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This study critically examines the curriculum framework published by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops which directs the four year, eight semester course of study for religion classes taught in all U.S. Catholic high schools. By examining this framework, I identify the concepts and methodology privileged by the Roman Catholic hierarchy and evaluate their efficacy in light of current insights in postmodern curriculum development. This study traces the twelve year timeline approaching the document's publication, sociological research data which supported the USCCB's decision to produce the Framework, and pre-Vatican II text series upon which the framework has been based. It critiques the framework against the Tradition of the Catholic Church in the U.S. from 1640 to the present, the Magisterial documents of the universal and local Church on education, and Holy Scripture. It also examines the framework against a postmodern description of the student consumers of the framework and present work in postmodern curriculum development. The study concludes with a recommendation to individual bishops and vicars of education to convene their own education councils before requiring use of the framework in their individual diocese.

LOOKING FOR LOVE: A CRITIQUE OF *DOCTRINAL ELEMENTS OF A CURRICULUM*
FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATECHETICAL MATERIALS FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE OF HIGH SCHOOL AGE PUBLISHED BY
THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
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To my late mother, Dorothy Miskiewicz Ostasiewski,
who gave me the finest education
primarily through her loving example and guidance
but also by providing me many fantastic educational opportunities.

To my husband Jim, and daughter Christina McDonald
who model for me what it means to be church.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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PROLOGUE

The topic of this dissertation, a critique of the newly-published curriculum framework for theology classes offered in U.S. Catholic high schools, is extremely important to me and those with whom I teach. As Catholic educators, we were surprised when the bishops announced that they intended to produce a framework and feared that what was produced would be inconsistent with the way we know and express Church. There is at present a swing from the ennobling and empowering spirit of the Church as expressed in the documents of Vatican II to a rigid clerically-centered reining in of the laity. Some priests, especially those newly ordained, concentrate on doctrine and dogma and continually remind parishioners of their ordained authority. We educators feared this unending fascination with ecclesiastical authority would be reflected in the Framework, and it is.

Those of us who teach Theology classes in Catholic schools are under ever increasing scrutiny by the hierarchy of the Church. A close friend was interviewed for a position teaching Catholic theology to high school students. The bishop of the diocese, who held an Ed.D., sat on the committee that produced the Framework. Before being offered the position, she was required to go to the chancery, or bishop's office, and be interviewed by the bishop himself. She referred to it as an "orthodoxy check." She knew the party line and was able to offer quotations to the bishop that surprised and pleased him and secured the position, though she is a social justice oriented, democratic lesbian.

We have all come to be very careful of word choice and find ways to stay consistent with written policy as we express the Church as we know her. Many of us, particularly female and or homosexual, are finding that choosing “ecclesiastically politically correct” language is becoming tiresome, and is challenging to our integrity. Others fear being recorded in class, or being quoted out of context to extremely orthodox parents and reported to the superintendent’s or bishop’s office. Most of us fear losing our jobs. All of us struggle with our authenticity in the classroom.

With this said, I found it next to impossible to find any published criticism of the Framework. I do not believe that professional educators are happy with it, but few are willing to speak out against the authoritarian structure that produced it. Fr. William O’Malley S. J., of Fordham, who wrote a scathing critique in *America* magazine, shared with me that it is only because he is ordained, aged, and unpaid, that he could say what he did.

Walter Brueggemann, in *The Prophetic Imagination* states, “Real criticism begins in the capacity to grieve because that is the most visceral announcement that things are not right. . . . As long as the empire can keep the pretense alive that things are all right, there will be no real grieving and no serious criticism.”¹ I wrote this dissertation because I grieve. I know, not just in my head, but in the core of my being, a Church that is the expression of the love of God. I (and many other servants of the Church, including ordained members who may also feel that they are unable to speak out) want this loving expression and loving community for my students, colleagues, and those outside the Church with

¹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2001), 11.

whom she engages. We want the hope-filled expression of what humanity can be, openly expressed and practiced in our classrooms and in our parishes. We want young women and young men, people of color, those of differing sexual orientations, those who are divorced, immigrants, and any others who may experience alienation, to feel that they are an expression of the love of God, and inexpressibly valuable to God and to the Church.

I also want the ideal Church that I teach to my students to be the Church we experience. I want to minister in the Church I love without fear. And I want my students to be invited into relationship with the Church and have them accept that invitation because they experience a Church that values them and teaches them to value others.

I have been taught by many incredible teachers of varying subjects, who knew the depth of the love of God and were called to share it. One such incredible woman was Sr. Rose Thering, O. P., Ph.D. This Roman Catholic nun wrote her doctoral dissertation on the systematic anti-Semitism taught in the Roman Catholic religion textbooks of the 1950's. She found them inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus. At the defense of her dissertation, a priest left the room to call the bishop's office. She was called in to the chancery to defend her orthodoxy and told by her bishop not to air the dirty laundry of the Church. She was always proud to say "I aired it." Eventually her dissertation, written in 1960, was read at the Second Vatican Council and guided the writing of the magisterial document, *Nostra Aetate*, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian religions.

In the spirit of Sr. Rose, I can do no less than call attention to the problems with this educational document and an attitude developing in the Church hierarchy which will

turn away the postmodern students who desperately seek to better understand their spirituality.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In November 2007, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops¹ (USCCB) published *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*.² For more than ten years, a number of the U.S. Catholic bishops articulated discontent with catechetical materials used in the Catholic schools they supported. They were especially concerned with the present catechetical texts used by high school students in the theology classes taught as academic subjects in Catholic high schools.

Timeline Approaching the Publication of the Framework

In 1996, the USCCB began discussing the production of a national curriculum guide for catechetical materials because they wanted to be sure all materials were in conformity with the then newly released Catechism of the Catholic Church. A task force was convened to prepare a scope and sequence chart for grades kindergarten through twelfth

¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “About USCCB,” <http://www.usccb.org/howeare.shtml>. The USCCB defines itself as “an assembly of the hierarchy of the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands who jointly exercise certain pastoral functions on behalf of the Christian faithful of the United States.” Their purpose is to promote “the greater good which the Church offers humankind, especially through forms and programs of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of time and place, . . . To unify, coordinate, encourage, promote and carry on Catholic activities in the United States; to organize and conduct religious, charitable and social welfare work at home and abroad; to aid in education; to care for immigrants; and generally to enter into and promote by education, publication and direction the objects of its being.”

²United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 2008).

grade and study the feasibility of a national catechetical series. A national curriculum remained on the table until the bishops decided that elementary school texts were not problematic. Efforts were then refocused on high school texts and curriculum.

In September 1998, Most Reverend Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B., D.D., archbishop of Indianapolis and chairman of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, expressed that he and his staff noted a pattern of doctrinal deficiencies among the catechetical series they had reviewed. He said, "While these series often treat certain doctrinal themes quite well, we have noted a relatively consistent trend of doctrinal incompleteness and imprecision. I am convinced that the doctrinal incompleteness is due to the prevailing cultural principle of primacy of plausibility." He attributed our postmodern culture's desire not to offend or exclude as cause of the deficiencies in the resources along with deficiencies in preaching and liturgy. "The primacy of plausibility must be overshadowed by our deep commitment to proclaim the fullness of the truth in season and out of season."³

At the November 2003 annual meeting of the USCCB, members of the Standing Committee on Catechesis reported that they were convinced that national doctrinal guidelines were needed at the high school level and listed a sampling of the kinds of problems that aroused serious concerns for the bishops on the committee. High school texts

³This article appeared in the Sept. 18 *Criterion*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Indiana. Most Rev. Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B., D.D. is the Archbishop of Indianapolis. Also available online at http://realliferadio.consultmq.com/files/realliferadio/jim20_-_Plausibility,_Buechlein,_Archbishop,_Whole.pdf.

are relativistic in their approach to the Church and to faith. Students, for instance, are easily led to believe that one religion or church is as good as another and that the Catholic Church is just one church among many equals.

. . . Our young people are not learning what we know and believe is based on objective truth revealed to us by God.

. . . Tentative language gives the impression that the teaching is just one legitimate opinion among others rather than a matter of truth.

. . . The sacramental theology which our young people are being taught is also often seriously flawed. In some texts they are taught that the sacraments were instituted over an extended period of time, with the implication that they can still be changed.

. . . The distinctive role of the priest may be sidelined or even ignored. Our young people are sometimes being taught that it is the community who baptizes or who confects the Eucharist.

They may be told the various ways Jesus is present during the Liturgy without a clear statement that He is present in the Eucharist in a unique and special way. They may be taught that the sacramental power to forgive sins and anoint the sick was once shared by all the faithful.

In some texts the teaching about the ordination of women is ambiguous or even misleading.

In some lessons on the sacrament of marriage, they are being exposed to language which makes reference to “partners” rather than “man and woman” or husband and wife.⁴

In addition, they expressed that they had found some troubling concerns in moral teaching, in avoidance of the use of masculine titles or pronouns for the Persons of the Trinity leading to inaccurate understanding of God, in an unbalanced overemphasis on the humanity of Jesus, with the interpretation of the Sacred Scripture based almost exclu-

⁴Women for Faith & Families, “USCCB - November Meeting Report. Catechisms: Progress and Defects,” <http://www.wf-f.org/03-4-Catechetics.html>.

sively on the historical-critical method, and on an approach to the Church overemphasizing the role of the community. From this report, the Committee on Catechesis began the development of the national guidelines for catechetical texts on the secondary level.

In their introduction to the published framework of 2007, the bishops explain it is meant to “guide catechetical instruction for young people of high school age wherever and however it takes place: in Catholic high schools, in parish religious education programs, with young people schooled at home or within the context of the catechetical instruction which should be part of every youth ministry program.” The bishops designed this framework to “form the content of instruction” and be “a vehicle for growth in one’s relationship with the Lord.” Their mission is to allow for each individual to “know him (the Lord) and live according to the truth he has given us.”⁵

The document offers guidance to the publishers of catechetical materials. They explicitly state it is not a “tool for direct instruction” or to be understood as the outline for courses but as “building blocks which can be combined in any number of ways within that particular thematic structure and augmented with additional doctrinal teaching, depending on the creativity of authors and editors.” The Framework is also to serve those responsible for “overseeing catechetical instruction within dioceses as well as those responsible for curriculum development or the development of assessment instruments designed to complement texts, programs or curriculums.”⁶

⁵USCCB, *Doctrinal Elements*, 1.

⁶*Ibid.*

A four-year, eight-semester instructional program is expected to provide uniformity for our very mobile society as students move with their families from diocese to diocese. The framework also hopes to “develop the necessary skills to answer or address the real questions in life and in their Catholic faith which they face.” A section called “Challenges” is offered within each theme. Using an apologetic style, it raises questions and “provides direction for ways to answer” these challenges.

What makes the production of this framework noteworthy is that those who taught or were educated after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) do not remember a time when the official hand of the teaching authority of the Church guided their religious curriculum so closely. Education is certainly a central responsibility of the bishops, however, for the past forty years, the U.S. Magisterium,⁷ or official voice of the ordained, specifically bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, has allowed professional educators and catechists to produce the educational materials used in the classroom. All explicitly educational materials were reviewed by a bishop’s censor for “official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error.” This official permission for publication called a *Nihil Obstat* (nothing stands in the way) and *Imprimatur* (let it be printed) did not however imply that the bishop who granted the certification agreed with the “contents, opinions, or statements expressed.”⁸ Additionally, in the eras before the Second Vatican Council, the U.S. bishops and the universal Church in general were both busy with more

⁷Jean Bainvel, “Tradition and Living Magisterium,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15 (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1912), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15006b.htm>.

⁸<http://www.fisheaters.com/imprimatur.html>.

pressing matters and cautious about educational proclamations, assuming influential religious educators, most often religious women, were competent and capable.

A Brief History of Catholic Education and Its Corresponding Curriculum in the United States

The history of the Catholic educational system in the United States mirrors the different historical and cultural periods of the country. The curriculum corresponded with the goals of the particular community supporting the schools. Curriculum often reflected the immigrant group newly in transition in the country and the teachers responsible for the curriculum. Following the growth of the United States, beginning with the thirteen original colonies and the appointment of the first U.S. Catholic bishop in what was first considered a mission territory, one can break down the history of Catholic Education in America into five overarching eras (the first three named for the influence of a particular group of newly arrived Catholic immigrants). The eras include the era of the English, pre-revolutionary war through the 1820's, the era of the Irish, 1830's through the 1860's, the era of the Germans, 1860's through the 1920's, the Golden era, 1920's to 1962, and lastly the era of Vatican II, 1964 to the present.

The Era of the English: Pre Revolutionary War through the 1820's

The English colonies in the years before the American Revolution were openly anti-Catholic and the Catholic population remained small. In 1634 two priests and about one hundred Catholics settled in Maryland. By 1765 about twenty-five thousand of the

two million inhabitants of the colonies were Catholic.⁹ Before the American Revolution the English ethnic group made up the largest part of the Catholic population in the area which would become the United States typically settled in Maryland, Pennsylvania or Kentucky. They were farmers who felt education was a private concern. At the time, schooling was not compulsory, and if Catholic children did attend public schools, they were met by anti-Catholic books and teachers.

Catholic settlers lived with neighbors who were influenced by their Protestant clergymen who preached about the decadence of Rome and were suspicious of the missionary activities of the Jesuits. Colonial children used primers and almanacs which taught the evils of Catholicism. Most of those who fled Europe to settle in the New World for religious freedom held the opinion that “the very idea of tolerating Catholics was regarded as an act of weakness, a betrayal of English liberty and denial of the righteousness of the Protestant faith.”¹⁰

English colonial anti-Catholicism was codified in to law by the varying colonies between 1690 and 1776. The only colonies where Catholics could freely practice their faith were Pennsylvania and Rhode Island, two colonies specifically founded on the principle of religious freedom. Most Catholic children, like many other colonial children, received their education at home with rare visits by visiting missionary priests. Wealthy Catholic parents, however, did desire rigorous formal training for their sons in both religious and secular subjects. Because it was considered risky to send children abroad for

⁹Timothy Walsh, *Parish School: American Catholic Parochial Education from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 12.

¹⁰Ibid., 13.

their education, the first colonial Catholic schools were founded. Though records prove their educational activities sporadic between the years of 1704 and 1765, Newton Manor in St. Mary's County (1640) and Bohemia Manor (1745) in Cecil County, Maryland, along with the school Governor Thomas Dongan helped establish in New York City, are considered to be the first Catholic schools in colonial America.¹¹

Very little information is available about the curriculum offered in these early schools, but we do know they were patterned after the academies of Europe, which focused on the classics, including Latin and Greek, and were under the direct influence of the particular religious order teaching.

The Era of the Irish: 1829-1866

The era of the Irish is marked by an influx of poor Irish Catholics who emigrated with a promise of available jobs building up a new and blossoming nation. In the decade ending in 1830, 50,000 Irish landed on American shores, by 1840 another 207, 000 arrived and by 1850 another 780, 000.¹² These poor immigrants changed the flavor of the Catholic population in the U.S. The bulk of the Catholic population was no longer wealthy land owners of the South but laborers who settled mainly in Northern cities. They were hard working, self-reliant, and self-empowered. They were not satisfied with appeasing the Protestant status quo because they had no position or property at risk. They did not accept minority status and were resentful of the older English Catholic leadership.

¹¹Glen Gabert, *In Hoc Signo? A Brief History of Catholic Parochial Education in America* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1973), 7.

¹²Ibid., 20.

These new immigrants often held themselves aloof from their non-Catholic neighbors and created Catholic ghettos.

