handle its own affairs as an entity distinct from the Library. It now sells books not only to members of the College but to

other institutions and private persons throughout Nigeria; in fact more than three quarters of its trade is outside the College.

#### Teaching and Research

At first the courses provided instruction only to the level of the Ordinary or General B.A. or B.Sc. degree. Honours courses have since been started in all subjects. Such courses demand a large staff and in some subjects the provision of honours courses had to wait until sufficient staff was available. Moreover it was necessary to adapt the courses to African requirements: Mathematics, Physics and the Classics (Latin and Greek) are the same the world over, but in subjects like Geography, History and the biological subjects at least some modification of the courses is needed and consequently different types of questions in the examination. These changes and the getting of approval from London University took time.

Another reason for a large staff is to allow the individual members time for research. Research is not a byproduct of the teaching profession, it is the *raison d'être* of a university, for universities must be continually developing learning, rewriting history and philosophy in accordance with modern discoveries, and inspiring students to push back the frontiers of knowledge. The latest thing is always a draw and so in a university the teacher who can tell students about the very latest things is a great attraction, but greater still if what he talks about is the fruit of his own discoveries.

#### Selection of Student

The problem of the selection of students had been to a certain extent, worked out by the Yaba Higher College which had been expecting students to read, in the first place, for the Intermediate examination of London University, whatever vocational courses they were to follow later. Since the University College was prepared to provide instruction for the Intermediate examination, a procedure similar to that used by the Yaba Higher College was used at the beginning by the University College. The Yaba Higher College year was the same as the calendar year and entrance examinations for that college were held in November before the beginning of each year. Since, it was known that in January 1948 the students of the Higher College would be transferred to Ibadan, the entrance examination in November 1947 might be regarded as the first examination for the selection of students for University College. In June 1948 another entrance examination was held for students wishing to enter the University College in the following October. About three hundred candidates sat for this examination and about one hundred were offered admission. The standard which the selected candidates were expected to reach was the old Matriculation standard in the United Kingdom. They were required to satisfy the examiners in four subjects chosen from a number, so that there were equal opportunities for science and

arts students, and every candidate was required to write an English essay. Candidates for scholarships took in addition a general knowledge paper. The entrance examination was held at ten centres which were widely scattered over the country and distance made it impossible for the candidates to have a personal interview. It was clear from the entries for this examination that science was more popular than arts, and that in science the tendency was toward professional subjects, such as medicine. This choice of subjects indicated that the candidates tended to regard university education as a means of getting a job rather than as an end in itself. This attitude to university education is not, however, confined to African students. Most European students enter the university with the same object, perhaps not so precisely stated, and only a few enter a university with the object of embarking on an academic career. When the University College began, there was a tendency towards a strict adherence to the syllabuses for examinations in the United Kingdom and modifications were made only with some difficulty because they might be considered as a lowering of standards. This conservatism, although it created certain difficulties, was an important factor in maintaining a high regard for standards and forcing the College to maintain, even raise, its standards in some respects above those of British universities. It was not long before letters appeared in the press from students and others who gave instances of candidates rejected by Ibadan being accepted for admission to British universities.

#### The Institution of the Hall System

Before the move from the temporary to the permanent site a warden, Mr. K.S. Lambert, had been appointed to take charge, under the Principal, of the general welfare of the students. In the Session 1949-50 the men students were divided into two groups in preparation for the physical separation which would happen after the move to the new site and residence in separate halls began. The women students formed a third group (or Hall III). In allocating the students to the groups, or hall as they were called from the first, care was taken to see that there was a mixture of tribes, and that so far as possible a hall did not become the preserve of a particular tribe. A Master for each of the halls was appointed from the teaching staff, and a Mistress for the women's hall. Members of the staff were allotted to each hall and from them, as an experiment, Directors and Assistant Directors of Studies were appointed. In addition, a system of moral tutors was initiated under which members of staff had several students allotted to them for social and non-academic purposes so that a close relationship between staff and students might be attained. The size of the College made these arrangements possible in the beginning, but as numbers grew the system was impossible to maintain for it is a system that depends on lavish staffing such as that found in Oxford and Cambridge. Nevertheless it undoubtedly helped to make known to the students the ideals of a university and the many customs and traditions that go to make a university a true place of education.

