

FROM CATHEDRAL SCHOOLS TO *STUDIA* *GENERALIA: EX CORDE ECCLESIAE*

Introduction

The *incipit* of Pope John Paul II's apostolic constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex corde ecclesiae*, reflects a basic insight that the latter are part of a tradition that is linked to the very origins of the university as an institution. The constitution continues by pointing out that the university has always been a centre of creativity and a beacon of knowledge for the good of humanity which as a *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* has devoted itself to research, teaching and the formation of students freely joined with their teachers in the same love of learning. While the precise juridical foundation of what would be termed formally a «Catholic University» is relatively recent, the link to its earlier origins is of some significance. In an issue dedicated both to the idea of a university and to an individual who was Rector of one the historical origins of the university remains of some importance especially in terms of what light this might shine on our present understanding of and approach to universities and higher education in general. Put in another way that medieval masters and students would readily have understood, the present is a brief gloss on the phrase *Ex corde ecclesiae*.

The origins of the university still remain both complex and at certain key points obscure even despite the enormous advances in scholarship that have characterized research in this area since the extraordinary and still invaluable work of H. Rashdall at the end of the nineteenth-century¹. Scholars are nonetheless at one in holding

¹ H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols., Oxford 1895; new edition by F.M. Powicke and A.B. Emden, 3 vols., Oxford 1936. For particularly important general works that include the results of scholarship after Rashdall, see J. Verger, *Les universités au Moyen Age*, Paris 1973; G. Arnaldi,

that universities are a creation of the middle ages, appearing for the first time between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries. They arose in a specific historical context and gradually emerged with certain characteristics and a relatively clear *modus operandi*, though naturally each institution retained its own particular characteristics.

From Cathedral School to University

The rise of the medieval universities did not occur in an educational vacuum but rather they are intimately linked with another important phenomenon of education in the middle ages, namely the cathedral schools². While in Italy a number of lay schools existed (Rome, Ravenna, Pavia), elsewhere the schools were generally connected with the Church and were built on the principles established in the Carolingian age. Charlemagne initiated a clear educational policy which he promoted and sought to enforce as one, albeit important, aspect of a wider social and religious transformation of the Frankish peoples. The revival of letters and learning was part of that revitalization of Frankish society. His famous capitulary of 789, the *Admonitio Generalis* (c. 72), required bishops and monks to establish schools to teach the psalms, music, singing and grammar.³ We know of the schools attached to the cathedrals or the *regia*, though a number of monasteries responded with particular vigour as the schools of Fulda, St. Gallen and Corbie demonstrate. In general before 1100 the scholarly system was characterized by a dual pattern of monastic and cathedral schools.

The twelfth-century witnessed a perceptible shift within the scholarly system: from an educational structure dominated by monastic requirements to one where cathedral schools and other

Le Origini dell'Università, Bologna 1974; A. B. Cobban, *The Medieval Universities: their development and organization*, London 1975; *A History of the Universities in Europe*, vol. 1, *Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. H. De Ridder-Symoens, Cambridge 1992.

² For an excellent study, see C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envt of Angels Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200*, Philadelphia 2000.

³ Ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capit.* I, Hannover 1883, 52-62.

non monastic schools became more influential. The reasons for the relative decline of monastic schools is complex but the cathedral schools were more solidly based in a world that was undergoing fundamental economic and social changes that in turn would have profound effects on education, especially higher learning. In this changing reality, the cathedral schools were generally more vital and energetic than their monastic counterparts. This closer connection with the world is reflected in their offering of some form of career training for would be future administrators in both civil and ecclesiastical spheres. Information on their operation is not extensive though some evidence exists from the letter (c. 1065) of the schoolmaster Godwin of Metz to his pupil Wachter, and for the middle of the twelfth-century the description by John of Salisbury of the teaching practices of Bernard of Chartres reported in his *Metalogicon*. Directed by a *magister scholarum*, who was subordinate to the bishop, they offered a basic education, teaching literary skills and some rhetoric both of particular use to future administrators. Generally the method followed was that established by Alcuin, of which were the seven liberal arts were the basis and theology as the apex, all founded on a limited though set number of texts. There was a fixed method: the reading of the text (*lectio*), comments by the master to establish the literal sense of the text (*sensus*) which then led to the presentation of the more profound and hidden sense (*sententia*). Alongside the transmission of the intellectual inheritance, one other function of the cathedral schools seems to have been instruction in *mores*, namely behaviour and personal deportment.