Native Protestant U.S. citizens did not take well to this new and ever increasing group of Catholics. Xenophobia ensued, and an era of Nativism began. Fear led to violence which peaked in 1834 with the burning of an Ursuline convent in Charlestown, MA and ushered in twenty years of anti-Catholic activity. This era of Nativism went hand in hand with a period of public school reform. The now popular Common School Movement called for education to be of service to the public goals of the government. It specifically intended for all children to be educated together in a common schoolhouse, assuming if children from differing religious, social, and ethnic backgrounds were educated together, there would be a decline in misunderstanding and, consequently, violence between the groups. It also expected to train the population to understand and obey the secular and religious law of the land. Of course, the religious values propagated were in line with a generic form of Protestantism.¹³

Catholic children were often met in the public schools with flagrantly objectionable reading materials and the insistence that any use of a translation of the Bible other than the King James translation was un-American. Fr. McCluskey, in his *Catholic Education in America*, preserved an example from a popular reader:

As for old Phelim Maghee, he was of no particular religion. When Phelim had laid up a good stock of sins, he now and then went over to Killarney, of a Sabbath morning, and got *relaff* by confissing them out o' the way, as he used to express

¹³ Joel Spring, *The American School: 1642-2000* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2001), 104-105.

it, and sealed his soul up with a wafer, and returned quite invigorated for the perpetration of new offences.¹⁴

Bishop John Hughes, first Archbishop of New York, was the principle spokesman for “the Catholic position.” An immigrant from Ireland himself and excellent speaker and journalistic writer, he felt that Catholic children were obviously being discriminated against. Instead of asking public schools to change, he asked for separate schools for Catholics in line with their faith. He stated his views frequently, frankly, forcefully and publically. Not only did he ask for the establishment of a separate system, he asked they be publicly funded because Catholics, too, were taxpayers. He was backed up by New York’s Governor William Seward who was concerned about the large number of Catholic children not attending school in order to avoid the obvious discrimination. In 1840, 1841, and again in 1842, Seward proposed the sharing of funds by public and non-public schools despite private charters or religious affiliations. The loud debate went badly. In Protestant society, supporters of Catholics were seen as un-American. The NY state legislature did not support funding for parochial schools but attempted to make the Protestant schools less sectarian. They failed.

In Boston, Bishop Francis Kenrick, also Irish born was less forceful but just as firm on the necessity of concessions for Catholic students. He was unable to prevent objectionable Bible readings and religious practices in public schools. Riots broke out in July 1844 and 40 people were killed.

¹⁴Neil G. McClusky, S. J., *Catholic Education in America: A Documentary History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1964), 71.

Kendrick and Hughes were unable to reach any kind of agreements with the public schools and shifted their focus to the building of parochial schools. Up to this point, the U.S. Roman Catholic hierarchy expected most education to take place in the home so financial resources were funneled to colleges and seminaries. Now the common public school with its overtly anti-Catholic curriculum was intolerable and necessitated the realignment of available funds.

The hierarchy of the U.S. Roman Catholic Church was growing along with the country. The U.S. was first acknowledged by Rome as a legitimate Church community in 1789 with the appointment of her first Bishop, John Carroll. Baltimore was the seat of the first U.S. Catholic diocese. It was in the city of Baltimore that official gatherings of the U.S. clergy took place to discuss matters of importance to the fledgling Church community. Education became a topic of importance at the three plenary councils of Baltimore and a fourth provisional council.¹⁵ The first Plenary Council of Baltimore was held in 1852. The official decree made on Catholic schooling was simple but important: “Bishops are exhorted to have a Catholic school in every parish and the teachers should be paid from the parochial funds.” The Second Plenary Council was held in 1866 and included the following on education:

¹⁵William Fanning, “Plenary Council,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 12 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12164c.htm>. A plenary council is a legally convened assembly of as many of the ordained Church hierarchy and theologians available in the area affected for the purpose of discussing and regulating matters of Church doctrine and discipline, resulting in regulations and decrees invested with the authority of the whole assembly. Councils basically concentrate the ruling powers of the Church for decisive action so that its decisions are the highest expression of authority of which its members are capable within the sphere of their jurisdiction, with added strength and weight resulting from the combined action of the whole body.

Title ix, Of the Education of Youth.-(i) Of parish schools. Teachers belonging to religious congregations should be employed when possible in our schools. The latter should be erected in every parish. For children who attend the public schools, catechism classes should be instituted in the churches. (ii) Industrial schools or reformatories should be founded, especially in large cities. (iii) A desire is expressed to have a Catholic university in the United States.

In 1884 the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore reiterated the mandate that required every Catholic parish to build and support a parish school.

Title vi, Of the Education of Catholic Youth, treats of (i) Catholic schools, especially parochial, viz., of their absolute necessity and the obligation of pastors to establish them. Parents must send their children to such schools unless the bishop should judge the reason for sending them elsewhere to be sufficient. Ways and means are also considered for making the parochial schools more efficient. It is desirable that these schools be free. (ii) Every effort must be made to have suitable schools of higher education for Catholic youth.

The Fourth Provisional Council of Baltimore met in May 1840, then Bishop John England stated,

It is no easy matter thus to preserve the faith of your children in the midst of so many difficulties. It is not then because of any unkind feeling to our fellow-citizens, it is not through any kind of reluctance on our part, to contribute whatever little we can do to the prosperity of what are called the common institutions of the country, that we are always better pleased to have a separate system of education for the children of our communion, but because we have found by a painful experience, that in any common effort it was always expected that our distinctive principles of religious belief and practice should yield in the demands of those who thought proper to charge us with error . . .

It was this pastoral letter that first mentions a Catholic school system, and the building of a Catholic school system began in earnest.

During this period curriculum within the Catholic school took second place to securing qualified teachers for the rapidly expanding numbers of new students. Pastors focused on the school building, desks or benches, blackboards, heat and light.¹⁶ Curriculum was led by the religious order teaching in the particular school. Often boys and girls were separated. In girls' schools, reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, grammar, geography, and history accompanied the use of a needle. The girls were expected "to make and to mend; to darn and to knit, and become useful in the home."¹⁷ One teacher's manual in use at the time all over the country emphasized "the training of the heart, the head, and the hands." The focus was the cultivation of piety, charity, patience, meekness, and self denial. Corporal punishment was forbidden and each child was to be disciplined as was seen best for her development. The prayers were memorized and recited, instruction on the Mass was done weekly, and hymns sung daily. "Require the exact words of the book in the recitation of prayers, catechism, and the rules of grammar and arithmetic; in all other branches encourage the pupils to use their own language. Reserve the place of honor for the essential branches- reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, grammar, history, and geography."¹⁸

Though the Catholic schools utilized textbooks written for the common schools, a desire for Catholic textbooks stirred the establishment of Catholic publishers. Some chose to adapt those being used in England and others produced their own materials. Two cur-

¹⁶Rev. James Aloysius Burns, C.S.C., Ph.D., *Catholic Education: A Study of Conditions* (New York: Green & Longmans, 1917), 19.

¹⁷Ibid., 125.

¹⁸Ibid., 127. From the Course of Studies of the Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur.

rently popular Catholic publishing companies were founded during the period between 1840 and 1870. Bishops interested in education were authors of many of the early texts but there were no dictates from a consensus of bishops or a country-wide movement to endorse one company or particular text over another. Schools and their teachers were happy to have any ready-made materials which supported their efforts.¹⁹

Era of the Germans: 1866-1919

Germans were the most numerous in the second wave of immigration which peaked in 1882. One and a half million Germans entered the country during the 1880s. Overall, it is estimated that 5.5 million Germans came to the U.S. between 1820 and 1920. By 1890, there were 9 million Catholics, half of whom were Germans.²⁰ They settled in compact self-contained communities primarily in the Midwest triangulated between Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Cincinnati.

This great wave of immigration spurred on the public school movement. The idea that every child should receive formal schooling gained increased acceptance in the U.S. and many state legislatures were enacting laws requiring attendance. Before this time, a parent had the right to send a child to the free public school, a parochial school or not to school at all; now it was to parochial school or free public school which remained objectionable. Few concessions were made to immigrants because it was seen as retarding the Americanization process. Church resources now had to be funneled toward elementary education. Germans were especially willing to set up parochial schools. They were a little

¹⁹Ibid., 143.

²⁰Gabert, *In Hoc Signo?*, 46.

richer than the Irish and wanted their children to retain their subculture and language. They had a history in Europe with an extensive school system which was controlled by the government. The German Catholics were happy to be out of governmental hands and at the same time enjoy the freedom of Church and family influence on the education of their youth.

Catholic schools varied considerably from one part of the country to another. The public schools were becoming more secularized and a bit less objectionable to Catholics as the Irish began to take their place in society within the educational realm where some Irish even found themselves teaching.

By 1874, many bishops were convinced the time had come for high level discussion of the school question. Coincidentally, Rome had sent out a questionnaire to the U.S. bishops about the subject of Catholic schools prodded by the ultra-conservative, highly influential James McMaster of NY, a layman and convert to Catholicism, who wanted to see every Catholic child in a Catholic school. The two questions on Rome's survey were: "Was it permissible for parents to enroll their children in a school that was in no way under the control and supervision of the Roman Catholic clergy?" And "Was the Papal letter of July 14, 1864, addressed to the Archbishop of Fribourg of Germany about the necessity of Church involvement in schools applicable to the Church in the U.S.?"

U.S. Catholic Bishops met to discuss a response to Rome along with the reality of the building of a system of schools. They took a moderate stand and were resentful of Rome's interference. Unaffected by the U.S. bishops, Rome subsequently issued an ultra-

conservative formal promulgation of rulings November 24, 1876. It stated American public schools were “most dangerous and very much opposed to Catholicity.” Point 4 read:

It only remains . . . for prelates to use every means in their power to keep the flocks committed to their care from all contact with public schools. All are agreed that there is nothing so needful to this end as the establishment of Catholic schools in every place, and schools no whit inferior to the public ones. Every effort, then, must be directed towards starting Catholic schools where they are not, and where they are, towards enlarging them and providing them with better accommodations and equipment until they have nothing to suffer as regards teachers or equipment, by comparison with public schools. And to carry out so holy and necessary a work, the aid of religious brotherhoods and of sisterhoods will be found advantageous where the bishop sees fit to introduce them. In order that the faithful may the more freely contribute the necessary expenses, the bishops themselves should not fail to impress on them, at every suitable occasion, whether by pastoral letter, sermon or private conversation, that as bishops they would be recreant to their duty if they failed to do their utmost to provide Catholic schools. This point should be especially brought to the attention of the more wealthy and influential Catholics and members of the legislature.

It was significant that the papacy made a statement on U.S. Catholic schools because there are very few cases where the hierarchy of the world-wide Church stepped into a local controversy. Consequently, a third plenary council was called and well attended. A pledge of silence was extracted from attendees before the merits of commanding parents to support Catholic schools and the definition of a truly Catholic school was discussed. This council decided to strongly recommend the building of schools by each parish and left the definition of what “Catholic school” meant to the local bishop. Consequently, every church was to build a Catholic school within two years and maintain it *in perpetuum*. Normal schools, or teachers colleges, were to be founded in dioceses whenever possible to supply well-trained teachers. Teachers would be expected to have a teaching diploma, and school boards were set up in accordance with diversity and lan-

guage. Pastors were really the ones in charge of their schools and expected to be there at least once a week. By stepping up the quality of schools and their teachers, bishops hoped to make Catholic schools look more like the public system so that parents would have no objection to using them.

It seems less that the Pastoral of 1884 had a lot of influence than that it rubber stamped what was already happening. There were about 2,500 parish schools at the time of the council; 1,100 were built in the ten years preceding the council and 1200 in the ten years after. By 1910 there were twice as many Catholics as there had been in 1880 and twice as many schools with three times the enrollment. The Catholic school was finally a viable alternative to public education.

The U.S. bishops were also interested in a textbook of Christian doctrine which would be specific to life in the United States and also provide more consistency from one diocese to another. Differing communities based either on the religious order responsible for teaching or the particular ethnic concentration of the area, used reprinted catechetical materials from Europe. The first Provincial Council of Baltimore decreed,

A catechism shall be written which is better adapted to the circumstances of this Province; it shall give the Christian Doctrine as explained in Cardinal Bellermine's Catechism,²¹ and when approved by the Holy See, it shall be published for the common use of Catholics.

The First and Second Plenary councils repeated the decree but a catechism was not written until a committee of six bishops from the Third Plenary council of 1884 took up the

²¹ This catechism was ordered by Pope Clement VIII in 1598. It was published in Italian for use in the Papal States and recommended for use throughout the world.

task. In 1885 *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine, Prepared and Enjoined by Order of the Third Council of Baltimore* was published. Theologians and teachers criticized the work and it had many additions and revisions. There ended up being a diversity of editions called the Baltimore Catechism printed and reprinted throughout U.S. Catholic school history up until the Second Vatican Council of the early 1960's.²²

The Golden Era: 1919-1964

The Golden era was the high point of Catholic education in the U.S. from the perspective of numbers of children enrolled in Catholic schools. In 1919, there were 5,788 Catholic schools with a student enrollment of 1,633,599 and over 2 million by 1949²³.

Between 1940 and 1960 the number of Catholic schools increased by at least 50 % and enrollment doubled. The growth of Catholic schools increased faster than public schools with a total number of Catholic schools around ten thousand.

Though renewed anti-Catholic sentiment reigned through the 1920's, there was peace within the ranks of Church members. The first national pastoral letter since 1884 was published in September 1919. It had a lengthy section on education which included

our own Catholic schools are not established and maintained with any idea of holding our children apart from the general body and spirit of American citizenship. They are simply the concrete form in which we exercise our rights as free citizens, in conformity with the dictates of conscience. Their very existence is a great moral fact in America.

²²<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05075b.htm>. The Catholic Encyclopedia Online accessed 10/15/2008 at 8AM.

²³Gabert, *In Hoc Signo?*, 82.

It was during this period that Rome issued the lengthiest statement on education *Divini illius Magistri*. (Christian Education of Youth) It stated there are three basic societies in the world: the Church, the family, and the State. Pope Pius XI stated

education belongs pre-eminently to the Church” because it assumed when Jesus said “teach ye all nations” he conferred upon the Church a magisterial office and because of this the Church must educate men in the ways of salvation. The Church is consequently independent of anything temporal but nevertheless is willing to cooperate with legitimate dispositions of the State. “It is the inalienable right as well as the indispensable duty of the Church to watch over the entire education of her children, in all institutions, public or private, not merely in regard to religious instruction there given, but in regard to every other branch of learning and every regulation insofar as religion and morality is concerned.²⁴

Pope Pius XI also felt that if a school is to be

a fit place for Catholic students . . . it is necessary that all the teaching and the whole organization of the school, and its teachers, syllabus and text-books in every branch, be regulated by the Christian spirit, under the direction and maternal supervision of the Church; so that religion may be in very truth the foundation and crown of the youth’s training; and this in every grade of the school, not only elementary, but the intermediate and Higher institutions of learning as well.²⁵

After WWII, immigration stopped so the “other-ness” issue attached to Catholicism was gone. American Catholics experienced a period of affluence and the Catholic school focus was on science (as was the public schools) due to the space race begun in 1957 by the Russian launch of the satellite Sputnik. Catholic schools incorporated innovative teaching techniques like team teaching, AV departments, centralization of admin-

²⁴Gabert, *In Hoc Signo?*, 84.

²⁵The Holy See, “Divini Illus Magistri,” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri_en.html, para. 80.

istration, and teacher unionization. Catholic schools no longer relied on orders of religious women to staff the schools and instead, increasing numbers of lay teachers were employed. Educational materials were continuing to be produced by a growing number of publishing houses. Some religious orders wrote, received copyrights, and published texts specific to their particular charism. There were no texts specifically ordered, written, or published by the U.S. Catholic Bishops other than the reprinting of the Baltimore Catechism.

Era of Vatican II: 1964-Present

Pope John XXIII was elected in 1958 and brought his own ideas about education with him. He had a traditional Jeffersonian notion that everyone should be educated to his state in life. He did not think all people needed equal education. He was also much more ecumenical so he did not feel the same need to defend the faith that many of his predecessors did. He was followed by Paul VI in 1964 who did not see public schools as deficient or anti-Catholic and who openly favored the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori. The famous Vatican II council did produce a document, *Declaration on Christian Education* in November 1964, with the final draft in 1965. It clarified that “certain rights and duties belong to civil society” specifically the completion of “the task of education with attention to parental wishes” and it supported the principle of subsidiarity²⁶ as defined in another Vatican II document *Church in the Modern World*.²⁷

²⁶<http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/pt3sect1chpt2.shtml>. Subsidiarity is defined as unjust and a gravely harmful disturbance of right order to turn over to a greater society of higher rank functions and services which can be performed by lesser bodies on a lower plane.

²⁷The Holy See, “Gaudium Et Spes,” http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

It also, for the first time in history, expresses concern for non-Catholic children attending Catholic schools. It does not advocate conversion of these students but instead defines the guiding principle of the Catholic school. It states that Catholic schools have a unique purpose, which they see as already in place. Catholic schools create an atmosphere of genuine freedom and charity. They seek to develop the physical personality of the child in consonance with his spiritual growth, and they seek to relate all human culture to the news of salvation.