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##### The Student's Union

A Students' Union Society was formed in 1948. At first, without a leavening of members with past experience of student self-government, it showed signs of immaturity, but gradually it has settled down and now functions in much the same way as Union Societies in other university institutions. At first it was inclined to consider itself a union in the 'trade union' sense, that was there to bargain with the staff for privileges. Since at first there was naturally some lack of amenities it was not difficult to find grounds for complaint, and they found that there was a strong sense of student solidarity when the college authorities were to be approached to remedy a grievance. Unfortunately it was not possible to provide the union with any building which they could occupy as their own although sketch plans for such a building and a position on the site were included in the scheme for the lay-out of the permanent site. This omission has now been remedied.

All undergraduates are required to join the Students' Union and to pay an annual subscription of £1. 10s. 6d. (one pound, ten shillings and six pence) which is charged together with the fees for residence and tuition.

The Council of the Union is elected each academical year and is a representative body, each hall being proportionately represented. The officers of the Union, who are students, are elected annually. The Registrar, or a person appointed by him, is the Treasurer of the Union. The day-to-day management of the Union is in the hands of the officers and such committees as the Council may appoint. Many clubs are affiliated to the Union and membership of any affiliated club is open to all members of the Union. The list, taken from the College Calendar for 1958-59, gives a list of those affiliated clubs but does not pretend to be inclusive of all. This list well illustrates the varied nature of the students' leisure occupations, and is as follows : Mathematical Society, Science Society, Dancing Club, United Nations Students Association, Geographical Society, Thinkers' Group, Radio Club, Society for the Study and Promotion of African Culture, Political and Economic Studies Society, Educational Society, Musical Society. The College provides and maintains grounds for football, cricket, hockey, netball, and badminton. There is an excellent running track fully maintained by the College, and tennis courts. Facilities for table tennis are also provided. The activities of the several sports clubs are co-ordinated by a Sports Committee.

##### Academic Studies

However important these athletic activities may be, they are of much lesser importance than the students' academic work, mention of which has been left to the last so as to avoid giving the impression that the main thing in a student's life is sport. The academic studies of the students and the examination results are an ample justification for the

faith of those who were responsible for the establishment of the University College. It could not be expected that the first results would be the normal for a well-established university institution, but as the College has grown and the standard of entrance has risen so the results of the final examinations now show a due proportion of first-class honours. Already several of those who had earlier attained such honours have returned to the College as teachers after being awarded a higher degree for research at another University.

Such is the testimony of Dr. Saunders, foremost among the earliest makers of Ibadan University.

These citations from the account of an active eye-witness show how one of Africa's best Universities took birth and grew. It would not be a waste of time to sum up, for purposes of clarity, what these conditions and circumstances were.

First, at least in the early years, conditions for entry were very stringent; for the authorities aimed at using the cream of Nigeria's rising Intellect to give the institution a solid foundation; and in this they went so far as to establish standards higher than those in Britain. The harvest of thirty years has proved them amply right, has vindicated the policy of selectivism in University admissions.

Second, they provided a teaching corps of the best minds consecrated to intellectual enterprise, Ibadan owes a debt to the calibre and dedication of men like Dr. Kenneth Mellanby, the first Principal, Dr. Christoffersen, the Dane and (curious thing in colonial times) the first Professor of English, Dr. Saunders, Dr. Onwuka Dike, and other distinguished academics.

Third, in order to instil discipline, good morals, salutary pride, healthy teacher-student contact and comradeship, the founders instituted the College or Hall-of-Residence system after the Oxon-Cantab model with men and women apart.

Fourth, and this is worthy of special note, although Ibadan was a completely lay institution, religion, as a solid and powerful bulwark in the moral moulding of youth, was fostered by the building of Chapels and a mosque right within the Campus grounds and chaplains, university churchmen themselves, were full members of the academic staff.

In the fifth place, by the establishment of a free student government through an independent Students' Union, these students were trained for future intellectual, active participation in public affairs.

And, sixthly, all this was carried out under the vigilant trusteeship of the London University which laid down :

- (a) that a college should have reached a certain stage of development, that is to say, there must be an adequate staff and a reasonable number of subjects taught;

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- (b) that the control of the academic work must follow the constitutional practice in universities in the United Kingdom;
- (c) that the equipment for teaching must be adequate;
- (d) that the standard of entrance requirements be satisfactory.<sup>(12)</sup>

The British colonial system was riddled, like any other, with grave injustices and defects. Yet, credit must be given where credit is due, namely, that in the setting up of Universities in their colonies they respected the tradition of British reverence for academic excellence and freedom and established Universities that beggar all but the whole, and stand out as a shining example, in Africa.