The system of education at the cathedral schools appears as relatively static. Investigation and an inquisitive approach seemed to be unnecessary as the practical and utilitarian focus tended to eliminate the need to pose many questions or at least those that might provoke a rethinking of fundamental questions presented in the texts under consideration. From around the mid eleventh-century there are indications of a change in the traditional pattern. As a consequence of an emerging cash economy monastic schools opened their doors to paying pupils who did not intend to become monks. This resulted in the establishment of what would come to be known as the «external schools» of the monastery. Bec is a good example of this momentum. Under Lanfranc, Bec's external school provided an education for those seeking relatively advanced learning along-

side education for beginners. We know that it attracted Anselm who directed it and for a time it became a recognized leading school. The rise of Bec points to one significant characteristic of the recognized monastic and cathedral schools: their fame and hence ability to attract students and indeed other masters turned greatly on the fame of individual masters.

These changes in the traditional pattern of education are evidenced in the growing prominence and reputation of a number of other schools in northern France. We know that Rheims maintained a powerful tradition until sometime in the 1120's. Chartres, under Bernard (d. 1130 circa) was flourishing at the beginning of the twelfth-century, especially as a centre of grammar and basic linguistic skills. Laon was known for its theological teaching especially due to the influence of individual masters: Anselm of Laon (d. 1117) and his brother Ralph (d. 1134/5).

The developments in and challenges of education were linked also to highly significant and potentially powerful intellectual currents that would in turn significantly affect the nature of the cathedral schools and to a certain extent their demise with the consequent rise of the universities. Of particular importance was the enhanced use of the dialectic method as a foundation for teaching in general but of particular relevance for theological education. We have only a limited understanding of theological education before 1100 though it was centred on the Bible and the reading and explanation of its text. There were intense theological debates as the case of Berengar's ideas on the Eucharist and Lanfranc's passionate response illustrate, but with the adoption of an approach to theology based on the principles of dialectic, a variety of new and energetic intellectual possibilities opened.

Anselm as head of the school at Bec changed the content and the spirit of theological teaching as he developed a theologically rational approach to understanding the mysteries of the faith, but it is especially with Abelard at Paris that dialectic forcefully influences and determines the future path of theological education. His famous *Sic et Non* (1135 circa) illustrated how dialectic could be used to overcome the contradictions and the obscurities apparent in the Bible and Church Fathers. His *Introductio ad theologiam* (1136–1140) provides an approach to rational theology though it did find severe critics. This new approach was not always readi-

ly accepted, as Bernard of Clairvaux's reactions evidence, and it continued to cause difficulties. In the 1180's Roscelin, teaching at secular schools in northern France, used logical deductions to untangle the mystery of the Trinity much to the discomfort of Anselm. Whatever the academic and ecclesiastical debates, dialectics stimulated a new approach to texts including the sacred ones. It provided a fundamental intellectual basis that stimulated new questions along with a new approach to the text.

The approach to the older and settled texts was complemented and enhanced by the appearance of new texts especially from the greek tradition that had been generally ignored in the Carolingian era. The famous phrase of Charles H. Haskins, «the renaissance of the twelfth-century» aptly captures the new and energetic approach to and development of a series of interrelated movements, a number of which would be determinative of and favourable to the transformation of the life of the schools and to the eventual rise of the universities. An important aspect of this renaissance was connected to the translation of previously unavailable texts. During the Carolingian era an initial effort to copy and collate biblical manuscripts, the writings of the Fathers and the classics was made, but a significant part of latin literature and virtually all greek literature were virtually unknown. The efforts at translating these texts, especially during the period 1130-1180, offered a particularly rich mine of new ideas and approaches to themes which hitherto had been rarely explored. The centres of translation had contacts with both greek and arabic culture. Thus Venice and its contact with Byzantium evidenced by the work of Giacomo di Venezia and Sicily with its links to latin, greek and arabic culture and the work of Aristippo of Palermo. Of particular importance was Spain whose islamic civilization in the tenth and eleventh centuries was decisive. Toledo became an important centre for translations particularly under its archbishop Raymond (1125-1151). The range of translators is suggestive including a number of foreigners that included germans, english and italians. These translations rapidly found their way to centres of learning throughout Europe and though the centres that were active in translation did not coincide with those of the schools they did nevertheless influence the field of educational and intellectual endeavour. Hence the translations concerning greek philosophy and science meant that by the end