Present Catechetical Curriculum

Though Catholic education today has a totally different focus than when first founded, I believe Catholic education has a place specifically in the U.S. because of the words of the Church fathers at Vatican II. Catholic schools have certain unique purposes. Catholic Schools seek to create an atmosphere of genuine freedom and charity. They seek to develop the physical personality of the child in consonance with his spiritual growth, and they seek to relate all human culture to Gospel values. In the light of today's focus on accountability through the objectification of the young people, Catholic education becomes a viable alternate choice for families who embrace a sacramental vision of the world. As philosophers grapple with the implications of our postmodern world with everything seen through a new lens of relationalism, the Catholic school offers spiritual truth as a touchstone and views young people as the children of God who must be nurtured.

In *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, a popular, comprehensive, qualitative and quantitative research-based review of post-Vatican II U.S. Catholic high schools pub-

lished in 1993, the authors evaluated the Religion curriculum as well as all others taught in their field-sample schools to see if Catholic school were indeed unique or if they had outlived their usefulness. Authors, Anthony Bryk, Valarie Lee, and Peter Holland found that overall

This type of religious studies program (the one found in their post-Vatican II field-sample schools) is grounded in the premise that faith is a developmental process, the end state of which can only be achieved through individual free choice. The aim is to develop and nurture personal conscience as a guide to personal action, and as a result, teaching by rote or imposition is seen as distorting the concept of faith. This view contrasts sharply with the pre-Vatican II orientation that Catholics must learn the “mind of the Church.” In contemporary religion classes, students are typically asked to analyze and interpret situations and to apply basic principles to complex social and moral problems. From a pedagogical point of view, the development of skills in analysis and synthesis has replaced the former emphasis on memorization, recall, and comprehension.²⁸

Researchers have identified professional materials in line with the prevailing attitude of the Church documents coming from the Second Vatican Council, especially the pivotal document *On the Church in the Modern World* proclaimed December 1, 1965. This document specifically states, “Only in freedom can man direct himself toward goodness.” It also questions the then prevailing educational attitudes which was felt insufficient.

A change in attitudes and in human structures frequently calls accepted values into question, especially among young people, who have grown impatient on more than one occasion, and indeed become rebels in their distress. Aware of their own influence in the life of society, they want a part in it sooner. This frequently causes parents and educators to experience greater difficulties day by day in discharg-

²⁸Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie E. Lee, and Peter B. Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 112.

ing their tasks. The institutions, laws and modes of thinking and feeling as handed down from previous generations do not always seem to be well adapted to the contemporary state of affairs; hence arises an upheaval in the manner and even the norms of behaviour. (7)

What is at Stake?

The production of the 2007 curriculum framework suggests an educational pendulum swinging back toward the attitude prevalent before the Second Vatican Council. The attitude may have been appropriate at the time, but we live in a different world than those first Catholics arriving on U.S. shores. As a religious educator for over twenty years, and a child of Vatican II, I fear this swing negates the best of what has developed from the documents of the Second Vatican Council. It seems the Framework delivers a deliberate fundamentalist Catholic religious attitude. In a world which delights in choice and freedom, I fear a fundamentalist presentation of faith will be seen as antiquated and forced, and handily dismissed by Catholic youth. I also fear a fundamentalist attitude will undermine cooperation and dialogue with those who practice the Muslim and Jewish faith. What I fear most, however, is the loss of the deliberate developmental process highlighting the free choice of Catholic faith found in today's Catholic high schools as documented in *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*.

From a pedagogical standpoint, I see danger in the dismissal of our prevalent postmodern philosophy as well as a lack of dialogue with the present culture. The curriculum must also acknowledge that of the other disciplines taught at the school, specifically history, civics, economics, and the sciences. The Framework tends to veer away from critical thought in order to present the Catholic message as objective truth. There is cer-

tainly value here, but the one skill which is in greatest need to a generation constantly bombarded with information in sound bites is the discernment of multiple viewpoints. Practice with discernment and choice within the realm of our faith tradition would be pedagogically sounder.

Theologically, I find problems with the way the Framework presents Scripture. Though historically Catholic theologians have examined the Hebrew Scriptures as precursors for the birth of Jesus, students discovering them for the first time will be short changed if they are only presented as the early part of salvation history. Again this makes our Jewish brothers and sisters look more like the people who “missed the boat” than, to quote Pope John Paul II, our “elder brothers in the faith.” I also find what has not been addressed in the framework troublesome. Many proclamations made in the documents already produced by both the universal Catholic Church and the USCCB on dealing with other faith traditions, care for the planet, and the principles of social justice have been ignored. Ignorance of these principles can have catastrophic effects in a world which seems to be growing smaller each day. I fear this neglect will imply these principles are simply unimportant.

Additionally, even though the Bishops offer their framework as a guideline and checklist for publishers to ensure accuracy and completeness for all approved new catechetical materials, their direction through their vocabulary and overall apologetic attitude, with the inclusion of the set of challenges after each course, is clear. Through their emphasis, they have reduced serious academic classes to more narrow and dogmatic fundamentalist recitation. Catholic school educators have spent the last few years watching our

public school colleagues “teach to the test” due to the mandates No Child Left Behind has put on testing. School administrators can assure everyone that time for creativity, student led exploration, and the practice of critical thought exists, but because the bottom line carries such import, everything else will take a back seat to test practice in order to achieve high scores. Our bishops have articulated that they expect students graduating from Catholic high schools to be able to defend their faith and explain any dogmatic statement to the general public. That certainly is the goal of any Catholic educator; however, by explicitly listing the questions that students should be able to answer as well as the correct answer, it is clear this will become the touchstone for each class’s success. The creativity needed to reach out and engage our postmodern culture may have to be waylaid.

Decisions made by the Bishops about the current high school curriculum for our youth read as a knee-jerk reaction to the legitimate fear for the future of the Roman Catholic Church as it now exists. Because church attendance is on the decline, especially in Europe, it seems the Church is losing her influence on the world culture. Problems are real and do need to be addressed; however, engaging the postmodern culture head on would be more helpful than reinstating an apologetic high school curriculum.

Church officials have suggested the relativism of postmodernity plays an important role in the loss of faith. I have heard Father Alfred McBride, O. Praem., member of the committee which authored the Bishop’s Framework, speak on postmodernity. He acted as though he could chase away the prevailing cultural mindset the same way he

would shoo away a fly.²⁹ Pope John XXIII, who called the Second Vatican Council, specifically asked the Church to “read the signs of the times”. This new curriculum model pretends postmodern attitudes and the influence of popular culture are insignificant and can be ignored instead of engaging the culture as is the directive in the General Directory for Catechesis. Our students must be believers within the Third Millennial milieu.³⁰

This framework, undertaken for clarity of Catholic doctrine, universality of scope and sequence within the United States, and to help students develop a personal relationship with God, may backfire. Specifically lacking here is engagement with the prevailing culture and postmodern mindset. I fear that what is at stake as we implement this new curriculum is relevance. We are foregoing the best that the post-Vatican II schools had to offer, invitation and personal choice of the faith tradition for apologetics. If theology courses become dogmatic, our sophisticated students will dismiss them. In their social studies and science classes they are challenged to apply principles and make connections between historical developments they have learned and the trends they see. Without similar invitation to engage the modern culture with faith tradition, students will be turned off. As a culture we cannot afford to raise a generation of Catholic people who are unable to engage religious thought together with real world problems. Additionally the teachings of Jesus will be lost to a generation of depressed consumers who may take environmental issues seriously but will not have the tools or spirit to make positive changes. Catholic

²⁹Address given to the Catholic school teachers of the diocese of Charlotte, September 18, 2008 at Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School, Kernersville, NC.

³⁰Francis D. Kelly, *The Mystery We Proclaim: Catechesis for the Third Millennium* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 16-17.

schools may become no more than religiously affiliated prep schools for those in flight from the problems of public schools.

Purpose of the Study

It is my intention in this study to deconstruct the framework from the perspective of critical pedagogy specifically from the perspective of the notion of proleptic eschatology offered by Patrick Slattery in *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*. I will point out contradictions with other authoritative documents written by both the U.S. Catholic Bishops and the universal Church, and with the lived tradition of Catholic education in the country. I also compare Walter Brueggemann's notion of prophetic imagination and the implications of a hierarchy in control of access to God to the expressed topics seen as important in the Framework. I will examine the inherent exclusions of vital topics; critically delineate obvious power relations at play; emphasize language used within the framework; and offer suggestions to the U.S. Catholic Bishops to revitalize this framework by engaging postmodernity.

I plan to lay out this study using five chapters. In the first chapter I will introduce the problem by detailing the history of the production of the 2007 *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. I will articulate how it is historically significant. Only one other time in the history of the U.S. Catholic Church did the Bishops write a catechetical document. I will do a brief review of the history of Catholic education in the United States. I will discuss why the framework is problematic and specifically what is at stake. I

will articulate my intentions and pedagogical leanings in concern with the framework and, lastly, I will map out the chapters of the dissertation.

In Chapter II, I will describe the *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. I will begin by specifically articulating the Bishops intentions stated within the document. I will trace the alarming statistical sociological data which I believe is the reason for the production of the Framework and I compare the Framework to two pre-Vatican II writings, the *Baltimore Catechism* and *Our Quest for Happiness*, a textbook series used from the 1940's through the 1960's. This high school textbook series printed by Mentzer, Bush and Company, "employed a return to the traditional method of the Church, the method of St. Irenaeus and the *Apostolic Constitutions* as perfected and recommended by St. Augustine in his *De Catechizandis Rudibus*."³¹

Chapter III will focus on a theological critique of the framework. Theologically the Catholic faith trusts the complex interdependence of Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium for its authority. I will critique the framework from the context of Scripture, both Hebrew and Christian, in light of the prophetic imagination described by Walter Brueggemann. Next, I will address curriculum development as part of the lived tradition of Catholic education in the U.S., and, finally, trace the published statements of the Magisterium, specifically universal Church documents *Rappresentanti in Terra* (1929), *Provido Sane Consilio* (1935), *The Catholic School* (1977), *The Religious Dimensions of Educa-*

³¹Clarence Edward Elwell, Mary St. Therese Dunn, Mary Kieran Dowd, and Roy J. Deferrari, *Teacher's Manual for Use with Our Quest for Happiness: A Textbook Series for High School Religion* (Chicago: Bush & Mentzer, 1947), 1.

tion in a Catholic School (1988), The General Directory for Catechesis (1997), and documents specific to the U.S. Catholic Church To Teach as Jesus Did (1972), In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (1990), and the National Directory for Catechesis (2005).

Chapter IV will be a pedagogical critique of the framework. I will examine the framework verses the “signs of the times” or the contemporary postmodern culture with special reference to our children and how they see the world. I will examine postmodern curriculum development and make reference to the Catholic Church’s views on postmodern philosophy. I will offer the proleptic eschatology of Patrick Slattery found in his *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era* and the theology of the Spirit of Mary Grey in *The Outrageous Pursuit of Hope: Prophetic Dreams for the Twenty-first Century* as a meeting point for the Church and our postmodern culture.

In Chapter V, I will address the fact that the Framework lacks official Vatican approval and the possibility that individual bishops could see the document as a suggestion rather than a mandate. I will specifically address topics which seem to be over emphasized and underemphasized within the Framework and the deliberate gender specific language used.

A religious curriculum developed in light of prophetic imagination has the ability to address the functional knowledge of faith and the implications for a world in need of spiritual nourishment. The present needs in today’s world for mutual cooperation, a preferential option for the poor, the dangers of fundamentalism, and direction for the ecological care of the planet, necessitate a curriculum focused on a world constantly drawn

closer to together through rapid advances in travel, technology, and electronic communication. This framework is a disappointment to both the Roman Catholic faithful and other peoples of faith who should be able to look to this work as a reflection of a balance of orthodoxy and promotion of “unity and love among men.”³² The Framework had the capability of being an example to other educational systems; instead it is a feeble attempt to recreate an era of the Church which no longer exists. Forcing Catholic high school classrooms to image these bygone days will not change or engage a postmodern culture. I believe this lack of engagement must be considered as no less than neglect of a generation of students hungry to express their spirituality.

³²*A Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965.

CHAPTER II

DESCRIPTION OF THE FRAMEWORK, THE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH BEHIND ITS CREATION, AND THE PRE-VATICAN II MODELS ON WHICH IT IS BASED

Boy and Girl: Who made us?

Christ: God made you.

Boy and Girl: What for?

Christ: To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in heaven.¹

This chapter is intended to describe in detail the Framework as published by the U.S. Catholic Bishops. In order to understand a critique of the Framework, the reader must be familiar with content of the Framework, the type of language and style dictated for use by the Framework and the models on which the Framework has been fashioned. I begin by describing the intentions of the Bishops as they articulated them at the introduction of their published work. I describe each of the six mandatory courses and the five possible elective themes in detail and sequence using the vocabulary chosen by the Bishops as necessary to flesh out the flavor of these classes. I include all the challenge questions for each published class for the same reason. These questions not only reveal what the education committee of the USCCB finds most important in the scope of each class, they also give insight into the fear the bishops expressed about the inability of

¹Bennet Kelley, *Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism: The Truths of our Catholic Faith Clearly Explained and Illustrated with Bible readings, Study Helps and Mass Prayers* (New York: Catholic Book Publishers, 1969), 9.

Catholic students to articulate the faith and more importantly their fears over their loss of control for the flavor and direction of Catholicism in the United States.

This chapter presents some of the sociological data published between 1989 and 2005 that show what could be alarming trends in U.S. Roman Catholic populations and practice. One Gallup poll specifically relating Catholic school attendance and orthodoxy in practice later on in life suggested the Church was wasting its limited resources. I have chosen to use survey results from The Gallup Poll and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), at Georgetown University because they are highly regarded by the Church and academics, as well as some of the most popular books on the subject. Two of the books I have included, *American Catholic Laity in a Changing Church* and *Laity American and Catholic Transforming the Church*, are the result of the research efforts of William D'Antonio, Executive Officer of the American Sociological Association and a member of the Board of Directors of an important Catholic newspaper, The National Catholic Reporter (NCR) and the newspaper's editor and publisher, Tom Fox and Bill McSweeney.

It is obvious that these scientific measurements affected the thinking of the members of the USCCB Standing Committee on Catechesis. The results of one of the CARA surveys appears in the first of the approved texts published for use in U.S. Catholic high schools since the Framework was completed and took effect.

The chapter then compares the Framework to the most popular textbook series used before the Second Vatican Council. Many believe the content of material taught in religion classes at the high school level after Vatican II (the mid 1960's to present) was

weak, watered down, and relativistic. Many even believe this weakness led to the results of the sociological studies mentioned. Because the Framework is eerily similar to the series *Our Quest for Happiness* in both the scope and sequence, I believe the Committee on Catechesis looked to past texts to formulate the current Framework. I also believe the highly structured Baltimore Catechism, with its series of questions and answers which students were required to memorize and recite, is the model on which the challenges section of each of the classes developed in the Framework are based.

This chapter does not intend to make comment on the choices of the Bishops in the formulation of the Framework, the Bishops use of all that the sociologists findings and conclusions, or the appropriateness of the philosophy, the basic principles used to develop *Our Quest for Happiness*, or the traditional historical method touted by that series. These will happen in later chapters.