I doubt that any other colonial government, or, indeed, any independent African government, for that matter, can lay claim to such credit for scrupulous concern to give to Africa Universities worthy of genuine, healthy pride.

When I survey the rise and growth of this noble institution, the University, from ancient days to our time, I pay homage to Alexander the Great, to the Church and the Monasteries of the Dark Ages, to Carolus Magnus, alias Charlemagne or Charles the Great,

But insofar as the University of our time is concerned, I salute John Bull.

For it is he who has kept and developed a university tradition that wins my homage and respect.

It is my conviction that political independence (if such a thing really exists) should not necessarily go pari passu with academic independence. For, more often than not, politics are based on, and guided by, expediency, not on the strict pursuance of truth and principle, not on what is, but on what fits: whereas academic enterprise, on the contrary, is intrinsically dedicated, or should be dedicated, to the unswerving quest for Truth, to the search for what should be.

It is therefore a serious mistake to confound the two.

I do not believe that it militates against genuine African interests if an embryonic African university, *ceteris paribus*, is confined to the trusteeship and guidance of a trusted and tested foreign University which, on its part, is shielded from political interference by a solemn, ancient Charter.

Hasty mindless improvisation at university creation and running, by non-academics, or pseudo-academics, or prostituted academics, leads unerringly to frustration and disenchantment, yes, even to vehement indignation and insurgency, as in the Nineteen Sixties, almost the world over, on the part of infuriated youth. Ignorance or deliberate fraud in founding universities heads,

(12) J.T. Saunders C.M.G., M.A., D.C.L., Principal, U.C.I., 1953-56 : University College Ibadan, Cambridge University Press, 1960, page 32.

as I have pointed out, for a society riddled with mediocrity and ineptitude; a state of things which (God forbid) could become a permanent, perennial malady.

### THE URGENT CHOICE

I have laid so much emphasis on 'thinking even for thinking's sake' as the target of University Studies, that I might have left the impression that I advocate a System of 'Knowledge as an end in itself', so aloof, so final and so exclusive and so absolute that the Gown should have no contact whatsoever with the Town, that the Academy should shun the business of the City, that the University should not be concerned about the needs of the individual or of the Community at large. Yet I have stressed, time and again, that the genuine intellectual is 'his brother's keeper' and should be imbued with a deep and abiding sense of duty, a profoundly conscientious sense of public service.

Still, the idea that there needs must be a utilitarian side to University Studies needs to be clenched and rammed right home.

A close look at each group of University disciplines shows that each group, in striving to push back the frontiers, to widen the horizons, to deepen the dimensions, of knowledge does so, not purely for the sake of Knowledge, but also, and essentially, to supply, with ever growing efficiency, certain specific needs of man.

The Physical Sciences — Chemistry, Biology, Geology, Physics, Mathematics — are particularly concerned with the need to feed, to clothe and to shelter the explosive population of the world; to shorten distance and conquer time by ever increasing speed; to make communication with the antipodes, and even between the planets, instantaneous; to make disease less prevalent, less debilitating, and render health more secure and more vigorous; to discover new sources of Energy to make the Sciences increasingly effective, and to save them from disappearing; for, if the sources of Energy are exhausted, not only the survival of Science, but that of the very human race, is at stake.

The Aesthetic Sciences — Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music, Literature — strive to slake

*'the thirsts that from the soul doth rise'.*

The Speculative Sciences — Ethics, Sociology, History, Geography, Political Economy, Economics — endeavour to supply solutions to the problems that beset society.

But taking into consideration our present particular, concrete situation, a singular problem does arise, namely, that of a vehicular language for Teaching and Research in our University with a view to supply our urgent and long term needs.

Cameroon being a bilingual country, officially, the University of Cameroon is, *ipso facto*, a bilingual University, officially. And here homage must be paid to the State, to the University Authorities and to the students for the effort they have made, in their various capacities, to make Cameroon stand out, as a State apart, in Africa, thanks to its official bilingualism in French and English.

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But the question can, and should, be legitimately asked whether a policy have since come to light to bring us to contemplate a change or a substantial modification of this policy?