of the century virtually all the works of Aristotle were available in translation.

An analogous process can be seen in the legal world. Before the end of the eleventh-century, the *Digest*, arguably the richest part of the *Corpus iuris civilis*, was virtually never cited. It appears that no pope after Gregory I (590-604) had directly referred to the *Digest*. Thus the recovery of texts from the *Digest* during the last quarter of the eleventh-century would usher in a critical change in the approach to law and legal questioning. It is difficult to imagine that the legal revival of the twelfth-century could have been achieved without the recovery of the *Digest* as the medieval jurists on reading the text in their law schools learnt to study and frame complex legal arguments, analyse questions and provide solutions. The rediscovery of the *Digest* must be placed in a wider context that also had its impact on legal learning, namely the reform movement of the eleventh-century. The investiture conflict, which to a certain extent characterized the debates over reform, saw a renewed interest in rediscovering and analysing the sources of canon law with a view to determining the exact text. Peter Damian in his *Liber Gomorrhianus*, written around 1049, was particularly conscious of the manifold problems with the existing canonical collections and individual texts many of which he viewed as pernicious fables or simply apocryphal. He argued that this required studious attention to the texts in order to determine their author and provenance. Later the work of Ivo of Chartres would not only organize the legal texts but with dialectics as a background also attempt to provide a solution to legal inconsistencies as explained in his *Prologus*. This new and long lasting approach to the canonical texts would find its realization in the work of Gratian in the second quarter of the twelfth-century with the appearance of his *Concordia discordantium canonum*. The work would remain the basic text in the canon law school for a century and its title aptly catches the impact of the dialectical method and its attempt to bring concord out of apparent discord.

The appearance of new texts and the development of a dialectical approach meant that both teaching practices and contents underwent significant changes. Study was now directed not only to the reading and understanding of the basic text, as for example the Scriptures, but a foundation in dialectics meant the texts themselves

suggested a variety of new problems or *quaestiones* encompassing various areas of knowledge. Specific problems looked at in light of contradictory affirmations in the texts meant that a solution needed to be reached. As the schools evolved new questions provoked new solutions which in their turn provoked further questions. Each stage generated material for masters and scholars to debate, for masters to teach, for solutions to be proposed and opportunities for students to consider. This occasionally created tensions as dangerous questions were posed, some of which were later condemned as heresy. New rules of academic argument, the *disputatio* further stimulated intellectual activity and agility. In a certain sense the original idea of handing on the tradition as practiced in many cathedral schools, was now accompanied by analysis, argument and debate in order to better understand the tradition. The task centred on the formation of a coherent and rational system whose aim was not necessarily to replace the basic teaching texts or discard the tradition, whether that of Gratian or Peter Lombard, but rather to analyse them in order that they might provide clearer illumination.

The appearance of new texts and new approaches to them were fundamental to the transformation of scholastic organization during the twelfth-century but other factors also contributed to it. Of critical importance was the development of the cities which were the result of important demographic changes in the west. During the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries profound economic and social changes resulted in a concentration of energy, activity and population moving from the countryside to the cities. Not all saw this change positively. The more conservative thinkers of the twelfth-century saw the rise of the city as representative of those cities condemned in the Bible - Sodom, Gomorrah or Babylon - as places that housed moral dangers to those who entered them. On the other hand, defenders of the cities welcomed them with enthusiasm as the new Jerusalem or the house of David in which contact with various peoples offered endless possibilities that also included intellectual ones.