The Framework

The Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework, to be known as The Framework within this document, presents an introduction, a core curriculum in six classes, and five options for elective classes in a fifty-three page booklet. The one page introduction states, “The distinctive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ.”² It also clearly defines the intended outcome of the document, “These ends are evident in this framework- designed to guide catechetical instruction for young people of high-school age wherever and however it takes place: in Catholic high schools, in parish religious education programs, with young

²USCCB, *Doctrinal Elements*, 1.

people schooled at home, or within the context of catechetical instruction which should be part of every youth ministry program.”³

The Framework is Christologically centered, and expected to be the content for curriculum and also a “vehicle for growth in one’s relationship with the Lord so that each may come to know him and live according to the truth he has given us.”⁴ For the USCCB, the ends to this curriculum is to produce “disciples who will participate more deeply in the life of the Church but are also better able to reach eternal life with God in Heaven.”⁵

The introduction clearly states that this is only a framework for the creation of instructional materials. The Bishops expect textbook publishers to use the doctrinal elements as building blocks to be combined thematically and augmented by creative textbook publishers. After development, publishers are expected to submit them to the USCCB for review and to check conformity to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. “The process of the review will ensure that the materials authentically and completely define and present the teaching of the Church.”⁶

The Framework was designed as a four-year, eight semester course of catechetical instruction to be composed of six core semester-length subject themes and two elective classes to be chosen by a diocese or school. The Bishops feel that in this highly mobile society national conformity will benefit the students.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

The Bishops added a section entitled “Challenges” to each theme in order to “help those same young people develop the necessary skills to answer or address the real questions that they face in life and in their Catholic faith.”⁷ The “Challenges” section presents “examples of these questions and provides direction for ways to answer them. This element is designed to give catechetical instruction for high-school-aged young people an apologetic component. Publishers and teachers or catechists are to strive to provide for catechetical instruction and formation that is imbued with an apologetic approach.”⁸

Catholic Encyclopedia defines apologetics as a “theological science which has for its purpose the explanation and defense of the Christian religion.”⁹

Its aim is to give a scientific presentation of the claims which Christ's revealed religion has on the assent of every rational mind; it seeks to lead the inquirer after truth to recognize, first, the reasonableness and trustworthiness of the Christian revelation as realized in the Catholic Church, and secondly, the corresponding obligation of accepting it.”¹⁰

Apologetics, by design, should lead an individual to the Catholic faith “as the divinely authorized organ for preserving and rendering efficacious the saving truths revealed by Christ. This is the great fundamental dogma on which all other dogmas rest. Hence apologetics also goes by the name of “fundamental theology.”¹¹

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Charles Francis Aiken, “Apologetics,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907). <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01618a.htm>.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

The core curriculum of *The Framework* is presented in this order:

I. The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture. This first class is to provide general knowledge and appreciation of the Sacred Scriptures. Students will learn about the Bible, which it is “authored by God through inspiration,” its value to “people throughout the world,”¹² and how to read the Bible. Students will become familiar with the major sections of the Scriptures with particular attention paid to the Gospels. The five themes in the class are How do we know about God?, About sacred Scripture, Understanding Scripture, Overview of the Bible, and The Gospels.

In the first thematic section the student will explore the inherent thirst of all for God. How God is revealed has been explained through Scripture, the Patristic fathers, St. Thomas Aquinas, through Vatican I and with contemporary arguments “based on the human person’s opening to truth, beauty, moral goodness, freedom, [and} voice of conscience.”¹³ This section also explores the meaning of divine revelation and the transmission of divine revelation culminating in the deposit of faith and the role of the Church.

The second theme, *All About Scripture*, discusses biblical writers as human authors, the inspiration of these authors by the Holy Spirit making God author of Scripture, the inerrancy of the Bible in matters of divine revelation, the development of the oral tradition, the written books, setting the Canon of Scripture, and the study of Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church. The section entitled *Understanding Scripture* uses the official Church documents *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, *Dei Verbum*, and the Pontifical Biblical

¹² UCSSB, *Doctrinal Elements*, 2.

¹³ Ibid.

Commission's *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* to present interpreting Scripture as a responsibility of the teaching office of the Church. It discusses criterion for the interpretation of Scripture, the literal and spiritual "sense" of Scripture, its relation to science and history, and modern critical ancillary approaches to Biblical research.

Overview of the Bible presents the books of the Old and New Testaments, the differences between the Old Testament books by Catholics and Protestants and the unity of the Old and New Testaments. It describes Old Testament as "the name given to the forty-six books which make up the first part of the Bible and record salvation history prior to the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ." It continues, "It is called the Old Testament because it relates God's teaching and actions prior to the coming of Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of Revelation. It also focuses on the covenant God made with the Jewish people, which is called the 'Old Covenant' to distinguish it from the New Covenant made by Jesus Christ." The fifth section on the Gospels discusses their centrality in Scripture and the definition of Gospel. It presents the dates of authorship, churches for which each was written and the contents of the three synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke and then presents the same for the Gospel of John.

The "Challenges" for this course include the questions Is it true that Catholics do not use or read the Bible?, Isn't the Bible just another piece of literature?, Is the Bible literally true?, Isn't the Bible about the past? Why do people today think it applies to them?, Why do Catholics maintain beliefs and practices not in the Bible?, And Why do some people try to challenge what the Church teaches about Jesus Christ?¹⁴

¹⁴Ibid.

The second course is: *II. Who Is Jesus Christ?* This class introduces students to the “Mystery of Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, the second person of the Blessed Trinity.”¹⁵ Students will learn that Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of God. In learning who Jesus Christ is they will learn who they are called to be. This class is broken down into four parts, God and Revelation, Jesus Christ’s Revelation about God, The Mystery of the Incarnation, and Jesus Christ Teaches Us about Ourselves.

God and Revelation explores revelation as God’s gift of himself, his divine plan-salvation history, and the revelation through Scripture, Tradition and the Deposit of Faith. This section also covers faith as a response to God’s self-revelation and the “willingness to believe and trust in what God has communicated to us.”¹⁶ It is faith in Jesus Christ that leads to discipleship, “active participation in the Church community and working to spread the faith by word and example.”¹⁷ It also examines the relationship between faith and religion and “the fullness of Revelation reflected in the life and teaching of the Catholic Church.”¹⁸

Jesus Christ’s Revelation About God discusses the “Son of God from all eternity and Son of Mary from the moment of the Incarnation,”¹⁹ Jesus Christ as the Logos and fulfillment of God’s promise to the people of Israel, his continuing presence in the world through the Church and that all Christ’s life is worthy of reflection and imitation. This

¹⁵Ibid., 6.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

section also presents the central theme of the Trinity, the three persons of the Trinity, the development of Trinitarian theology and the unique role of Mary as the Mother of God.

The section entitled *The Mystery of the Incarnation* explores Jesus Christ as fully God and fully human and the unity of these two natures in one Person called the hypostatic union. The fourth section, *Jesus Christ Teaches Us About Ourselves*, reminds the student that to be fully human means to accept and become the person God created us to be, God created the human person in his image, good but in need of salvation, and as stewards of God's creation. This section also discusses Jesus' redemption gives us the grace to choose good, it reveals the way to repentance and conversion. Jesus' death and resurrection unites us to God and are "conformed to Christ to grow in holiness."²⁰ We learn prayer and evangelization, the goal of this life and the end of life by Christ's example.

The Challenges in this section are: How can we know God really exists?, There are some who see human suffering and conclude that God does not care about us, Why do we say that he loves us deeply?, How can people say that God is good if suffering and evil are present in the world?, There are some who dismiss God's Revelation and say that the beliefs and doctrines taught by the Church have been made up by members of the Church. How can we be sure that what the Catholic Church teaches has come from God?, and How do we as Catholics answer questions about the Blessed Virgin Mary and her role in the life and prayer of the Church?²¹

²⁰Ibid., 8.

²¹Ibid., 10.

The third course, *III The Mission of Jesus Christ - The Paschal Mystery* helps students “understand all that God has done for us through his son, Jesus Christ.”²² Through this course students will learn that “for all eternity, God has planned for us to share eternal happiness with him, which is accomplished through the redemption Christ won for us.”²³ The class will also explore what it means to be a disciple of Christ. It is broken down into six sections: The Goodness of Creation and Our Fall from Grace, The Promise of a Messiah, Christ Our Light: Redemption Unfolds, Redemption through the Paschal Mystery, Moral Implications for the Life of a Believer and Prayer in the Life of a Believer.

The Goodness of Creation and Our Fall from Grace discusses the creation of the world by God and that creation reflects the glory of God. This is followed by the creation of people in the image of God, the dignity of men and women, and God’s plan of holiness and justice. This is followed by the fall from grace, original sin, and its consequence for all: suffering, death, a tendency toward sin, and the need for salvation.

The Promise of Messiah follows the prophesy of a messiah in the book of Genesis and God’s people’s longing for the fulfillment of the promise through readings in the Old Testament. The promise of redemption is fulfilled in Jesus. This is developed through the annunciation to Mary, the dream of Joseph and the ancient prophesies as found in the Gospels. The meaning and implications of the Incarnation are followed by a discussion of Christ’s life as revelation of the mystery of redemption.

²²Ibid., 11.

²³Ibid.

Key events in the life of Christ are discussed in *Christ Our Light: Redemption Unfolds. Redemption through the Paschal Mystery* details the passion and death of Jesus, redemption accomplished and the promise of God fulfilled. The significance of Christ's resurrection as confirmation of his divinity is developed next as well as an invitation for believers in the mystery of redemption through the sacramental life of the Church and ultimately the promise of our own resurrection. This is followed by the Ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Moral Implications for the Life of a Believer details Christ put to death for our sins and raised for our justification, our need to accept and live the grace of redemption, and the judgment by God at our death. This is followed by a universal call to holiness and the discussion of living as a disciple. *Prayer in the Life of a Believer* details its necessity for a relationship with God, the use of Scripture and other expressions of prayer, and the Lord's Prayer as the basis of the Church's understanding of the value of prayer.

The Challenges offered for this class are: Why would God the Father allow his Son, Jesus, to suffer and die the way he did?, Why are followers of Jesus Christ sometimes so willing to make sacrifices and to accept pain and suffering, especially in witness to Christ and their faith?, Isn't making sacrifices and putting up with suffering a sign of weakness?, In the end, isn't it really only the final result that matters?²⁴

The fourth course in the series is *IV. Jesus Christ's Mission Continues in the Church*. This class helps students understand that they encounter Jesus Christ "in and through the Church." "In this course, students will learn not so much about events in the

²⁴Ibid., 14.

life of the Church but about the sacred nature of the Church.”²⁵ It is divided into five segments: Christ Established His One Church to Continue His Presence and His Work, Images of the Church (Partial Insights of Church Sharing in Trinitarian Communion), The Marks of the Church, The Church in the World, and Implications for Life of a Believer.

The first section, *Christ Established His One Church to Continue His Presence and His Work* lays out the origin, foundation and manifestation of the Church from its promise to Abraham through its establishment through Christ. It details the role of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, through the gifts bestowed on the Church, and as inspiration of the Apostles’ mission. This section also speaks of the handing on of the teachings of Jesus through Apostolic tradition, the role of the Apostles in the early Church, the Council of Jerusalem and that the community of Apostles is continued in the community of pope and bishops.

Images of the Church speaks of all the imagery of the Church as prefigured in the Old Testament and Gospels and as developed through Tradition. The Marks of the Church teaches the line from the Nicene Creed which calls the Church one, holy, catholic and apostolic. This section deals with unity in the world through charity, the profession of one faith, the common celebration of worship and the sacraments and Apostolic succession. It speaks to wounds to unity through heresies and schism and ecumenical dialogue with Orthodox and Protestant faith communities. This section also deals with the Divine and human dimensions of the Church, the Church’s need for conversion and renewal, the holi-

²⁵Ibid., 15.

ness of Mary, the canonized saints, the Church as means of salvation for all people and the Apostolic mission and teaching of Scripture and Tradition.

The Church in the World discusses the role of the Church as sign and instrument of communion with God and unity of the human race, the purpose and mission of the Church and the visible structure including the college of Bishops in union with the Pope, individual dioceses, parishes and the domestic Church. It details the roles of the ordained, the consecrated, and the laity. It is in this section that the teaching office of the Church, the Magisterium, is explored along with indefectibility, infallibility, and the governing office of the Church. *The Implications for the Life of a Believer* teaches why belonging to the Church is essential, the liturgical worship cycle, and the call to be example of Christian witness at home, workplace, and public square.

The Challenges for this course are: Why do I have to be Catholic?, Aren't all religions as good as another?, Isn't the Church being hypocritical in telling other people to be holy and avoid sin when many Catholics including the clergy, are guilty of terrible wrongs?, Who needs organized religion? Isn't it better to worship God in my own way, when and how I want?, and How is it that the Catholic Church is able to sustain the unity of her members even though they live out their faith in different cultures and sometimes express their faith in different ways?²⁶

The fifth course *V. Sacraments as Privileged Encounters with Jesus Christ* is offered to help students understand that they can “encounter Christ today in a full and real

²⁶Ibid., 19.

way in and through the Sacraments.”²⁷ This class is divided into four sections, The Sacramental Nature of the Church, The Sacraments of Initiation, The Sacraments of Healing, and the Sacraments at the Service of Communion.

The Sacramental Nature of the Church explores the definition of sacrament, the sacramental economy of salvation, redemption mediated through the seven sacraments, and prayer. The Sacraments of Initiation focuses on Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, the Sacraments of Healing, Penance and Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick, and Sacraments at the Service of Communion, Holy Orders and Marriage. For each of these seven sacraments the unit unpacks the scriptural basis of the sacrament, how it is celebrated, the essential rites, the effects and implications of the sacrament, requirements for its reception, the minister of the sacrament, and appropriating and living the sacrament.

The Challenges for this class are: Can’t a person go directly to God without the help of the Church or a priest?, Can’t God forgive us directly when we are sorry for sin?, Aren’t the sacraments just celebrations to mark significant moments in our life?, Is there any difference between receiving Holy Communion in the Catholic Church and going to communion in a Protestant worship service?, How do we know that any of the sacraments really work?²⁸

The last required class is *VI. Life in Jesus Christ*. Here students will examine the moral concepts and precepts of disciples of Jesus Christ. This class is divided into four

²⁷Ibid., 20.

²⁸Ibid., 25.

sections, *What is Life in Christ?*, *God Has Taught Us How to Live a New Life in Christ*, *Living New Life in Christ and the Gospel Message Are the Basis for Catholic Moral Teaching*, and *The Reality of Sin*.

What Is Life in Christ? develops an understanding of God's plan for us and our response to God's plan. *God Has Taught Us How to Live a New Life in Christ* develops the notions of eternal law, divine Providence, natural moral law, each of the ten commandments, the two great commandments of Jesus, the beatitudes, and the Church and her teaching authority and responsibility. *Living New Life in Christ Jesus and the Gospel Message Are the Basis for Catholic Moral Teaching* spells out the concepts of God's love and mercy through Jesus Christ, our vocation to discipleship, grace, virtue, sustaining the moral life of the Christian, conscience, Sacraments and prayer, and appropriating and living the moral teaching of Jesus. The section the *Reality of Sin* discusses original innocence, effects of original sin, the sins of omission and commission, mortal, venial and capital sin, and scriptural images of sin.

The Challenges for this class are: If God created me free, doesn't that mean I alone can decide what is right and wrong?, Isn't it wrong to judge other people by telling them something they are doing wrong?, Isn't it wrong for the Church to impose her views of morality on others?, Why can't we make up our own minds and be in control over everything?, There's an old saying about charity beginning at home, and Doesn't this mean that I don't have to worry about helping anyone else until I have enough to take care of me and my family?²⁹

²⁹Ibid., 30.

At the discretion of the bishop either he or educational leaders of individual schools will choose two classes from the following list of elective courses. These classes will either both be taught in the senior year or one taught in junior year and the other in senior year along with *Life in Jesus Christ*.

Option A: Sacred Scripture is meant to introduce the basic principles for understanding and interpreting the Bible.

Because of the extent of the scriptural material, this outline will not try to cover the vast content but rather offer comments about Scripture's purpose and religious significance . . . Every effort will be made to project a sense of the unity of the narrative the divine plan of salvation, the presence of God's action in this record of his Revelation and his desire to share his merciful love with us.³⁰

This class is divided into eleven sections. The first is *Divine Revelation: God Speaks to US*, which details the stages of revelation and its transmission, God as author of Scripture, principles of interpretation, the role of Scripture in the life of the Church and faith as our personal and communal response to revelation. The next sections cover particular books. Part two covers the Pentateuch, three Joshua and the Era of Judges, four the Historical Books, five the Wisdom Books, six The Prophets, seven is an overview of the New Testament, eight is The Gospels, nine Acts of the Apostles, ten The Letters, and eleven the Book of Revelation.

³⁰Ibid., 31.

The Challenges for this class are Why do Catholics believe in things that are not found in the Bible?, Why isn't Scripture enough for Catholics?, and Why does the Catholic Bible have more books?³¹

Another optional course is *Option B: History of the Catholic Church*. The purpose of this course is to provide a general knowledge of the Church's history from Apostolic times to the present. This class first addresses the origin, foundation, and manifestation of the Church. It then jumps into the two thousand year history of the Church. In the section History of the Church in Post-Apostolic Times it discusses the age of persecution, the teachings of Sts. Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus, and the development of house liturgies. This is followed by The Age of the Fathers of the Church including Constantine and the Edict of Milan, inculturation of Scripture for Greek and Roman peoples, the development of the Eastern Patriarchates, the first four ecumenical Church councils, heresy and the need for a creed. It moves on to the Roman Church of the West with a discussion of the barbarian invasion of Rome, political influence of the Church, and rise of monastic communities. This is followed by The Church of the Middle Ages, The Crusades, The Renaissance, Protestant Reformation, The Age of Exploration: Church's Missionaries Confront New Cultures, Vatican I, The Industrial Revolution, The Church and Social Justice Teaching, Pope Pius X, The Church Between the Wars, Vatican Council II, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and The Church in the United States.

