

invested enormous amounts of time and energy—and indeed, money as well—to make sure that this conference goes as well as we expect it will. And I want to thank you all personally on behalf of Henry and myself both.

Second, I want to thank the staff members who have been working with Henry and myself for the past two years to make this happen. Conor Kelly, a Ph.D student in theology, just finished

And indeed, it's a chance for all of us at Boston College to think about what we do here collectively and why we do it. I want to invite each and every one of you in the audience tonight, and indeed tomorrow, to join that process by offering your insights and asking your questions during the discussion period that follows every session at this conference, including the lecture that you're about to hear.

So with that, let me now briefly introduce our keynote speaker this evening, Dr. Nathan Hatch, president of Wake Forest University. Dr. Hatch received his undergraduate education at one of our country's most distinguished religious colleges, Wheaton College in Illinois, and he earned his master's and doctoral degrees from Washington University in St. Louis. After a postdoc at Johns Hopkins, he joined the faculty of another of our country's great religious universities, Notre Dame, where he distinguished himself as a first-rate scholar of American religious history.

He's the author of the seminal work

hope that I see in a place like this, and then also some of the challenges that are to be faced.

I am hopeful about an institution like this for two primary reasons. First, they have carefully set a course that sustains a middle ground where vital religious traditions can engage modern thought in a climate of academic freedom. Critique of this middle course, of course, comes from both sides.

From conservative quarters, some within the church, it is opined that the mission concedes far too much and has sold the Catholic birthright for the pottage of academic prestige. From the larger university still comes the opposite concern, that things may be too parochial, or that academic freedom may be constrained—the old canard of George Bernard Shaw that a Catholic university is somehow a contradiction in terms.

The key to advancing this middle way, I think, has been a wonderful partnership between clerical and lay leadership—a partnership, I might add, that seems far more fruitful than in other sectors of the Roman Catholic Church itself. This partnership has unleashed the energy, resources, and expertise of American lay Catholics upon a wide range of colleges and universities. That generosity has propelled many institutions to a competitive academic level, bolstering endowments, facilities, faculty support, and financial aid. Catholics and non-Catholics alike are attracted to such academic communities, where religion is taken seriously and practiced intelligently.

Protestant higher education in America has had a much harder time constructing anything like this middle ground. In the 20th century, Protestant higher education has become largely a two-party system, with mainline institutions losing much of their religious identity, except in limited cases where there's a divinity school, or in some cases, in some denominational colleges. By contrast, the 100 or so evangelical colleges, which require all faculty to accept a statement of faith, continue a vital tradition and do a superb job of

professions for reasons other than self-interest. What is evident is a commitment to the holistic nurturing of students' body, mind, and spirit. If the Roman Catholic Church in America is to retain the loyalty of the next generation of educated parishioners,

So today, I think we must serve our students in two ways. We must argue for learning for its own sake with one hand, and with the other, we must help them think about and negotiate paths to professional leadership. I'm convinced that we must, and can, do both.

A second challenge that we face is the marvelous, almost magical connection in which students live today, and the uphill battle to help them learn to be reflective and deliberative. In short, we need leaders who can focus and concentrate amidst a culture that is wired for distraction. Today, our problem is not a lack of information. I heard one of our parents say in the advertising business—he said, today, a student has a million places in the palm of their hands.

That is true. There are more places in the palm of their hands than the library of Harvard University, just maybe not as good as the library of Harvard University. But they do have a million places in the palm of their hands.

Yet our mystique about digital connection also keeps us in a constant state of anticipation and interruption. Our first obligation becomes to respond when that beep goes off. William Powers has written an interesting book called *Hamlet's BlackBerry: A Practical Philosophy for Building a Good Life in the Digital Age*, and he warns about the problem of a digital consciousness that is the enemy of depth, and the danger of being constantly distracted.

I think more than any other college or university, religious institutions know the value and the practice of deliberation, concentration, meditation, and solitude. The question for the coming generation amidst all the frenzy of our lives is how to structure environments for students that can make these traditions a reality for them in the midst of this connectedness. Given the great Jesuit tradition of being contemplatives in action, I would hope that a place like Boston College could help us revive the virtue of deliberation and reflection in a world of frenzied connection.

Let me now turn to a third issue, possibly the most challenging, because it involves the very structure of the modern academy and the expectations of contemporary faculty. Are we able to provide a curriculum and develop a faculty that addresses larger questions of meaning and purpose, that keeps alive theological and spiritual frameworks as ways of understanding the world?

Sadly, the modern university largely, even in the liberal arts, increasingly ignores the big questions about the meaning of life and the forging of character. We must begin by admitting how difficult it is today for colleges to do that. And on this point, there's healthy debate. Some, like Stanley Fish or John Mearsheimer, have argued that universities have no business trying to make people good. They should aim low and leave this task to churches, synagogues, and mosques.

Many others, however, note ruefully the seeming inability of higher education to answer the question, what is living for? In his book, *Education's End*, Yale's Anthony Kronman notes that he has watchewers2 1 . q 045 0 haw(2 1 .6 608.4 cm BT) 5(g)-21 (he)45 0.26f [(u Tf 3 (t (a

The Teagle Foundation, under the leadership of Robert Connor, has been engaged in initiatives to engage college and faculty in posing for students the big questions of meaning and value. What they have found, also using the higher education research surveys from UCLA, is that students are hungry to address such questions, but actually find fewer and fewer faculty willing to engage them on such questions.

Robert Connor is clear about the reasons for these differing expectations. Faculty are hired and promoted for their sectoral knowledge and understandably resist suggestions that they should be involved in the moral development of students. In fact, many see it as dangerous to their professional identity and reputation, particularly since so much talk of morality has come from the far right. Harry Lewis agrees that this deep tension will exist as long as faculty are hired primarily on the basis of their scholarly distinction, even as students come to college seeking, among other things, a framework for meaning and purpose.

A second reality in the modern academy compounds this issue. Academic disciplines themselves have become more diffuse, and many, such as English departments, have

The absolute authority is the sovereign self. Individuals are autonomous agents who have to deal with each other, but do so as self-directing choosers. The words duty,

one would give a life. And popular culture today exalts few heroes for young people to emulate. Instead, it pulsates with the antics of the infamous characters—very interesting, sort of the opposite meaning of a leader of character. Characters. So many television shows today focus every week on dark and dysfunctional figures—*Breaking Bad*, *The Tudors*, *The Borgias*, *Weeds*, *Dexter*, *Boardwalk Empire*, all follow in the tradition of Tony Soprano, week after week beckoning audiences to root for the flawed leader.

A university such as this needs to provide counterexamples to these narratives. In a world that is cynical about political leadership, we need to show models of lively and compelling civic engagement. In a world that is cynical about the church and its leadership, we need to show patterns of worship and service that are winsome and life-giving. In a world that preaches that the self is the center of life, we need to show compelling examples that the purpose of life is not to find yourself, but to lose yourself in education, in health reform, in third world development, in building businesses and professions that are genuinely for the common good, and in a myriad of other ways that a creative campus as this can devise.

If this is a community called to light the world, as I believe it is, let it begin in these halls. In your research, teaching, and service, continue to build a vital community that will inspire a generation of students to lead lives that matter. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]