

Introduction to *Zeal* 1/2

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This second issue of *Zeal: A Journal for the Liberal Arts* includes a forum on the theory and practice of “ungrading”; an author-meets-critics discussion of the future of Catholic higher education; and two education-themed essays under the heading “Provocations & Occasions”—articles that, though worthy of a wide readership, are in one way or another misfits with standard disciplinary journals. The contributors represent a diverse array of institutions, bring multifarious perspectives, and express themselves, as a rule, in forthright, plainspoken prose.

The forum on ungrading, organized by associate editor and King's Professor of English Robin E. Field, comprises ten contributions plus an introduction. The contributors include leading figures in the ungrading movement (not least the figure who coined the term), which questions the utility of conventional grading practices for the goal of student learning. The contributions examine the promises and pitfalls of ungrading and propose and evaluate concrete methods to make ungrading work for instructors and students alike. As a whole, the forum makes an extraordinary contribution to a set of pressing questions in post-pandemic higher education.

The author-meets-critics discussion focuses on the book *The Future of Catholic Higher Education* (Oxford, 2021) by James L. Heft, S.M., founder and president emeritus of the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at U.S.C. The discussion, organized by the journal's editor, Professor of Philosophy Bernard Prusak, includes five responses to Heft's book and Heft's response in turn. The respondents include both historians and theologians, who approach Heft's book from a variety of angles and provide a rich discussion of what Catholic higher education has been and might be as it passes through this period of turmoil in American political and cultural life. (As a sidenote, King's College, *Zeal's* host institution, is a Catholic liberal arts college.)

Finally, the two “Provocations & Occasions” provide a bit of levity, even while taking on weighty matters. The essay “The Plight of the Dissertator” evokes, with apologies, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's composition “Flight of the Bumblebee”; the essay “Teaching towards Love: The Manifesto of a Recovering Pedant” opens with reflections on the TV series *The Good Place*. Both authors write with uncommon verve.

Zeal is an online, open-access journal with the mission of inspiring and fostering scholarship that supports and advances the liberal arts. The editors invite proposals and contributions to further this aim.