The Challenges for this class are: How can the Church claim to be holy and a protector of the truth when there are things in her history like the Crusades, the Inquisition,

³¹Ibid., 34.

the persecution of the Jews, and the Galileo case?, and If the Catholic Church truly has the fullness of truth, why have other churches broken away from her?³²

A third option, *Option C: Living as a Disciple of Jesus Christ in Society* teaches the tenants of the Church's Social Teaching, and its concern for others especially the poor and needy. This class is broken into four units, God's Plan for His People, Social Teaching of the Church, Major Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, and Sin and Social Dimensions. God's Plan for His People looks at the Church as a sign and instrument of communion with God and unity of the whole human race. It explores redemption through the Paschal Mystery, how to achieve happiness in this life, the unity of the whole human race, and the Church as household of faith.

The second unit, *Social Teaching of the Church* looks at social teaching in Scripture, different types of justice, the official documents of the Church: *Rerum Novarum*, *Gaudium et Spes*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. This is followed by the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching from the Universal Magisterium and the USCCB. Section three of this class explores the six major themes of Catholic Social teaching and the preferential option for the poor. The fourth section looks at the concept of social sin and the social dimensions of the specific commandments, the beatitudes, and the two Great Commandments.

The challenges for this class are: Why shouldn't we look out for ourselves first? No one else will look out for me., Isn't the degree of a person's success and achievement really measured in terms of financial security and wealth?, Isn't not fighting back or get-

³²Ibid., 39.

ting even with someone who hurts or offends you a sign of weakness?, and Isn't it more important to work for justice than to engage in charity?³³

Option D: Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ helps students consider what it means to live in service to others and how all vocations (married life, single life, priestly life, and consecrated life) are similar and are different. "Students should learn what it means to live life for the benefit of others and the value in considering a vocation in service to the Christian community."³⁴ It begins with God's Call to Each of Us meant to remind students of our inherent longing for God and that personal vocation is a call from God. The second section of the course called *Serve One Another* looks at the teachings and example of Jesus and the Sacraments at the Service of Communion. Part three focuses on Marriage, God as author of marriage, lifelong commitment, the preparation for celebration of and effects of the sacrament. It also speaks of challenges to marriage and family life, the question of divorce and or remarriage and the validity of previous marriages of divorced Catholics.

The fourth part of the course is on the sacrament of Holy Orders. It details the sacrament as instituted by Christ, gives the historical development of the three degrees of Holy Orders, why the sacrament is reserved to men, the preparation for, effects of and celebration of the sacrament. The fifth part of the course is The Consecrated Life. This section details the different types of religious institutes in the Catholic Church.

³³Ibid., 43.

³⁴Ibid., 44.

The challenges for this class are: Isn't having the right vocation, job, or career essential for a person's happiness?, Isn't the real measure of success in life the degree of one's financial security and material comfort?, Just as people fall in love, they fall out of love. Isn't a failed marriage just a regular part of life?, and Don't men and women who promise celibacy or lifelong chastity live lonely, unhappy lives?³⁵

The last option course, *Option E: Ecumenical and Interreligious Issues* is meant to help students understand the manner in which the Catholic Church relates to non-Catholic Christians as well as non-Christians. "It is intended to help students to recognize the ways in which important spiritual truths can be found in non-Catholic Christian churches and ecclesial communities as well as in non-Christian religions."³⁶ This course is divided into five parts, Revelation and the Catholic Church, Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities Apart from the Catholic Church, The Relationship of the Catholic Church to the Jewish People, The Church and Other Non-Christians, and Proclamation and Dialogue.

The first part of the course on *Revelation and the Catholic Church* traces Divine Revelation through the history of salvation through the Old and New Testaments, the divine foundation of the Catholic Church, and the Church's role in Divine Revelation. This is followed by a look at other Christian Churches through an ecclesiology of communion, a history of rifts and serious dissension, specific difference with the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches, The Anglican, Lutheran and reformed Christian Churches, ecu-

³⁵Ibid., 48.

³⁶Ibid., 49.

menical efforts, hope of restoring full communion, and obstacles in doctrine and practice. The third portion of the course is the Relationship of the Catholic Church to the Jewish People. It details the link between the Church and the Jewish people. It calls the Jewish people “God’s special choice to be the instrument for salvation of the world”³⁷ and details the common elements of moral life and practice. It teaches the fundamental differences between the Catholic and Jewish faith, teaches that anti-Semitism was evident among Catholics for many centuries, condemns anti-Semitism and the inference that the Jewish people as a whole were responsible for the death of Christ, and details efforts in dialogue between the faiths.

The Church and Other Non-Christians speaks of the Church’s relations with Muslims, specifically the similarities of belief and the common elements of moral life and practice. It teaches the impact of the Crusades on our relationship and addresses efforts in dialogue. Part five of the course, Proclamation and Dialogue teaches that “the Catholic Church possesses the fullness of the means of salvation willed by God as the ordinary way of saving all people”³⁸ and explains by use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church that all may achieve eternal salvation. Interreligious dialogue is then addressed in its many forms.

The challenges in this course are: Isn’t one faith or religion as good as any other?, Isn’t it more important to show tolerance and not say that the Catholic faith is better than any other?, If unity of people in faith is the real goal, why can’t each side compromise?,

³⁷Ibid., 51.

³⁸Ibid., 52.

What caused the four divisions in Christianity from the time of Ephesus, Chalcedon, the Schism of 1054, and the Protestant Reformation?, and Is there any hope of unity?³⁹

Sociological Research Which Inspired the Framework

Though the timeline for the production of *The Framework* began at the meeting of the USCCB in 1996, fear about the direction of the Catholic Church in the U.S. began much earlier. On August 11, 1993 an embarrassing and disturbing Gallup public opinion poll was released called “Catholics and their Church.” It stated, “As Pope John Paul II tries to rekindle the faith of American Catholics during his visit to the United States in August, a Gallup Poll shows that he will find a congregation with little regard for the authority of the Church but with considerable support for its spiritual nourishment. American Catholics routinely disagree with what are supposedly inviolable Church teachings, yet they express overwhelming satisfaction with the Church’s ability to meet their spiritual needs.”⁴⁰

Poll results collected between August 1992 and May of 1993 were compared with corresponding data from polls taken in 1986 and 1977. Each corresponding question showed increased resistance to acceptance of the standard view of the Church. National trends showed that American Catholics showed little regard for the authority of the Church. They reported that they disagreed with what was considered inviolable Church teaching like engaging homosexual behavior, sex outside of marriage, supporting abortion rights, use of artificial birth control, and voting for a political candidate who favors

³⁹Ibid., 53.

⁴⁰George Gallup, *The Gallup Poll, Public Opinion* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 148.

abortion. Only twenty-three percent of Catholics admitted to being very strong in his or her faith, and those in the majority opposed the Church by clear majorities on the matters concerning prohibition of abortion, sex outside of marriage, and remarriage after divorce. People were split over whether regular Mass attendance was necessary to be considered a good Catholic. Even devout Catholics broke ranks with the Church on issues use of artificial means of contraception, allowing priests to marry and the ordination of women.

The Gallup pollsters printed that, “Much to the consternation of the Pope and other religious leaders in the Church, Catholics apparently are choosing those parts of the faith that they find fulfilling and rejecting those with which they disagree.” Results about Catholic youth were even more disturbing. Only twelve percent of Catholic youth aged eighteen to twenty-nine considered themselves strong in the faith and expressed the strongest opposition to Church dogma.⁴¹

The August 12, 1993 results of a corresponding Gallup survey, “Catholics and Their Schools,” was equally upsetting. They printed, “Over the past half century the Catholic Church has invested considerable money and effort in its own primary and secondary schools, with the intent of reinforcing the religious beliefs of its children. The results of a recent Gallup Poll, however, suggest that it may make little difference whether a Catholic has attended parochial school or not. Those who have attended Catholic elementary school show no greater commitment to the Church, nor any greater ‘orthodoxy,’ than those who have not.”⁴² When asked “Do you think of yourself as a strong Catholic,

⁴¹ Ibid., 148.

⁴² Ibid., 150.

or a not very strong Catholic?” of those who attended a Catholic elementary school, 23% said they were very strong, 32% moderately strong, but 45% indicated they were not strong. Eighty-one percent of those not attending Catholic elementary school compared with 83% believe that one can be a “good” Catholic and still use artificial birth control. Fifty-three percent of Catholic elementary attendees thought it was acceptable to engage in sex outside of marriage, and 66% did not think it was necessary to attend Mass regularly. Sixty-four percent of attendees as opposed to 62% of those who did not attend think that it is acceptable to get divorced and remarried without an annulment.

In addition to the Gallup Polls, several books on the changing American Catholic Church published their own sociological findings. One very credible and popular book, *American Catholic Laity in a Changing Church* based on informal discussions between the well respected William D’Antonio, Executive Officer of the American Sociological Association and a member of the Board of Director of the important Catholic Newspaper the National Catholic Reporter (NCR) and the newspaper’s editor and publisher, Tom Fox and Bill McSweeney came out in 1989. The book focused on how American Catholics were responding to the social, political, and demographic changes of the 1960’s, 70’s and 80’s. The data for the book came from a 1987 survey of American Catholic laity aged 18 and older. The authors felt American Catholics were dissatisfied with the role of “pray[ing], pay[ing], and obey[ing],” and that their image of themselves and the Church was changing. The survey itself focused on who American Catholics thought should have

the moral authority to decide whether actions like the use of birth control was sinful and whether the laity should have the right to participate in Church decision making.⁴³

They concluded by saying that their study found the demographics of the American Catholic no longer reflects and immigrant Church in urban ghettos. That Catholics did not support their Church monetarily in relation to their salaries and that they gave approximately two percent of their income to the Church. They found younger and better educated Catholics were less committed than older less educated folks but that the level of commitment increased with the number of years of formal Catholic education. "Those with sixteen or more years were among the most committed. It would appear that Catholic education does make a difference, but only eight percent of the sample had sixteen years of Catholic education. And there is little likelihood of any significant increase in the percentage American Catholics spending sixteen years in Catholic schools."⁴⁴ Thirty-nine percent challenged the teaching authority of the leaders by saying you could disobey the Church and still be a good Catholic.

D'Antonio and his team believe the developmental changes in American society coupled with the teachings of Vatican II encourage personal autonomy. They found that traditional sacramental and liturgical practices no longer define the American Catholic and that the laity is no longer willing to accept Church dictates as the norm for sexual and marital relations. They also found that almost half said you couldn't be a good Catholic if you did not help the poor. This response also reflected the strong efforts of Church lead-

⁴³William V. D'Antonio, *American Catholic Laity in a Changing Church* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1989), 1.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 186.

ers to raise the consciousness of the laity to the problems of the poor throughout the world.⁴⁵ D'Antonio's team found for the first time in U.S. Catholic history that two thirds of Catholics felt that the ultimate source of moral authority did not rest with Church authority alone. They reported that contemporary Catholics see themselves as the proper source of moral authority, with or without the teaching of church leaders as an aid to guide them. And that rejection of Vatican teachings is the greatest among the young and better educated.⁴⁶

Because the rejection of the teaching of Church leaders is a serious matter, the survey team suggested two ways to strengthen her moral authority. The first was to re-examine the process of formulating moral teachings with the aim of including as many different Catholic factions as possible, including very specifically women. And the second was to clarify the relationship between the authority of Church teachings and the informed individual's conscience. The team found that the democratic tendencies woven into the fabric of the development of the nation made clear that the American Catholic laity was prepared for a joint participation in the decision making processes of the Church. They specifically state,

The most interesting implication from our findings is that the laity wants to participate in joint decision-making. They do not insist on going it alone, totally rejecting the role of the hierarchy. Nor do most of them simply want to drop out. Rather, they seem to be working toward a model of Church as voluntary association, a model consistent with the American cultural experience.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Ibid., 187.

⁴⁶Ibid., 188.

⁴⁷Ibid., 189.

In 1996 D'Antonio and team repeated their sociological study and published *Laity American and Catholic Transforming the Church*. In the preface they state that the six years between the two studies were significant because it was during this time that the pope spoke out against abortion and the bishops hired a public relations firm to help promote their pro-life/anti-abortion campaign, the stories about the sexual abuse by priests broke into the news, and more lay Catholic groups began to speak out and question the “highly controlled centralized model of the Church being reasserted by Pope John Paul II.”⁴⁸

They concluded that the American Church had an “Integrationist Trajectory.” They believe the Church will gradually include more lay persons in decision-making at all levels from parish to diocese to Vatican, and the laity will demand more say in selection of priests and even bishops. They expect, mostly because of the shortage of ordained clergy, that parishes will have more lay staff and that all levels of Church will be forced into open accountability in financial matters. Consequently they expect theological definitions of priesthood and lay status will be open to modification and the centralized power of the Church in the Vatican will come under pressure in favor of a more federated Church structure.⁴⁹

Not surprisingly, other research teams published similar data and came up with similar conclusions naming the Europeanist view versus the more democratic Ameri-

⁴⁸William V. D'Antonio, *Laity American and Catholic Transforming the Church* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1989), vi.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 164.

canist view as the present struggle within the Church.⁵⁰ Specifically on the topic of Catholic education, researcher Patrick McNamara reported in *Conscience First, Tradition Second*, that of the graduates of a suburban middle-class Catholic high school in the Southwest only one third said their faith was the same as their parents', a large majority were no longer attending Mass regularly or adhering to the Church moral teachings and that "being Catholic is not that compelling or formative of ideals or viewpoints." They also reported that these young people were looking for a "teaching authority that is both rational and reasonable. They found the "congenial and respectful approach of their teachers that acknowledges their own thinking and experiences" they defended the right to think for themselves.⁵¹

Another popular book published in 2005, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* supported by the Lilly Endowment Inc., and the National Study of Youth and Religion reported on the youth of many differing faith traditions. Specifically on the topic of Catholic youth and Catholic schools they stated, "Compared both to official Catholic norms of faithfulness and to other types of Christian teens in the United States, contemporary U.S. Catholic teens are faring rather badly. On most measures of religious faith, belief, experience, and practice, Catholic teens as a whole show up fairly weak."⁵²

⁵⁰Gene Burns, *The Frontiers of Catholicism: The Politics of Ideology in a Liberal World* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992).

⁵¹Patrick H. McNamara, *Conscience First, Tradition Second: A Study of Young American Catholics* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), 158.

⁵²Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 216.

The study goes on to discuss the reasons they found for Catholic teen apathy. The Catholic Church has become “devitalized” as a result of upward mobility and acculturation, and Catholic youth seem to be on the leading edge of a larger U.S. trend. They also found the organizational means that the Catholic Church historically employed to educate their youth, namely the Catholic school and CCD classes,⁵³ has changed in such ways that “render them inadequate to serve as the primary vehicles for contemporary youth evangelization, formation, and ministry.” Complicating this is the relatively low institutional priority given to youth ministries by the Church so that many of today’s Catholic teens reflect the relative laxity of their parents. The conclusion of these researchers is that the Church must invest a great deal more attention, creativity, and institutional resources into youth activities.

Catholic schools, once staffed by priests and nuns “dedicated by life calling to distinctively Catholic instruction and pedagogy” are no longer the norm. Today only five percent of the staff of Catholic schools are clergy or members of religious orders, and the Catholic theological knowledge and commitment of the remaining ninety-five percent, not all of whom Catholic, is sometimes thin. According to J. Fraser Field, executive officer of the Catholic Educator’s Resource Center, “Having received their training in secular universities, most Catholic teachers are poorly equipped to appreciate the positive historical and cultural impact of Catholicism and are therefore generally lacking in the background necessary to share these riches with their students.”⁵⁴ The researchers feel

⁵³Classes on Catholic doctrine taught weekly to students who do not attend Catholic schools.

⁵⁴Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 212.

“that something profound about the ‘Catholicness’ of the education has been lost in recent decades.”