Rightly seen, it is clear that the academic and intellectual searchlights must clear the darkness before the prince pronounces his political fiat. Therefore, while accepting government policy as a working hypothesis, the researcher must continue his work of collecting and analysing data in order to bring the prince, either to confirm his decree, or modify it in degree, or change it in kind.

Back in 1951, twenty six years ago, I saw the fervour with which Cameroonian, from either side of the Mungo, at home and abroad, embraced the idea of Reunification; so deep and strong and wide-spread was this enthusiasm that they could have danced in the very streets at the very thought that it would one day come true, although there was a naive touch to that dance. The question I asked myself then was whether analysis could reveal deep and solid reasons for this popular clamour, or was it just an ephemeral phenomenon. When I convinced myself that there were deep-seated causes for this fervour; that the chances were, ten to one, that Reunification would come, I decided to sit down to a thorough study of French — Language, and Letters and Culture. I began in Nigeria where there was not a soul around, for four full years, to give me a hand. Next I went to The National University of Ireland and consecrated a good part of another four years to the Study of French Language and Literature. Then I went to study in the very heart and citadel of French Culture, that institution rich in lore and in story, the ancient central seat of European Learning, the University of Paris, then popularly known as the Sorbonne. Finally I wrote my M.A. and Ph.D. thesis in French.

Could the French Language and Culture have found a more fervent and dedicated votary?

I convinced a younger friend of mine, now Dr. Paul Verdzekov, S.T.L., Ph.D., D.D., the Ordinary of Bamenda, current President of the Cameroon Bench of Bishops, to do the same.

When Reunification finally came, ten years after, we were more prepared for it than the politicians who had scoured the country stumping for a reunited Cameroon. We have both played a humble but, perhaps, significant role in this united country. I in the State and in the Academy; he as a rising eminent Churchman.

Thus no one can justly, and truthfully, point a finger at me as an enemy of things French; I that sacrificed a significant slice of my life and energy for their promotion.

Yet today, twenty six years after, surveying the situation in the world and seeing the solid unchallengeable facts before us all, who would see, and analysing the accumulating data, I have been forced to change my stand.

Today, I am still for bilingualism; but with a significant difference, namely, this, that I no longer believe in the equality of the two languages. My firm conviction, now, is that English, from my present point of sight, should increasingly become the first language of instruction in the University; indeed, that it should be elected as the first official Language of Cameroon.

Such, as I see it, is the urgent choice.

English should regain the historical primacy that it had, in this country, because it was the first European language to penetrate Cameroon long before German and French.

There are those, obviously among the French, yea, even among Cameroonian, who will be furious with me, as Jobert was furious with Giscard, for taking such a stand.

But, fury, here, is absolutely irrelevant, completely out of place.

The question that should be asked, and asked clear-headedly, and asked with composure, and asked for the common good, is whether the facts I put forward are historically solid, indisputable, undisputed; whether the conclusion I have drawn, from them, follows clearly, follows logically, follows with inexorable rigour.

True or false? — that is the pertinent question.

He governs well who foresees scientifically and philosophically by a meticulous and systematic examination of the facts before him, and by a cool and firm acceptance of the inevitable conclusion that emerges from them.

For it is far better to analyse reality in order to shape, direct, and control events, than to ignore that which must come, whether you like it or not, only to find yourself, one day, unexpectedly, taken unawares, and driven helplessly along like a sheet before the furious, inexorable wind of history.

This therefore is a question to be examined thoroughly, without ruffled emotions, without anguish, but with total and complete coolness of head and heart.

Indeed, when you look carefully at what is happening in this country, you will see that fore-sighted French-speaking Cameroonian have read the writing on the wall and are shifting, quietly, almost imperceptibly, from French to English. Nor is this discernible only among the far-sighted youth with their future still before them. You see it among parents who would lose no opportunity to send their children to English Schools. You see it in the growing number of Francophones doing their studies in Anglo-Saxon Institutes of Higher Learning, especially in American Universities. There is already a scattering of them back home with Ph.Ds; and I do not discern in any of them any hankering after a *Doctorat d'Etat* or *agregation* which, here, is supposed to possess more

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prestige. They have found that facilities for research, in the United States, the Almighty Dollar, are so far superior to those in France or Great Britain, that they become solidly sure of themselves and confident of their academic attainments and stature. Some in this category of Francophone Cameroonian have such a solid command of the English Language that one would hardly suspect that they had a French back-ground at all. They certainly know on which side their bread is buttered; for the future is theirs within and without the Academy.

