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GRAY THORON

*Milton Gould†*

Gray Thoron has now joined that distinguished group of legal pedagogues who have left their mark on the minds of the Cornell lawyers who have passed through his hands. There will be many to attest to the value of his work as a teacher and as an administrator. It was my privilege to work with him in one special aspect of forming the minds and characters of his students. I was a witness to a unique faculty in Thoron that he communicated to all those young men and women who passed through his hands his dominating principle: that the law is a calling that demands of its votives something more than scholarship and industry—that it required, above all, a special nobility of character. To Gray Thoron that nobility of character was a distillation of the loftiest ethical concepts, single-minded devotion to traditional legal and moral precepts hammered out over many generations, and always carried out with honor and decency. We spent many hours together exemplifying for law students the personal horrors that attend deviations from the highest ethical standards, imbuing them with the conviction that membership in the bar carries with it the responsibility to serve clients not only with skill, but with honor. It was Thoron’s conviction that the profession of law affords not only rich opportunities for public service and successful careers; it offers perilous temptations for lawyers to make Faustian bargains that can lure them into shame and disgrace. He saw it as his duty to instruct his students to keep their feet in the paths of truth and decency.

I have heard many testaments of gratitude from those who benefitted from Thoron’s tutelary guidance. While others can testify to Gray Thoron’s pedagogic skills and devotion, in my view it may be his finest contribution to generation after generation of Cornell lawyers that he was able to instill in them the awareness of a need for observing the highest ethical principles.