One study specifically mentioned in the first approved textbook published in 2009 to support the new Framework, *Catholic Essentials: An Overview of the Faith* by Michael Amodei, published by Ave Maria Press, specifically address one of the surveys conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), at Georgetown University. The CARA Report, published since 1995, reports academic research on a wide variety of topics specifically focused on American Catholics and the Catholic Church in the United States. The text uses the term “disarming trends” when referring to a 2002 survey of young adult Catholics. The title of the page is “Reversing Trends,” and specifically asks students to evaluate themselves against the data which they present as negative.

Pre-Vatican II Models on Which the Framework is Based

The U.S. Catholic bishops were obviously alarmed by the sociological data. They heard the researchers saying Catholic education was losing its “Catholicity.” It is obvious by comparing the new Framework with old high school religion texts that the USCCB Standing Committee on Catechesis reacted by reviewing texts written before the Second Vatican council. Although a handful of textbook series were used in U.S. Catholic high schools during the 1940’s, and 50’s, the most popular was *Our Quest for Happiness*, authored by Right Reverend Monsignor Clarence E. Elwell, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Cleveland, published by Mentzer, Bush and Company. The Framework draws heavily from the philosophy, scope and sequence of this textbook series.

At the August 17th opening meeting of all diocesan school personnel of the Diocese of Charlotte in the Triad for the 2009-10 school year, the Very Reverend Roger K. Arnsparger, VF, Vicar of Education of the Diocese specifically addressed the subject of the “Catholicity” of the diocesan schools and articulated his vision for all academic subjects in line with Roman Catholic teaching and values. He made mention of *Our Quest for Happiness*, as a text he uses for reference and taught the school personnel from a handout printed from pages 408, 409 and 417 of the freshman text, *Our Goal and Our Guide*, book one of the series. It is also interesting to note that this series along with *The Baltimore Catechism*, a series of questions and answers to be memorized, are again in print unaltered from their original pre-Vatican II versions and available to parents who choose to home school their Catholic children.

The articulated philosophy of the *Our Quest for Happiness* series as found in the 1949 edition of the Teacher’s Manual for the series states “the method employed is a return to the traditional method of the Church, the method of St. Irenaeus and the *Apostolic Constitutions* (second century C.E.) as perfected and recommended by St. Augustine in his *De Catechizandis Rudibus* (400 C.E.) . . . Our Quest for Happiness has striven to unite whatever is good and true in modern educational theory and practice with all that is thoroughly Catholic in religious instruction and education.” It goes on to describe the Historical Method of catechesis as focused on charity. This method follows the historical sequence of Sacred Scripture and “weaves the events together in such a manner as to form a narrative which shows God’s love for us and calls for our love of Him.” It states that the historical method had not been employed during the last two hundred years of

catechesis in the U.S., neglected because of the “mistaken notion” that “cold logical analysis of dogmatic and moral theology” is a more effective way to teach religion. Elwell stated analytical presentation might be effective to teach facts but “would be relatively ineffective in religious character building or the formation of the true and perfect Christian which is the proper and immediate end of Christian education.”⁵⁵

The biblical and liturgical sequence of the Apostles Creed is the backbone of the four year course of study. Accenting doctrine is the elemental bedrock of this formational study because sound morals are built on strong doctrine. “Dogmas are the bases of the moral code and furnish the incentives, the motive power, and the driving force to live up to the lofty Catholic ideal of practical life—love of God and love of neighbor for His sake.”⁵⁶

You begin your narration, then, with an account of the creation of all things in a state of perfection, and you continue it down to the present state of the Church. Your only object will be to show that everything which precedes the Incarnation of the Word tends to manifest the love of God in the fulfillment of this mystery. What do we learn from Christ Himself, immolated for us, if not the immense love for us which God has manifested in giving us His only Son?

You will render a satisfactory account of everything you relate; you will show the cause and the end of all things to be love, in such a manner that this great idea shall be ever present to the eyes of the mind and heart. The twofold love of God and neighbor being the goal or end of everything you have to say, you will describe what you relate in such manner as to lead the listener to Faith, from Faith to Hope, and from Hope to Charity.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Elwell, Dunn, Dowd, and Deferrari, *Teacher's Manual*, 4.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., 5.

Elwell titles the series on the psychological motivation of happiness. He states it is “a natural, innate, ineradicable desire placed in human nature by God, so that life, in reality, is nothing less than a quest for happiness.” He believes it is the job of religious formation to build on this drive. The series then tries to use this fundamental drive and raise it to its highest perfection, “the absolutely selfless, altruistic service and love of God.” The series is also meant to impress on the students that the happiness that we so desperately seek can be found in selflessness, and connect the idea of real happiness to self-sacrifice and service to God.

The principles used in the creation of this series are firstly doctrinal content, secondly the completeness of the series independent of previous or possible future study, the four year study is integrated as a single unit, the subject matter is historical and narrative based on Creed, Scripture, and Liturgy, the psychological sequence follows the traditional order of the Church—faith, to hope, to charity focusing on the love of God, the moral code presented from the viewpoint of the virtues and logical deduction from doctrine; the course is to be appealing to adolescents and adopted to their interests and abilities, and lastly that the aim is not knowledge but “the supernatural conformation of a free human being to the likeness of the virtues of Christ.”⁵⁸ Elwell specifically mentions the papal recommendations of Pope Pius XI in an apostolic Letter to the Bishops of the United States of America pointing out the need of “evolving a constructive program of social action.” The U.S. Catholic Bishops replied assuring the Pope of their promotion of the “preparation of practical and suitable courses of study in true principles of Catholic civ-

⁵⁸Ibid., 9.

ics, economics, and sociology, the basis of true Christian Democracy for inclusion in the regular curriculum of the Catholic Educational System of this country.”⁵⁹

Comparing the freshman course from *Our Quest for Happiness* to the Framework is essential an exact match. Both start with the human desire for God and that “only in God can lasting joy and peace can be found in this life and the next.”⁶⁰ They both follow with the revelation of God through Scripture describing the “Catholic” interpretation and approach to the sacred text. The old series then takes us through two sacraments, Baptism and Confirmation and the first three commandments whereas the Framework groups things a little differently keeping all the sacraments together in one course and commandments in another.

The second course of the Framework corresponds to the second year of *Our Quest for Happiness* matching the lessons on Jesus and the mystery of Incarnation and the teachings on the Trinity. The third year of *Our Quest for Happiness*, entitled the *Ark and the Dove* teaches the Holy Spirit and the Church. The second year of the framework expands on Jesus and the Paschal mystery and then explains the nature of the Church. The third year of the Framework teaches the Sacraments and then morality. These subjects are broken up and presented throughout the *Our Quest for Happiness* series.

The focus of the fourth year of *Our Quest for Happiness* along with Vocation and Sociology is Apologetics. As defined within the senior textbook, “it is the science of

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰USCCB, *Doctrinal Elements*, 2.

proving the case for the Catholic Church”⁶¹ Additionally, “the object of your study of apologetics is that you may learn to state the case for the Church unanswerably.”⁶² The last twenty percent of senior course focuses on answering questions those of others faiths or those with no faith may ask a practicing Catholic. The Framework specifically states that the Challenges section of each of the courses taught “is designed to give catechetical instruction for high-school-aged young people an apologetical component. Publishers and teachers or catechists are to strive to provide for a catechetical instruction and formation that is imbued with an apologetic approach.”⁶³

At the 1962 printing of the *New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism* it was still “the standard text for the middle and upper grades of grammar school in most diocese.”⁶⁴ It was usually the practice to have students memorize the 499 questions and answers based on the Creed, Commandments, Sacraments and Prayer. The “Challenges” section of the Framework stating the questions each student should be able to answer and the “correct” answer for each of the questions for each course harkens back to the Baltimore Catechetical method. The clear expression of this catechetical text is apologetic. The Appendix entitled Why Am I a Catholic? states,

Our Catholic Faith should not be a blind unreasoning thing, but something based on a firm foundation of reason. This lesson shows us this foundation. It gives us a brief outline of the steps we can use to prove to ourselves the reasonableness of

⁶¹Clarence E. Elwell, *Toward the Eternal Commencement*, Vol. 4, *Our Quest for Happiness: the Story of Divine Love* (Chicago: Bush & Mentzner, 1956), 457.

⁶²Ibid., 458.

⁶³USCCB, *Doctrinal Elements*, 1.

⁶⁴ Kelley, *Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism*, 3.

believing in everything that the Church teaches, whether we can understand it or not. Then it shows how certain are the facts from which we derive these reasons.⁶⁵

The following chapters of this study will critique the Framework based on the Catholic Church teaching on education and current pedagogical trends. What is most interesting about the Bishops' response is that they acknowledged and acted upon the data that the scientific sociological researchers found significant but chose to ignore their recommendations to appeal to the Integrationist Trajectory or Americanist view which supports the students' own thinking and experiences; their fierce desire to defend the right to think for themselves.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid out the Framework. I have detailed the Bishops' intentions for this curriculum to be Christological. They intend that this course of study will not only provide content of instruction but help young people develop a relationship with "with the Lord so that each may come to know him and live according to the truth he has given to us." I have also detailed the content for each of the six core semester-long classes and all five of the possible elective classes from which two will be chosen. By including the challenge questions for each class, I have demonstrated the apologetic nature by which the Bishops' desire material to be taught.

The Framework itself states that the desired outcome for the four year curriculum to help young people develop a relationship with Jesus. Though there is a discussion of prayer in the life of a believer in the first course of the sophomore year, and I am hoping

⁶⁵Ibid., 236.

textbook publishers will include exercises that encourage students to pray, there is no mention in this guideline of student activities that validate their personal experiences. The Framework often references the use of reason and experience as a natural way to believe in the existence of God but no examples are given to relate the contemporary world to the students. The Framework also lacks reference to an appreciation of the vast psychological developments of those aged fourteen to eighteen as they follow this curriculum or how these developments are served their sequence.

I followed the review of the Framework with seemingly upsetting sociological data published in survey form that is certainly behind the production of the Framework. Most notably, I included the recommendations from those who saw trends in U.S. Catholicism. William D'Antonio, Tom Fox, and Bill McSweeney of the National Catholic Reporter (NCR) published *Laity American and Catholic Transforming the Church* in 1989 and *American Catholic Laity in a Changing Church* in 1996. They concluded that the American Church had an "Integrationist Trajectory" and believe the laity will demand more say in Church decision making both financial and theological as they take on greater roles working on the staffs of so many parishes. They even expect theological definitions of priesthood and lay status will be modified and the centralized power of the Church in the Vatican will be pressured to be more inclusive of the laity in the structure of the Church. Additionally I included Patrick McNamara similar conclusion naming the struggle within the Church the Europeanist view verses the more democratic Americanist view. He reported in *Conscience First, Tradition Second*, that young people were looking

for a respectful approach from their teachers who acknowledge their own thinking and experiences and expressed their right to think for themselves.

It is interesting to note that although the Bishops were alarmed by the statistics and accepted the professional nature of the data, they did not feel the same way about the recommendations. Instead they took the recommendations of Fr. Clarence Elwell, writing in the 1940's, as to best organize a curriculum serving postmodern minded students.

I concluded the chapter with the similarities between the new Framework and the pre-Vatican II textbook series *Our Quest for Happiness* and *The Baltimore Catechism*. The scope and sequence of the Framework and *Our Quest for Happiness* are certainly similar as well as the philosophy articulated in the older series. Elwell used the historical sequence of Sacred Scripture to “weave the events together in such a manner as to form a narrative which shows God’s love for us and calls for our love of Him.” It states that the historical method had not been employed during the last two hundred years of catechesis in the U.S., neglected because of the “mistaken notion” that “cold logical analysis of dogmatic and moral theology” is a more effective way to teach religion.

It is obvious, especially in the first course *The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture*, the third *The Mission of Jesus Christ*, and the fourth *Jesus Christ’s Mission Continues in the Church* that teaching all Revelation points to Jesus, is the key. Teaching of the Covenant of God with the Hebrew people is only important as a fore-shadowing of the person of Jesus. It is amusing to read in the old teacher’s edition of *Our Quest for Happiness* that Elwell states, “*Our Quest for Happiness* has striven to unite whatever is good and true in modern educational theory and practice with all that is thoroughly Catholic in

religious instruction and education.” Apparently the present Bishops do not see need for more updated educational theory given today’s students approach the world with a post-modern mindset.

In Chapter III, I will critically analyze the Framework based on scripture, the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and the documents published by the Magisterium, or teaching authority of the Church. Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium have long made up the tripod on which authority within the Catholic Church rests. Using the concept of Prophetic imagination described by Walter Brueggemann, I develop my critique of the appropriateness of the Framework within Scripture. I address curriculum development and, finally, trace the published statements of the Magisterium to both the universal Church and the U.S. Catholic school system.

CHAPTER III

CRITIQUE OF DOCTRINAL ELEMENTS OF A CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATECHETICAL MATERIALS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE OF HIGH SCHOOL AGE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE SCRIPTURE, TRADITION, AND MAGISTERIUM OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

. . . Education becomes a sacrament, the process by which the ordinary invites the possibilities of becoming holy. . . . The task is awesome, exhilarating, terrifying, and glorious. The risks are high, but the risks of not seriously engaging in the processes are even higher. The sacred errand that you pursue has consequences beyond you and your communities, because the larger culture also yearns to ground its efforts in an enduring vision of meaning.¹

Chapters III and IV critique the Bishops' Framework. Chapter III will focus on the religious content of the Framework in the light of what the Catholic Church herself values as its triune source of authority: Holy Scripture, the lived Tradition of the Church and the Magisterium or teaching authority of the Church. Chapter IV follows with a pedagogical critique in light of post-modern curriculum development. Because the Church dismisses postmodernity as relativism, I will offer work of Patrick Slattery on proleptic eschatology and theologian Mary Grey's work on the Holy Spirit as a place for the Church can meet the culture and engage in dialogue.

The Catholic faith trusts the complex triune interdependence of Scripture, Tradition, or the lived practice of the Church passed on from generation to generation, and Magisterium or episcopal teaching authority, to provide a unique set of checks and bal-

¹David E. Purpel, *Moral Outrage in Education* (New York: P. Lang, 1999), 182.

ances for guarding the deposit of faith. I feel it is important to first measure the Framework against these three which the Church concedes to be its treasure. Held up to the light of what should be its own source and significance, the Framework must be the perfect fit to each, resonating with the written revelation of God, the lived history of the Church, and all the mandates decided upon with conciliatory authority of the Church. Failure to reflect the whole of the deposit of faith will damage its credibility and question whether it will be able to stand the test of time.

First, I will address curriculum development, as best as it is possible, as part of the lived tradition of Catholic education in the U.S. It is wrongly perceived by many that the Catholic school system has always “used” the curriculum offered in the U.S. public school system and added religion class. The system of Catholic parochial schools only arose in its enormity because of the overt anti-Catholic sentiment in the country which was manifest throughout the curriculum, from the Scripture class taught in the public schools to their varying textbooks, especially their primers. The Framework is, however, the first time the Roman Catholic hierarchy, as opposed to individual professional religious teaching orders or publishing houses, has felt the need to step in and produce a nationwide curriculum. A look at the history of the Church hierarchy’s lack of involvement in education may help us understand how the Framework fits into the overall Tradition of the Catholic Church in the U.S.

Next, I will look at some of the published statements of the Magisterium on education, specifically universal Church documents *Rappresentanti in Terra* (1929), *Provido Sane Consilio* (1935), *The Catholic School* (1977), *The Religious Dimensions of Educa-*

tion in a Catholic School (1988), The General Directory for Catechesis (1997), and documents specific to the U.S. Catholic Church To Teach as Jesus Did (1972), In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (1990), and the National Directory for Catechesis (2005). Again, if the Framework does not fulfill the dictates of the long-published requirements the Church has for her vision of education, then it has fallen short.

Finally, I will look at Holy Scripture as it is applied to the Framework. It is obvious that the U.S. Catholic Bishops are theologians trained to interpret Scripture. No one would argue that the bishops have included extensive reference to scripture in the Framework. Additionally, the institutional Church teaches that no Catholic can criticize the Bishops' use or interpretation of Scripture, as it is considered one of the duties of their anointed vocation. The bishops are clear to remind us of this in the first course in the Framework, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture*, by quoting from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Authentic interpretation of the Bible is the responsibility of the teaching office of the Church."² Again in the fourth course, *Jesus Christ's Mission Continues in the Church*, the teaching office of the Church is described as "authentic interpreters of God's Word in Scripture and Tradition."³ I do not intend to critique the Framework's use of Scripture or how Scripture is interpreted by our Magisterium. I simply offer Walter Brueggemann's insight into the prophetic tradition of Scripture for considera-

²USCCB, *Doctrinal Elements*, 2.