I say that unchallengeable facts have led me to change my stand, radically, on the Nature of Cameroon Bilingualism; and I am telling my countrymen that the need for a revision of our language policy is a pressing imperative.<sup>+</sup>

Now, what are these facts?

Number one : before the Second World War, the British Empire, for long, never set. And the English Language, thanks to that Empire, had spread over a sizeable portion of the World.

Number two : after the War, the all-out aggressive American bid for world hegemony, in order to stem the tide of Communism, has brought English, together with American influence, to almost every corner of the world. Indeed, if there were inhabitants on the Moon, the first language, ever, that they would have heard and learnt, would have been English, because the very first utterance on that planet was in English : "One small step for man, one big leap for humanity."

The first man to land on the Moon, said this or something very near it. The first book to reach the Moon was the Bible — in English.

Number three : out of the nine present Common Market countries, at the very least, six, and at the most, eight, would prefer to do business in English — England, Ireland, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Flemish Belgium, Italy and Luxembourg.

Number four : thanks to the phenomenal American progress, in all dimensions, English has become the Language of Science, the Language of Technology, the Language of Big Business, the Language of Global Diplomacy. Every well-advised student in any scientific discipline or in any discipline where research entails the expenditure of immense sums of money, knows that the best books in that field are in English.

World Trade thrives in English.

<sup>+</sup> For more details see my article on Education Through Literature August 1977; A paper read and debated at the Seminar on the Teaching of English, organised jointly by the Cameroon Ministry of Education, The British Council and the American Cultural Centre, Yaounde, 16–26 August 1977.

This year, at the North-South Conference held in the very stronghold and heart of French Culture, the City of Paris, every working document was in English.

The United Nations thinks in English and the O.A.U. is bound to follow suit, if it has not already.

French is no longer the Diplomatic Language that it was for centuries, and, consequently, its status as a world language is seriously threatened, if, already, it has not been undermined beyond repair. Indeed, as a Cameroonian in France remarked, English is taking over even at Orly Airport!

In Europe, French has lost its position as the first Cultural Language. Outside of France itself, it is spoken by a minority in Switzerland; it is the language of a dwindling minority in Belgium where the Flemish with waxing power are bent on war to the knife, on French.

In the New World, it is clung to almost with the hysteria of the frightened, by a minority, in Quebec, engulfed by an Anglo-Saxon throng over two hundred million strong.

Curious thing, Africa has become the guarantee of Lebensraum for French in the world, *la caution africaine*, as the French themselves put it. Yet even this guarantee is an illusion; for, population-wise, all the French-speaking African countries put together do not amount to one third or even one quarter of giant Nigeria. And Nigeria is, perhaps, the biggest market for French cars in Africa. Nigeria has forced America to change her Southern Africa policy. *A fortiori*, Nigeria can dictate terms to France; while the French African countries must still bear the burden of an overbearing France.

Such is the situation in the world today — the omnipresent, the all-penetrating, the all-pervading, the inescapable, the inexorable Anglo-American cultural and linguistic hegemony, — a cultural imperialism to which, sooner or later every one must bow, will he, nill he.

I do not see any other force to arrest it; and, if we cannot dump it, we have no choice but to lump it. It is not our wish. It is not our creation. It has come uninvited.

No one is, perhaps, more conscious of, this, that French as a world language is on its death bed, than the French themselves. The prestigious Académie Française, alarmed at the rate at which French was being invaded and adulterated by English took measures to arrest the advance of this *Franglais* and purify the French Language. But there are certain forces so powerful that their advance cannot be halted even by the most stringent, and firmest, and sternest Legislation. A Secretariat of State has been created in the French Prime Minister's Office to fight to restore French to its pristine prestige, to salvage what might already be unsalvageable.

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This year, in an article that appeared in the English paper, *The Guardian*, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing violently to task for aiding and abetting the fall of French, for speaking English on official occasions even where, according to Jobert, he could avoid it; and thus for failing to take up the cudgels in defence of French, as the Constitution demands. But Giscard is a victim of an irreversible historical process and, therewithal, a practical politician that has no patience with out-moded mindless jingoism.

There is disquiet, and anguish, and anger, in France, at this inexorable phenomenon.

But this need not be.

What has happened, or is happening, to French, has happened, time and again, in history. Greek rose and fell, Latin rose and fell. But, in the heyday of these cultures, they looked so solid, so impregnable, that anybody who predicted their demise would have been liable to be examined for sanity. So, as surely as English is waxing today, just so surely will English wane and die, one day, yielding place to new.