Significantly, the city offered a backdrop to the development of a more nuanced and ultimately juridical understanding of the corporation. One of the key characteristics of the city was the conscious awareness of the division of labour of various professions linked especially to commercial activity. Being part of a profession

was central to the overall self awareness of the city. The city itself was considered a corporation, a *universitas*. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the juridical understanding of the *universitas* coalesced to include a number of central elements: its internal authority in the sense of providing its own statutes and officials and imposing an internal discipline on its members; the recognition of its juridical personality by public authority which was practically symbolized by the concession of a seal destined to authenticate its acts. These elements common to the various corporations or *universitates* within a city would in time be echoed in the corporation that would become the «university» known as the *studia generalia*.

The rise of the *Studia generalia*

It is important to note an important terminological distinction in the process of the rise of what we now understand as universities. The actual word used to describe the institution we know as university was not *universitas* but rather *studium generale* which became common around the beginning of the thirteenth-century. It did not mean an institution that taught all disciplines, specifically those connected with the higher faculties, theology, philosophy and law (both civil and canon) but rather a place to which students came from many different places. Further, in time the *studium generale* also meant an institution of higher studies which granted academic titles that were valid everywhere, the *licentia ubique docendi*. In this sense it had a particular connection with the papacy. Generally the term *universitas* referred to the body of teachers and students as *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* or *universitas studii*, while the abstract academic institution was termed *studium*. Thus the *universitas* preceded the *studium* and did not always necessarily contain all the fundamental elements that would later characterized the *studium*. The origins of Paris are to be found first in the grouping of masters and students though the initiative was with the former. Only in a second moment do we witness the formal structures that would constitute an abstract body which generally would be known as a *studium generale*.

The various changes and developments during the twelfth-century clearly had important consequences on scholastic life and educational institutions, especially the cathedral schools. The change

is evidenced by Guibert of Nogent who noted that from the first decades of the twelfth-century his contemporaries were aware of a fundamental change in education. What he had experienced as a youth – few masters whose *scientia* was poor – was rapidly being replaced by the relatively new educational institutions which were also becoming more numerous. The changes in educational methods and contents during the twelfth-century also witnessed an increase in the number of schools in the cities and in time the scholastic population of the city became a significant social factor. In addition certain schools acquired a particular fame or reputation that meant the attraction of more students and masters. In the early twelfth-century we witness the first signs of the Parisian schools in their rise to prominence. Paris was already a magnet before Abelard arrived sometime around 1100. As his *Historia calamitatum* notes his great aspiration was to teach there and he spent considerable personal energy in trying to fulfil this desire. Paris was different from other schools due chiefly to the number of its masters it could sustain, a reflection of its economic and political advantages as an emerging capital of the Capetians. In this it was different from most towns that normally could support only one or two masters but we know that Paris had a number of schools: the cathedral school and schools on the Mont Ste. Geneviève and after 1109 the school of St. Victor. The attraction of Paris to both students and masters was an essential element in its rise to pre-eminence among the schools of northern Europe and its eventual development as a *studium generale*.

Some schools had reputations as centres of particular specialization or learning: Paris for philosophy and theology; Montpellier and Salerno for medicine; Bologna for legal studies, both canon and civil law. The increasing complexity of education centred on the vibrant world of the city pointed to the first signs of the development of institutional structures that would evolve into a particular form of corporation, a *universtias magistrorum et scholarium*, though the evolution was not pre-ordained. Essentially two types emerged which were based on the models established at Paris and Bologna though each reflected a different resolution of particular difficulties and challenges created by the influx of students and masters and their relations with local civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

The history of the origins of both universities and on those that to varying degrees modelled themselves on them has already been

carefully studied and does not need repeating here. Given that, there are some essential characteristics of the rise of these universities during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries that are of some note. One is the international character of the institutions. This was already noted by John of Salisbury in his *Metalogicon* who was a student at Paris 1135–1148. The international character points to another aspect of the nascent universities, namely what might be termed the transformation in academic mobility. Initially masters would be tempted to wander sometimes attracting students even if not always formally attached to a particular establishment. With the cathedral schools and especially with those schools that had gained a special reputation the masters tended generally to become more stable. A consequence of this phenomenon was that students tended to become more mobile as they were attracted to the school in which a renowned master taught. They came from many nations and we know that Paris like Bologna attracted students from Italy, England, Germany as well as from France and Italy itself. In other words specialized education of a high quality was available to those who could travel and had the means to do so. This internationalization was also a product of the growth of the money economy in the twelfth-century but it also closely involved the Church which provided benefices for clerics who were absent for study but might still receive the fruits of their benefice.