³Ibid., 6.

tion within the context of education, especially as it is presented to our post-modern minded young people living in a culture of isolation and affluence.

Brueggemann uses the prophets of the Hebrew and Christian Scripture, including Jesus, to open the reader to consider a move from the text of Scripture to its “concrete circumstance.”⁴ He argues that the prophets became the voice of their respective communities. They brought hope to those who did not dare speak of things that were not right, who could not criticize the status quo. The prophets validated the fact that people were suffering and empowered their communities to confront the causes behind the suffering by remembering their history as God’s people and energizing them to envision a world closer to that of the mind of God.

Why apply Brueggemann’s “prophetic imagination” to the Framework? The Framework is a reflection of how the institutional Church views the deposit of faith and what it feels is most valuable and important. It reflects how the Church sees its place in the world, and, most importantly, the students for whom the Framework was written. I will ask if the Framework helps build community, helps students understand the rich symbols of faith that underlie the Liturgy and communal practice of the faith, and whether or not it energizes a generation living in their present isolationist, relativistic, materialistic society with hope and helps them envision a better world order. It is in this section that I will reveal my own “hermeneutic of suspicion.” I will specifically be looking for clues that the hierarchy is more interested in keeping the status quo, with an eye to the Church of the 1950’s, than truly working to engage and rally today’s students.

⁴Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination* , xii.

**Tradition—Critique through the Lens of the Catholic Professional Educators
of the Last 200 Years**

Catholic encyclopedia describes the ecclesiastical definition of tradition as “the thing (doctrine, account, or custom) transmitted from one generation to another.” It can also refer to the organ or mode of transmission. A more common definition is the lived faith, or how the faith is expressed in the lives of those who profess it. The Magisterium claim the right to be most in control of that which is considered tradition outside of the scriptures; however,

the exercise of this authority is by so much more certain and easy as the faithful, generally, so to speak, confirm by their adhesion the decisions of this authority: a dogmatic definition scarcely does more than sanction the faith already existing in the Christian community.⁵

Noted Vatican II Catholic scholar Yves Congar, O. P. quotes phenomenologist Max Scheler in his *The Meaning of Tradition*, published in 1964:

Tradition lies halfway between heredity and the mode of learning and education leading to “self-knowledge.” It is communicated automatically with life itself. It consists in acquiring a certain mentality, certain habits in exercising the judgment and will, by coming into contact with, and unconsciously imitating, the behavior and way of life in milieu. In short, with tradition—and we are not aware of receiving something. We take the will of another for our own; we make no judgment or evaluation before receiving it, and no choice is involved.⁶

To this description Congar adds:

⁵Jean Bainvel, “Tradition and Living Magisterium.”

⁶Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 23.

But a milieu exists only through, and by means of, people. For tradition to exist—tradition understood as the environment in which we receive the Christian faith and are formed by it—it must be borne by those who, having received it, live by it and pass it on to others, so that they may live by their own turn. Tradition, like education, is a living communication whose content is inseparable from the act by which one living person hands it on to another.⁷

The “traditional method” of catechesis for young people is through a Catholic school or parish program. Traditionally the young have been taught by those of varying religious orders or well educated laity. In the *General Directory of Catechesis* produced for the whole of the Catholic Church in 1997 it states,

In a special way the Church calls those in consecrated life to catechetical activity and wishes that “religious communities dedicate as much as possible of what ability and means that they have to the specific work of catechesis.” The particular contributions to catechesis of religious and of members of societies of apostolic life derives from their specific condition. The profession of the evangelical councils, which characterizes the religious life, constitutes a gift to the whole Christian community. In diocesan catechetical activity their original and particular contribution can never be substituted for by priests or by laity.⁸

It is difficult to “prove” the lack of actual classroom teaching or production of curriculum by the hierarchy. However, the ordinary, traditional, day to day lived transmission of the faith to the young in the U.S. has been through men and women religious as testified above by the Magisterium. The people who spend the necessary time forming the young people are, and have always been, the family and Catholic educators. It is the educational office of this diocese that mandates teachers of religion in Catholic high schools must hold a Master’s degree in theological study and teachers of religion in ele-

⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁸ *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 228.

mentary schools must be practicing Catholics. Students have little to no contact with Church hierarchy. Consequently, tradition cannot and does not recognize the hierarchy as a real presence, or conveyance of the deposit of faith.

Catholic Book Publishing

Catholic book publishers played a role in the development of Catholic youth without sanction from the hierarchy. The largest Catholic bookseller, the Benzinger Company, opened its first sales office in New York City in 1853. The Benzinger brothers followed the German Catholic immigration to the U.S. and provided German-speaking immigrants with books, devotionals and religious articles. In the 1860's they began publishing English language Catholic books, devotional, educational and juvenile literature and theological works, written by priests, those in religious orders, and the laity. In 1867 The Vatican conferred the title "Printers to the Apostolic See" on the firm. Their 1912 *Catalogue of All Catholic Books in English* states, "Books written by Catholics but not Catholic in content were not included." The firm itself functioned as the sanction as to what was considered Catholic in a time when their influence was widespread and real. The Vatican gave this publisher their explicit endorsement. The hierarchy of the U.S. Catholic Church did not see the need to oversee their products, and consequently, the products of other Catholic publishing houses.

The Plenary Councils of Baltimore

The Plenary Councils were the earliest meetings of all the ecclesiastical leaders of the country. In the three councils held in 1852, 1866, and 1884, there was little mention of education. At the first council, it was decreed that "Bishops should appoint censors for

books relating to religion”; however, it does not expect this oversight committee to write the religion books. It also mandates that “pastors themselves should teach Christian doctrine to the young and ignorant.” This became increasingly impossible as the percent of Catholics in the U.S. increased from 9.6 million or two percent of the population in 1820 to 106 million or seventeen percent of the population in 1920.⁹ It also “exhorted to have a Catholic school in every parish and the teachers should be paid from parochial funds.”

Title xi of the second plenary council called for the use of religious congregations in parish schools “when possible.” It reiterated that Catholic schools were to be erected in every parish and also called for catechism classes to be provided for children attending public schools. In the decrees of the third plenary council, it describes the “absolute necessity” of Catholic schools and the “obligation of pastors to establish them.” It also exhorts parents to send their children to Catholic schools “unless the bishop should judge the reason for sending them elsewhere to be sufficient,” and that Catholic schools were to be free of charge to parents.

It is obvious from the need to repeat to the pastors the need to build schools that this practice was not always being done. The need to exhort parents to send their children to these schools means many parents did not choose to do so. It is also obvious that no directives were given to the curriculum of the schools, use of textbooks, or the content of religion classes.¹⁰

⁹Clyde F. Crews, *American and Catholic: A Popular History of Catholicism in the United States* (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994), 73. U.S. Census records.

¹⁰William Fanning, “Plenary Councils of Baltimore.”

The Baltimore Catechism

In 1829, the first Provincial Council of Baltimore decreed: “A catechism shall be written which is better adapted to the circumstances of this Province; it shall give the Christian Doctrine as explained in Cardinal Bellarmine’s Catechism (1597), and when approved by the Holy See, it shall be published for common use of Catholics” (Decree xxxiii). Bellarmine’s Small Catechism was published in Boston in the original Italian with English translation in 1853. A catechism particular to the U.S. was not produced, and the bishops reissued decrees for a catechism at their next two plenary councils in 1852 and 1866. At the Third Plenary Council of 1884, many bishops were in favor of using a 1775 catechism written by the Irish Archbishop James Butler but decided to form a committee of six bishops for the production of a new work. The end product was “A Catechism of Christian doctrine, Prepared and enjoined by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore.” Immediately after publication, it was attacked by theologians and teachers and soon, many different arrangements of the material were published, each with the title Baltimore Catechism.¹¹

At no time since the founding of the United States did the U.S. Catholic bishops try to write curriculum. Professional educators, generally from varying religious congregations, produced their own works until publishing houses were established. These texts were reviewed by a bishop for accuracy but were never written by the hierarchy, nor were their contents overseen by the hierarchy. The one time the bishops tried to produce a sim-

¹¹Wikipedia, “Baltimore Catechism,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltimore_Catechism.

ple catechism, it was immediately rejected by theologians and professional educators who rewrote more suitable versions.

Critique through the Lens of the Official Magisterial Writings of the Universal Catholic Church and the U.S. Catholic Bishops

A second of the triune aspects of authority for the Church is Magisterium. The Catholic Church teaches that the Magisterium, that being the offices of Pope and Bishops, is the teaching authority of the Church. They also teach that in matters of faith and morals, the Magisterium is infallible. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states,

It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates. To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals.¹²

The Catholic encyclopedia adds that it is the job of the Magisterium not only to hold and teach the faith but also to give the truth expression.

The thought of the Church is essentially a traditional thought and the living Magisterium by taking cognizance of ancient formulas of this thought thereby recruits its strength and prepares to give to immutable truth a new expression which shall be in harmony with the circumstances of the day and within reach of contemporary minds.¹³

In order to give contemporary expression, which is in harmony with the living situation of the contemporary world, the Church has issued documents both universal and local. I

¹²*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 890.

¹³Bainvel, "Tradition and Living Magisterium."

will examine several magisterial documents in light of the Framework to show that this new curriculum is not in line with the writings of the past.

In December 1929, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Rappresentanti in Terra, or On Christian Education*. This lengthy letter addressed the necessity of Christian education but focused on the Church's right to teach. The document also addressed methodology. It stated that traditional Christian education should imitate the method God employed toward creatures, "He demands active cooperation according to the nature of each." The Framework clearly lays out what students must study but does not encourage any creativity. The apologetic style which is to "imbue" the Framework does not allow students creativity in either engaging the material or creating their own questions. This denial of active participation in the production of wisdom clearly violates this magisterial document.

In January 1935, Pope Pius VI issued *Provido Sane Consilio or On the Better Care for Catechetical Teaching*. This relatively brief document reiterates the need for bishops and pastors to provide catechetical instruction specifically making seven demands including:

Furthermore, let pastors and their assistants endeavor so far as they can to make the children eager to attend the parish catechism classes. To this end the most successful and tried means should be employed

The Framework has specifically been developed without consultation with educators or any reference to the students' world experiences, technological endeavors, or the prevailing postmodern way of thinking. Fr. William O'Malley S. J., honored educator

and the only published voice critiquing the Framework, writes in the September 2009 issue of the Catholic magazine, *America*, the Bishops' committee did not even consult professional educators in its production. Because it purposely excluded professional educators and the pedagogical sciences in its production, it is clearly in violation of this document.

In 1951 Pope Pius XII addressed the first International Congress of Teaching Sisters. In this short but beautiful speech, the Church lovingly addressed the women who teach and encouraged them to get to know their students. They recognized the fact that young people had changed and had become "irreverent toward many things that formerly from childhood were naturally regarded with greatest respect." The Pope did not blame young people for their attitude but instead described the changes in the world around them. "In childhood, they have lived through horrible things and they have seen many ideals formerly held in high esteem break down miserably before their eyes. In this way they have become distrustful and aloof." In dealing with students he told the sisters,

To try to reform young people and convince them by making them submit, to persuade them by force, would be useless and not always right. You will induce them very much better to give you their confidence if you, on your side, strive to understand them and make them understand themselves

Making yourself understood . . . means expressing clearly one's own thoughts in different yet always correct ways, striving to fathom the thoughts of others, always keeping in mind their difficulties, their ignorance, and their inexperience.

If the Framework kept in mind the world in which our students live today and reached out to the students the way Pope Pius XII suggests, it would have a much better chance at succeeding with students who are, as he put it, "distrustful and aloof." The apo-

logetic style singularly chosen by the Bishops gives mind to the precepts of the Church but not the students.

The Vatican's Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education released its document *The Catholic School* in 1977. In paragraph seventeen, under *Present Difficulties over Catholic Schools*, the document argues it is important to identify difficulties "if teachers are to make a serious attempt to adapt their work to the needs of the contemporary world." In paragraph twenty-seven under *The School as Center of Human Formation*, the document deals with culture.

Culture is only educational when young people can relate their study to real-life situations with which they are familiar. The school must stimulate the pupil to exercise his intelligence through the dynamics of understanding to attain clarity and inventiveness. It must help him spell out the meaning of his experiences and their truths. Any school which neglects this duty and which offers merely pre-cast conclusions hinders the developments of its pupils.

Under the section entitled *Educational Work of the Catholic School*, the document addressed pedagogical technique and developments in the science of education.

The Catholic school must be alert at all times to developments in the fields of child psychology, pedagogy and particularly catechetics, and should especially keep abreast of directives from competent ecclesiastical authorities.

If the writers of the Framework had only reread this document, they could have included professional educators in its production. It is obvious that the Framework falls short when compared to what the Vatican asks of Catholic schools. The Framework clearly lacks any attempt to make the material relevant to students, to help students make sense of the world around them, or to include the advice of professional educators. The

most glaring diversion from this document is the formation of the questions and answers in an apologetic style. This violates paragraph twenty-seven by giving students “pre-cast conclusions” and not allowing them to exercise their “intelligence through the dynamics understanding.”

The Vatican document, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, subtitled *Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal* was published in 1988 by the Congregation for Catholic Education. What is particularly unique about this document is that it, for the first time, calls the Catholic school to become a community and uses the word love forty-eight times in twenty-eight pages. This document focuses on the student and begins by describing them with the characteristics of a post-modern mindset. Without actually using the term, the Church describes students as “young people (who) absorb a wide and varied assortment of knowledge from all kinds of sources” and they live in “a condition of radical instability.” It acknowledges the fact that their universe can be one-dimensional “in which the only criterion is practical utility and the only value is economic and technical progress.” It speaks of the student’s environment “devoid of truly human relationships” and the students who “suffer from loneliness and lack of affection.” It states that they are “notably depressed” and “worried about an uncertain future.” Much worse it adds, “Their worry and insecurity become an almost irresistible urge to focus in on themselves, and this can lead to violence when the young are together—a violence that is not always limited to words.”

Because our kids are taking a critical look at the world, they are asking “whether religion can provide any answers to the pressing problems afflicting humanity.” The document articulates the goal.

We need to integrate what has already been learned, and respond to the questions which come from the restless and critical minds of the young. We need to break through the wall of indifference, and at the same time be ready to help those who are doing well to discover a ‘better way’, offering them a knowledge that also embraces Christian wisdom. The specific methods and the steps used to accomplish the educational philosophy of the school will, therefore, be conditioned and guided by an intimate knowledge of each student’s unique situation.

Paragraph thirty-two clearly states students “must be active agents in their own education.” This document also calls for “mutual esteem and reciprocal collaboration between the Catholic school and the bishop and other Church authorities through direct contact.” Paragraph sixty-two demands a Catholic school be “attentive to issues having to do with educational methods,” and praises teachers of pedagogical science. In the section entitled Some Basic Presuppositions about Religious Instruction, it begins

It should be no surprise that young people bring with them into the classroom what they see and hear in the world around them, along with the impressions gained from the world of mass media. Perhaps some have become indifferent and insensitive. The school curriculum as such does not take these attitudes into account, but teachers must be very aware of them. With kindness and understanding, they will accept students as they are, helping them to see that doubt and indifference are common phenomena, and that the reasons for this are readily understandable. But they will invite students in a friendly manner to seek and discover together the message of the Gospel, the source of joy and peace.

It adds “The discovery process is an important pedagogical method,” and continues “The formation process comes to a halt when students are uninvolved and unmoved.”

In regard to students of other faith traditions, the document is clear.

Not all students in Catholic schools are members of the Catholic Church; not all are Christians. There are, in fact, countries in which the vast majority of the students are not Catholics—a reality the Council (the Second Vatican Council) called attention to. The religious freedom and the personal conscience of individual students and their families must be respected, and this freedom is explicitly recognized by the Church. On the other hand, a Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education; this is its right and its duty. To proclaim or to offer is not to impose, however; the latter suggests a moral violence which is strictly forbidden, both by the Gospel and by Church law.

Again, the Framework is counter to the mandates of this recent document. The Framework does not allow for discovery. Furthermore, it does not take into account the culture or mindset of the individuals students, and certainly does not seek out the cooperation of educators as part of the production and does not address students who are not Catholic. The Framework fails because it focuses only on the message to be delivered instead of trying to understand the recipients of their message.