Therefore there is no reason for the French to feel hurt; rather, being faithful sons of René Descartes, they should face the situation with a Cartesian, philosophical *sangfroid*; and not with a blind irrational emotionalism reft of composure.

The Chinese language is the most widely spoken, population-wise, in the world. But the level-headed Chinaman knows that Chinese is not for export, at least not in the foreseeable future. The Chinese do not waste time moaning and groaning over this, but are busy exporting Maoism, far and wide, through other peoples' languages. The Soviet Union is one of the two Super-powers dictating its will and Lenin's ideology to millions and millions round the world; but not in Russian, by and large.

Only a man out of his mind will rub his hands, at the French discomfiture with unhealthy, unholy, mindless glee; or will stomp for a total dumping of French.

I, for my part, and with deep sincerity, would have Cameroonian, if I could, to study as many languages as possible, because studying a new language is entering a veritable new universe, and that is always a cultural enrichment.

But it is our duty to watch the world with scrutiny in order to see, not only situations that have arrived, but also those in the offing, those whose time has not yet come; to collect facts and data, to examine them intensively, extensively, coldly, dispassionately, and with intellectual honesty; it is our duty to scrutinise them with our minds shorn of foregone conclusions, to analyse them without mindless mirth or needless bitterness, and draw, from them, the conclusions that follow with syllogistic rigour.

If, in this particular case, we see that Science, Technology and Research are the levers that lift the world of today, and that we cannot effectively master Science and Technology without mastering the language of Science and Technology; if English is this language so absolutely necessary; and, if we conclude, as a logical consequence, that the progress of no country should be sacrificed or jeopardised to save another country's face, and that English must, therefore, become the first foreign language of this country, within the Academy, without the Academy; then we must say so, and say so without pleasure, and say so without rancour, and say so without wincing, and say so without gloating, and say so without mincing, and say so remorselessly, and say so unhesitatingly, and say so unrepentantly—and say so categorically.

### CREDO

I believe in John Henry Cardinal Newman, Fellow of Oriel and Trinity, Oxford, Founder and First Rector of the Catholic University, of Dublin, one of the greatest (if not the greatest) authorities on University Education, himself among the finest (if not the finest) scholars of the last century; one of the very greatest masters of English style, the most eminent Churchman since a hundred years and more, whose insights and ideas were so far ahead of his time that he was misunderstood, maligned, ill-treated and officially relegated to the limbo of obscurity till late, very late indeed, in life, and lived under a cloud of suspicion for decades. But today, while his contemporaries, his maligners are themselves in limbo, the soul of Newman goes marching on, more alive today than in his time. His ideas, as I have said, influenced the First Vatican Council, and dominated and took control of the Second, a hundred years after.

I believe with him that the University should be an ideal land, a central Metropolis of Learning; I believe that, there, the True, the Good and the Sublime should be found in substantial being; that, there, all departments of Truth, in all its dimensions, should be explored, and all diversities of intellectual power exhibited; I believe, as he did, that in the University, Science, Philosophy and Taste should be majestically enthroned as in a kingly court.

I believe, with Newman, that, in the University, there should be no sovereignty but that of mind, and no nobility but that of genius.

I believe that, in the academy, rule should belong to Professors, and that, therein, princes should do homage.

I believe that for Professors to merit this homage, for them to ward off the prince's interference in academics, their learning should be solid, their disinterestedness, towards non-intellectual power, beyond all shade of doubt, their humility genuine, their hearts over-flowing with the milk and honey of human kindness, their integrity unquestionable, their firmness in the right unshakeable, their word and pledge absolutely inviolate, their sincerity transparent.

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I believe that it is Professors imbued with these qualities that can exert, with efficiency, that influence which is indispensable for the esse of the University, and can set up, with effectiveness, and run, with skill, that organization absolutely necessary for the *bene esse* of the University.

I firmly believe and profess that thinking, even for its own sake, is the final end of Academic Enterprise; that in order to teach the youth to think, coherently, unerringly, intensively, extensively, every University discipline should be inculcated scientifically and philosophically; and I believe fervently that for this, the Scientific Method and Philosophy should become a categorical imperative, right from the start, in every department of University Studies.