The presence of the Church in the rise of the universities is the other significant factor that characterizes their origins and their growth. This presence is witnessed in the evolution of Paris as a *studium generale* in its struggle over jurisdiction with the bishop and chancellor of the diocese as well as local civil authorities. At the beginning of the twelfth-century some of the concerns of the nascent institution were met by Philip Augustus in 1200 but the concern of the universal Church, in particular the papacy, was demonstrated in the first instance by the papal legate Robert of Courcon when in 1215 he sanctioned its essential elements by providing statutes. These included those typical of any corporation: control over the granting of the licence; the right to prepare statutes that regulated the structural functioning of the institution and to which its members were to swear obedience; the right to elect officials to ensure the application of the statutes; and finally the possession of a seal with which to authenticate acts, a tangible symbol of its

autonomy. Opposition to the jurisdictional claims of the Paris *studium generale* on the part of the bishop and chancellor continued but with the bull of Gregory IX in 1231, *Parens scientiarum* the institution had its legal position recognized with the clear backing of the papacy. Analogous approaches can be seen for Bologna.

The popes of the twelfth-century, beginning with Innocent III, appreciated the reform and significance that the development of the university represented. That various popes appreciated the schools perhaps should not come as a complete surprise. Innocent III had studied at Paris under Peter the Chanter in the 1180's, Boniface VIII had studied at Bologna and others as Innocent IV had been professors. But their interest was more profound than mere sympathy based on fond memories or recognition of a good education. They realized that education, especially in the higher faculties was an integral part of the Church's universal mission and could not be removed from it. The teaching and research of theologians and canonists was critical to explaining and defending the faith. What was especially incisive was their appreciation of the fact that the explanation and defence of the faith should take into account the new intellectual approaches that had developed in the schools during the intellectual developments of the twelfth-century. In a very real sense the most contemporary scholastic methods were harnessed to the fuller understanding and presentation of Christian dogma. In addition the papacy also appreciated the practical usefulness of a solid university education with which well trained individuals might assume positions of responsibility not only within ecclesiastical structures but especially in the struggle against the ever present challenges associated with various heretical movements.

The interest of the papacy in higher education was not only a specific response to the rise of the universities. The education, especially of the clergy, was a particular preoccupation of the reform programme of Gregory VII. Thus the papal synod which promulgated the decree of 1078 against lay investiture also determined that all bishops were to ensure the teaching of literary arts in their churches⁴. Gregory VII further held that literary knowledge was necessary not only for bishops but also for priests as without it no

⁴ Gregory VII, *Registrum*, VI. 5b: "Ut omnes episcopi artes literarum in suis ecclesiis doceri faciant".

one could either teach others or defend himself.⁵ Under Alexander III, Lateran III required that «every cathedral church to assign a suitable benefice for a master who is to teach the clerks of the church and poor scholars free of charge'. Further the *scholasticus* (or *magister scholarum*) or other official in charge of the cathedral school could not demand a fee for the licence to teach (*licentia docendi*).⁶ This concern was extended and reinforced at Lateran IV under Innocent III. It extended the requirement of Lateran III to all churches with sufficient resources and further decreed that «a metropolitan church is to have a *theologus* who is to teach the Scriptures to the priests and others and to instruct them especially in those subjects which are known to relate to the cure of souls»⁷.

The involvement of the highest authority of the Church is not to suggest that they were the founders of the first *studia generalia*. Many of the official documents concerning the early *studia generalia* confirmed what was already in place. In other words they did not create or formally found them as was later the case. It is clear that these were what might be termed spontaneous developments on the part of masters or students who in light of local realities and the recognition of their need to organize themselves as something akin to corporations in order to safeguard their rights against interference from local church or civil authorities. On the other hand public authorities such as the papacy quickly recognized both the significance of the new institutions and the need to be actively involved in establishing them. The university of Naples had been founded by the emperor Frederick II in 1224 while the first papal foundation was effected in 1229 at Toulouse by the legate Roman of St. Angelo. Others would quickly follow.

