

# CONTENDING WITH MODERNITY

## Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century

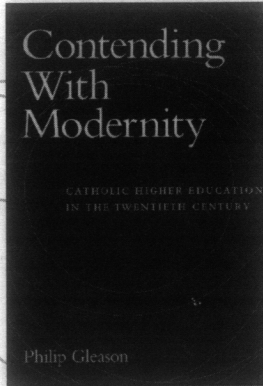
BY PHILIP GLEASON

Free public high schools, record-breaking college enrollments, a breakdown of the classical curriculum leading to new fields of study, the rise of the research university—these historical changes were just a few of the well-documented conditions that revolutionized American higher education in the early years of this century. How did Catholic colleges and universities respond to these trends?

Written by the leading interpreter of American Catholicism, *Contending with Modernity* is the first full history of American Catholic higher education to examine both intellectual and institutional dimensions of the subject.

Taking a narrative approach, Philip Gleason begins his account with an overview of old-style Catholic colleges in the 1800s and the internal conflicts that influenced the founding of The Catholic University of America, the first modern Catholic university. From there, Gleason depicts Catholic educators around 1900 as they began to accept modernization in the organizational sphere but rejected it in the realm of ideas and beliefs. These new structures did not seriously disturb Catholic identity because they rejected "Modernity" and, instead, adopted the neo-Thomism prescribed by Rome as their official alternative.

Convinced of the truth of their religious and intellectual position, the restructured Catholic colleges grew rapidly after World War I and moved into the postwar era with great self-confidence. Gleason examines trends such as "Catholic Action" and argues that the economic collapse at home during the 1930s and rise of totalitarianism in Europe furthered the critique of secularism and led to a firm Catholic commitment to educate for a "Catholic Renaissance."



Against this spirit of militance, new currents were also stirring as Catholics began to look more favorably on modernity in its American form in the post-World War II era. As Catholic colleges and universities continued to expand, self-criticism and commitment to academic excellence on the secular model soon followed. In the 1960s, changes in church teaching as a result of the Vatican II Council and cultural upheavals in American society reinforced the internal transformation already under way.

The resulting "identity crisis," according to Gleason, demonstrates how Catholic educators have come full circle since 1900, as they once again face the task of envisioning Catholic colleges and universities as a distinctive element in higher education. Brilliantly told from an insider's perspective, *Contending with Modernity* reveals how one important subgroup of American society has reflected the growth of education at all levels of American culture.

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2. Articles should be no more than 35 pages *including* footnotes (or, no more than 9,000 words).
3. Article font should be 10 characters per inch (or pica type).
4. Two copies of the manuscript should be submitted on white paper, addressed to the *History of Education Quarterly*, School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405. *Manuscripts are not returned unless the article is accompanied by a self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage.*
5. The author's name should appear *only* on the title page of the article.
6. Footnotes should be listed in a separate section at the end of the article. The following format should be used for references:

#### *Book:*

<sup>1</sup>Neil Coughlan, *Young John Dewey: An Essay in American Intellectual History* (Chicago, 1972), 92.

#### *Edited Book:*

<sup>2</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction," in *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change*, ed. Richard Brown (London, 1973), 71–112.

#### *Journal Article:*

<sup>3</sup>John Rury and Glenn Harper, "The Trouble with Coeducation: Mann and Women at Antioch, 1853–1860," *History of Education Quarterly* 26 (Winter 1986): 481–502.

#### *Popular Magazine Article:*

<sup>4</sup>W. Caspari and R. E. Marshak, "The Rise and Fall of Lysenko," *Science*, 16 Aug. 1965, 275–78.

#### *Unpublished Work:*

<sup>5</sup>Richard Simon, "Comedy, Suffering, and Human Existence" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1977), 100–102.

#### *Manuscript:*

<sup>6</sup>Hiram Johnson to John Callan O'Laughlin, 16 July 1916, file 6, box 20, O'Laughlin Papers, Roosevelt Memorial Collection, Harvard College Library.

#### *Second and subsequent references:*

<sup>7</sup>Coughlan, *Young John Dewey*, 92.

<sup>8</sup>Rury and Harper, "The Trouble with Coeducation," 492.

The style of the *History of Education Quarterly* conforms very closely to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago, 1993). Authors should consult this manual if they have further questions.