I believe that this scientific and philosophical training coupled with daily contact with teachers of genuine, of sterling worth, will imbue, will instil, both the mind, and the heart, and the will of burgeoning youth with such sound principles of life that discipline, for them, will become a powerful influence welling freely, from within, and not an imposition, from without, by a resented iron fist.

I believe that the College System that has withstood the test of centuries, in Oxford and Cambridge, is the most efficient instrument of University Education. I believe that a rigid and artificial separation of the sexes in the academy is undesirable, were it even possible. Still I strongly and stoutly believe that to throw young men and women pell-mell into a *cité universitaire*, without guidance, without safeguards, without restraint, at a period in life when passions, even when unprovoked, can become over-powering, is an unpardonable crime.

I believe that, while provision should be made, for each rising citizen, to develop whatever skill or talent, with which he is blest by birth, through the establishment of specialized schools, the University, consecrated, as it should be, to scientific and philosophical studies, should be reserved for those who are capable of scientific and philosophical studies. I believe that just as it would be unjust, to society, to waste precious time in a bootless futile exercise to turn a skilled smith into a philosopher, it is equally unjust to strive to forge a smith out of one endowed with philosophical powers of mind. I believe that the University, at least in its early stages, should be concerned with the cultivation of the carefully selected and tested brains of the commonwealth. I believe, firmly and truly, that the University is meant, not for the many, but for the few, not for the ungifted crowd but for the Talented Tenth. I believe that it is only by such selectiveness that it can give, to the community, genuine votaries of the True, the Good and the Sublime and faithful Keepers of the Public Conscience, devoted to public service and to the common well-being.

I believe that, if the university does not produce, in growing abundance, this prototype with sharp and ordered mind, brimming with knowledge and seeking it to his dying day, humane in heart and firm in the right, it has failed in its primordial, intrinsic and essential purpose.

I believe in God, as the fount and origin, the final end, the alpha and the omega, of all Truth and Goodness and Sublimeness. I believe that no rights-minded

makers of Universities should ignore (not to speak of spurning) that Science which strives to make man's knowledge of Him more profound; they would be omitting a vitaliest link, in the chain of College Knowledge.

I believe then with Newman that,

*if the various branches of knowledge  
which are the matter of teaching in  
a University, so hang together, that none  
can be neglected without prejudice to the  
perfection of the rest, and that, if  
Theology — Natural Theology, that is — be  
a branch of knowledge of wide reception,  
of philosophical structure, of unutterable  
importance, and of supreme influence, the  
ineluctable conclusion to which we are brought  
from these premises is that to withdraw  
Theology from the Public Schools is to impair  
the completeness and invalidate the trust-  
worthiness of all that is actually taught in  
them.<sup>(13)</sup>*

I believe; therefore as Newman did, that the thought of God and nothing short of it, is the happiness of man.

I believe with Augustine of Hippo, Saint, Philosopher and Doctor of the Church, that God made us for Himself and that our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.

I believe with Socrates, the immortal Philosopher

*that happiness does not consist  
in luxury and extravagance;  
that the gods are perfect because  
they need nothing;  
that to want nothing is to resemble  
the gods;  
that to want as little as possible  
is to make the nearest approach  
to the gods;  
that the Divine nature is perfection;  
that to be nearest of the Divine  
nature is to be nearest to perfection.<sup>(14)</sup>*

(13) Charles Stephen Dessain : John Henry Newman, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1971, page 103.

(14) Xenophon, Memorabilia of Socrates, Socratic Discourses, Everyman's Library, N° 457, 1954, page 32.

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I believe with Sophocles, perhaps, the greatest dramatist the world has ever seen, that

*Of happiness the crown  
And chiefest part,  
Is wisdom, and to hold  
The gods in awe; (that)  
This is the law  
That seeing the stricken heart  
Of pride brought down  
We learn when we are old.<sup>(15)</sup>*

I believe that it is by holding firmly, fervently, unwaveringly, to this corpus of essential principles, I believe that it is by inculcating them scientifically and philosophically, that the University can instil genuine, sterling, steep, unalloyed Wisdom, in whatever place, in whatever period, it lives, and moves, and has its being, in the total *Orbis terrarum*.

Yaoundé  
19 November, 1977.

(15) Sophocles — The Theban Plays — Antigone : Penguin Classics Translated by E.F. Watling, page 162.

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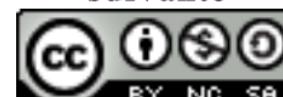


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