Intimately connected with the idea of direct papal foundations or later recognition was the granting of the *licentia ubique docendi* or the right to teach in all universities without the need to sustain another exam. It was the pontifical extension of the licence to teach granted originally by the *scholasticus*. In effect this specific papal

⁵ Gregory VII, *Registrum* IX. 2: "Quae virtus quam sit non modo episcopis, vereum etiam sacerdotibus necessaria, ipse satis intelligis, cum nullus sine ea aut alios docere aut sese possit defendere"

⁶ Lateran III, c. 18.

⁷ Lateran IV, c. 11.

privilege marked a precise boundary between the *studia generalia* and the cathedral schools: only those institutions that on reception of the papal bull could grant the *licentia ubique docendi* could be considered *studia generalia*. In fact by the end of the twelfth-century the most ancient of the universities, even those of spontaneous origins, had obtained this papal privilege.

Conclusion

The later educational and institutional prominence of a cathedral school, especially due to its transformation into what would be known as a *studium generale*, nevertheless needs to be placed in context. The prominence of cathedral schools depended to a significant degree on the prominence of masters and not on the idea that they might become a *studium generale*. Clearly the *studium generale* developed later as regulated and structured teaching became necessary. In addition some centres that never formally became or were considered *studia generalia* remained, at least for a period, genuine centres of learning. The case of England is a case in point. The intellectual activity at places such as Northampton, Hereford, Lincoln and York in the twelfth-century remained as significant as that at Oxford, yet they never became universities. In other words the continued importance of «non university» cathedral schools in the twelfth-century needs recognition. In fact the question as to why some places did not become universities is often as problematic as to why others did. The legislation of both Lateran councils certainly recognized the ongoing significance of the cathedral schools. Nonetheless it is clear that with the momentum towards the *studium generale*, supported actively as they were by the papacy, the days of the cathedral school were numbered. Finally they found it increasingly difficult to effectively compete with the attraction of city centres that could attract and sustain masters and a body of international students involved in higher learning.

The Church's role in this process was fundamental though as the centuries passed not always easy or even. The challenges of the Schism, of the new humanism and the rise of strong national states meant new approaches and new dilemmas that had to be faced and resolved. But even given these challenges one constant characteristic remained. In 1455 on the occasion of the inaugura-

tion of the University of Fribourg in Breisgau its first rector delivered a sermon on the proverb of Solomon: *Sapientia aedificavit sibi domum*⁸. In a very real sense this was the core ideal of the *studia generalia* as well as the cathedral schools: wisdom building itself a house. The house of wisdom which institutionally was realized in the *studia generalia*, notwithstanding the many hands involved in their construction, was essentially connected with the Church, *ex corde ecclesiae*.

Streszczenie

Autor prezentuje historyczny kontekst powstania uniwersytetów na przełomie XII i XIII wieku, podkreślając ich związek z edukacyjnym fenomenem szkół katedralnych, które nie tylko przekazywały dziedzictwo intelektualne, ale też kładły nacisk na rozwój osobowy. Zwrot „renesans XII wieku” trafnie określa rozkwit nowych metod, trendów i treści, które – w większości – doprowadziły do przemiany systemu kształcenia w szkołach i, w konsekwencji, do założenia uniwersytetów, pierwotnie nazywanych *studia generalia*. Niektóre z nich cieszyły się szczególną sławą lub reputacją, dzięki czemu przyciągały więcej studentów i mistrzów niż inne szkoły. Trudno przecenić rolę Kościoła w powstawaniu centrów nauki; papieże szybko uznali znaczenie nowych instytucji i wspierali ich powstawanie i rozwój odpowiednimi aktami prawnymi.

⁸ Cited in H. Grundmann, «La genesi dell'Università nel medioevo», in G. Arnaldi *Le Origini*, 98.