The Vatican also produced the *General Directory for Catechesis* in 1997. Unlike the documents before comprising several dozen pages, the *General Directory* is a 263 page book with a thematic index. In its preface, it states that the Second Vatican Council prescribed such a directory be drawn up and avail itself of experts from around the world. It is divided into five parts, first defining catechesis and the process of evangelization and next spelling out the norms and criteria for presenting the Gospel message. Part three focuses on pedagogy and methodology; part four, those to be taught; and part five, the ministry of catechesis in the particular Churches, its agents, and the formation of catechists.

What is of particular interest to this study is the section on methodology. Paragraph 152 states, “Experience has different functions in catechesis. For this reason, it must be continuously evaluated.” It goes on to explain that human experiences arouse in the student questions and reflections which goad him or her into a desire to transform the world.

It arouses in man, interests, questions, hopes, anxieties, reflections and judgments which all converge to form a certain desire to transform his existence. It is a task of catechesis to make people more aware of their most basic experiences, to help them to judge in the light of the Gospel the questions and needs that spring from them, as well as to educate them in a new way of life. Thus the person becomes capable of behaving in a responsible and active way before the gift of God . . .

Interpreting and illuminating experience with the data of faith is a constant task of catechetical pedagogy—even if with difficulty. It is a task that cannot be overlooked without falling into artificial juxtapositions or closed understandings of the truth. It is made possible, however, by a correct application of the correlation and interaction between profound human experiences and the revealed message. It is this which has amply borne witness to the proclamation of the prophets, the preaching of Christ, the teaching of the Apostles, which constitutes the basic normative criterion for every encounter of faith and human experience in the time of the Church.¹⁴

Similar statements are made in paragraph 157, where the *Directory* calls for “the active participation of all the catechized in their formative process.” It states most clearly that active participation is “in harmony, not only with the genuine human communication, but specifically with the economy of Revelation and salvation.”¹⁵ In paragraph 158 it states, “Catechetical pedagogy will be effective to the extent that the Christian commu-

¹⁴*General Directory for Catechesis*, 148-149.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 151.

nity becomes a point of concrete reference for the journey of individuals.”¹⁶ Taking up the theme of the individual, the *General Directory* then addresses those to be catechized. The Framework written for the direction of those ministering to fourteen to nineteen-year-olds does not even address the particular needs of this fragile group of people.

Within the *General Directory*, the Church, herself, indicates that if the catechist fails to tap into the experience of the student, “artificial juxtapositions or closed understandings of the truth” will be created. In line with the teaching of the prophets and Jesus, himself, students must be encouraged to think, question and dream. The Framework will not only be counter-productive to the needs of the post-modern student, it violates the catechetical imperatives of the universal Church. Ultimately, it fails to do what it intends, which is to catechize young people.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops have issued their own series of local documents. The most beautiful and best remembered is the 1972 document *To Teach as Jesus Did*. This document on Catholic education “reflects a painstaking effort to obtain the views of persons from a variety of backgrounds and interests—priests, religious men and women, lay people, professional educators at all levels of education, parents, students.” Unfortunately, we know that those who wrote the present Framework did not gather people from these groups. Paragraph 107 states “Basic to the task, as we have said earlier, is instruction which is authentic in doctrine and contemporary in presentation. Failure on either side renders instruction ineffective and can, in fact, impede the growth of living faith in the child.” I am particularly fearful that, though the Bishops have put considerable time

¹⁶Ibid., 151.

into the message, without contemporary presentation, the instruction will not only be ineffective but will actually drive students away.

In the section under youth ministry, paragraph 130 states,

This community does have solutions to many of the questions which trouble today's youth, but it cannot realistically expect young people to accept them unless it, for its part, is willing to listen to their problems. Thus it must strive not only to teach the young but to learn from them and to see its own institutions through their eyes and make prudent changes which this insight may suggest.

If the Bishops were less fearful of losing control of their flock, the young could bring them closer to all by sharing their vision.

Their follow-up document, *In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*, was issued in November of 1990. It is most prominently focused on the financial challenges faced by Catholic schools. It did not, however, back away from the Church's schools by saying, "we wish to commit ourselves to certain seven year goals as an affirmation of the principles laid down in that pastoral (To Teach as Jesus Did) . . . Our concern for the importance of Catholic schools is set in the context of the responsibility we have by our Episcopal office to ensure total Catholic education in all its phases for all ages." The document specifically mentions a mandate to "turn their skills to responding to the educational needs of Hispanics." It also reaffirms that:

Today the Catholic school still represents for many in the Black community, especially in urban areas, an opportunity for quality education and character development . . . The Catholic school has been and remains one of the chief vehicles of evangelization within the Black community. We cannot overemphasize the tremendous importance of parochial schools for the Black community. We even dare to suggest that the efforts made to support them and to insure their continuation

are a touchstone of the local Church's sincerity in the evangelization of the Black community.

The most comprehensive educational document the U.S. Catholic Bishops have issued is the 314-page book *National Directory for Catechesis*. Printed in 2005, this is the local presentation which is to develop the Vatican offering, *General Directory for Catechesis*. Like the Vatican book, it is organized into chapters including those on doctrine, methodology, catechesis in diverse settings, those to be catechized, and resources for catechesis. It also includes chapters on the particularities of proclaiming the Gospel and the diocesan structures and offices unique to the catechetical ministry in the U.S. In the chapter on methodology, this document clearly states

it (catechetical methodology) must respect the liberty and promote the active participation of those being catechized. From the beginning of time, God has adapted the message to earthly conditions so that we might be able to receive it. This implies for catechesis the never ending task of finding a language capable of communicating the word of God and the creed of the church, which is its development, in the various circumstances of those who hear it.¹⁷

The document also adds that “the situation of those to whom catechesis is addressed is not a peripheral concern in the proclamation of the Gospel—rather, it is integral to its successful transmission.”¹⁸ Specifically in the section on catechesis of adolescents, it mentions that the life experiences of adolescents must be utilized. It calls the catechist to a personal relationship with his or her students and invites them to foster a “shared dialogue between the life of the adolescent—with his or her joys, struggles, ques-

¹⁷*National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 95.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 96.

tions, concerns, and hopes—and the wisdom of the Catholic Church.” It also expects the catechist to engage the adolescents by incorporating a variety of learning experiences “through which adolescents can explore and learn important religious concepts of the Scriptures and Catholic faith.” It asks for the creation of group participation within a warm, accepting, and caring environment “so that young people can hear and respond to God’s call (fostering the freedom to search and question, to express one’s point of view, and respond in faith to that call)” and to provide real-life application of their lessons.¹⁹

In the section entitled Catechesis in Special situations, the document expresses the need for catechesis in ecumenism, on the Jewish people, and on non-Christian religions. Teaching the universal truth of the Gospel “celebrates the diversity within the community of faith, affirms the fundamental equality of every person, and acknowledges the need for charity, mutual respect, and justice among all groups in a pluralistic society in ushering in the Kingdom of God.”²⁰

The Church, both universal and local, has made education a fundamental issue. The number of documents attests to the fact it is under consideration by each generation of the people of faith. Tracing the history of the publication of these documents shows things have a changed a bit over time, but the fundamentals of teaching individuals with the best methods professionally available in ways for the students to make the Gospel their own, has not. The Framework is entirely inconsistent with the educational documents produced by the Church. In no document does it address educators to look back in

¹⁹Ibid., 201-202.

²⁰Ibid., 216.

time and adopt methods used previously; in no document does it tell educators to produce standard questions for students. Over and over again, catechists are asked to find ways to help students dream of ways to make the Gospel consistent with their lives. By deviating from the path laid out by previous documents, there is a real possibility that students will only be presented with, quoting the Church, “artificial juxtapositions or closed understandings of the truth” or “pre-cast conclusions.” All Catholic high schools will be forced to “hinder the developments of its pupils” by not allowing students to “hear and respond to God’s call (fostering the freedom to search and question, to express one’s point of view, and respond in faith to that call).

**Scripture—Critique through the Lens of Prophetic Imagination
as Articulated by Walter Brueggemann**

Walter Brueggemann published *The Prophetic Imagination* for the first time in 1978. In it, he asked theologians, and, consequently, the people of God when studying the Hebrew Prophets, to widen their scope and move past the traditional method of historical criticism where one is meant to understand each prophet in his historical context and apply that “text-in-context” to general themes. He, and others after him, approach the Prophets not as lonely voices, but as a representative voice that expresses their social constituencies. “The effect of such study is to situate prophetic text more densely in the interplay of social forces that are in conflict over the correct characterization of social reality.”²¹ He goes on to say that because Churches presently lack the energy to engage

²¹ Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, x.

“the American ethos of consumerism,”²² it is time again to take up the study of the prophets. He calls the collective prophetic vision prophetic imagination.

In August 2006, he defined his notion of prophetic imagination for the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church of Washington D.C.:

Prophetic practice, as evidenced in the Old Testament, consists in the courage, freedom, and daring to see the world differently. That difference is rooted in the old covenant traditions, but is brought to bear upon contemporary issues of power, injustice, and inhumaneness. It is no wonder that such a capacity to “imagine” the world differently refuses dominant ideologies of state, church, and corporation that serve status quo vested interests and seeks always to expose and subvert such mis-truth that deceives and denies.²³

It is significant that Brueggemann linked the seemingly passive verb “to see” with practice. It is also significant that Brueggemann’s understanding of seeing requires courage, freedom and daring. He uses the verb to see in a complex way. His seeing requires what psychologists call visual cognition. Not only must the subject acknowledge that which is perceived but also judge it and take consequent action as well.

In order to really see something, it must first register with the viewer. Robert Solso, psychology professor at the University of Nevada, teaches a dual concept of seeing. He believes “seeing is accomplished through both the visual stimulation of the eye and the interpretation of sensory signals by the brain.”²⁴ Our brains are constantly being over-

²²Ibid., 1.

²³Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, written as an announcement for an upcoming workshop at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Washington D.C., August 2006. <http://www.nyapc.org/docs/brueggemann/propheticimagination.pdf>.

²⁴Robert L. Solso, *Cognition and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 4.

loaded with incoming sensual information, some of which is important, but most is trivial or downright useless. If we processed all information equally, it would be a waste of energy and overload our processing system. Solso describes our interpretation of raw sensory data as visual cognition which happens in a series of steps. First, our brain analyses the data using basic colors, shapes, contrasts, and movements. This primitive information is then organized into fundamental forms which are then given meaning through association with previous knowledge of the world stored in long-term memory. “Finally the brain *adds* information to the raw visual impressions, which gives a richness of meaning far beyond the simple stimuli it receives.”²⁵ Gestalt psychologists describe the organizing of information and the rules that govern its use and combination as schemata. When we look, for instance, at any scene we expect to see certain features. Schemata influence both perception and memory. Experiments have been done which show subjects recall objects compatible with a particular schema, diminish recall of incompatible objects, and fabricate nonexistent objects.²⁶ We travel through life using the schemata we have learned through personal experience. “Each person has formed a personality laden

²⁵Ibid., 77-78, italics this writer’s emphasis.

²⁶Ibid., 116. “Evidence of the influence of a schema on perception and memory is presented in a paper by Brewer and Treyens (1981). Subjects were asked to participate in an experiment and led into a college office. There they waited for 35 seconds, after which they were taken into a testing room and asked to write down everything they saw. Presumably, when the subjects were led into the office, they activated a kind of “college office schemata.” If this is correct, then we would expect the subjects to recall conventional objects compatible with (and expected in) a college office. Furthermore, it is possible that subjects might invent objects that are highly compatible with the “college office schemata” but not actually present in the office where they waited. These hypotheses were confirmed by the results obtained by Brewer and Treyens. Almost all the subjects recalled that the office had a chair, a desk, and walls. Only a few recalled it had a bulletin board or skull. But, most interestingly nearly one-third of the subjects *falsely* recalled that the college office had books, which it did not. Apparently, the college office schema was powerful enough to enhance the recall of compatible objects, diminish the recall of incompatible objects, and fabricate nonexistent objects.”

with attitudes about how the world should appear.” Our own personal context influences our perception and memory.²⁷

Visual dissonance is defined as a state of psychological tension caused when one experiences a disparity between what one expects to see and what one actually sees. “An important part of human motivation is found in dissonance reduction, in that people do not (normally) choose to live in a state of psychological tension. In psychological terms, such a state is aversive, to be avoided or resolved.” Solso believes there are three basic means to reduce visual dissonance: reinterpreting the importance of the dissonant element, reinterpreting the problem elements, or changing one of the dissonant elements.²⁸

Prophets are people who are able to “see” societal dissonance and have not only developed a sophisticated “world-view” schema, but also have chosen not to reinterpret their frustration as unimportant, and, consequently, choose not to alter their schema to fit that of societal norms. Instead, they choose to expose and question what they see as dissonant elements. Prophets have the courage to cling to their schemata and challenge the dominant ideologies.

Brueggemann begins his study by describing Moses as a prophet who was concerned with dismantling the Egyptian social order which enslaved the Hebrew people. The dominant culture controlled not only the livelihood of the enslaved but also entrenched them with vocabulary and epistemology. The Pharaoh kept these people bound because they were no longer able to remember their God of freedom. They settled into

²⁷Ibid., 121.

²⁸Ibid., 122.

the schema presented to them by their Egyptian captors, and it took Moses' dismantling of the image of the strength of the Egyptians to help people remember God's schema.

Brueggemann reminds us that "a truly free God is essential to marginal people if they are to have a legitimate standing ground against the oppressive order of the day" and that "for those who regulate and benefit from the order of the day a truly free God is not necessary, desirable, or perhaps even possible."²⁹ Brueggemann quotes Alberto Soggin in his description of a "program of state-sponsored syncretism" which steadily ate away the memory of the Hebrew people and beckoned Moses to a radical prophetic vision. The system included an elaborate bureaucracy which used technical reason to institutionalize its oppressive system. Soggin reminds us that "technical reason is inherently conservative and nearly immune to questions of justice and compassion." The bureaucracy was also fascinated with wisdom which "represented an effort to rationalize reality."³⁰ Interestingly, centuries later, the same sort of oppressive system of the Egyptians from which the Hebrew people had been liberated was created for them by their own King Solomon.

Another characteristic of oppression demonstrated by what Brueggemann calls "the royal consciousness" of the Egyptian Pharaoh or King Solomon is affluence. "It is difficult to keep a revolution of freedom and justice under way when there is satiation."³¹ Covenant making takes people and relationships seriously. When people are lulled into a stupor by over consumption, they seldom seriously consider the value of humanity. They regard people as products to be used and God's alternative consciousness is forgotten.

²⁹Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 23.

³⁰Ibid., 24.

³¹Ibid., 26.

Unfortunately, an “exploitative appetite can develop insatiable momentum so that, no matter how much in the way of goods or power, or security is obtained, it is never enough.”³² In Solomon’s regime, there was no longer room for justice and compassion. The logical, systematic order made asking the questions unthinkable, even blasphemy. The “order of the state was the overriding agenda, and questions of justice and freedom, the main program of Moses, were necessarily and systematically subordinated.”³³

Brueggemann adds that the economics of affluence and the politics of oppression could not be sustained without a theological nod. He proposes that another characteristic of royal consciousness is the creation of a static religion. Solomon put God in his temple and subordinated God’s place to that of justifying the actions of the government and its agenda. “There is no notion that God is free and that he may act apart from and even against the regime. Now God is totally and unquestionably accessible to the king and those to whom the king grants access.”³⁴

To counter the stagnation created by a royal consciousness of economic affluence, the politics of oppression and a religion which boxes God into royal accessibility, the prophet must work to bring the community a “possibility of passion.”³⁵ Because imagination must be awakened before any alteration of the present reality, “the prophet engages in futuring fantasy . . . It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of im-

³²Ibid., 27.

³³Ibid., 28.

³⁴Ibid., 29.

³⁵Ibid., 35.

agination, to keep on conjuring and proposing future alternatives to the single one the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one.”³⁶

The prophet Jesus is the quintessential example of a prophet engaged in futuring fantasy. At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus announced both his role as prophet and the vision of a new age when he reads to the congregation from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth. He read the beginning chapter 61,³⁷ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” He then said, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”³⁸ He became a threat to those in authority strictly because he wished to ignite a passion for compassion and justice, to free those who were bound.³⁹

³⁶Ibid., 40.

³⁷The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, ²To announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God, to comfort all who mourn. New American Bible, Isaiah 61:1-2.

³⁸He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read ¹⁷and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” ²⁰Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. ²¹He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” ²²And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, “Isn't this the son of Joseph?” ²³He said to them, “Surely you will quote me this proverb, ‘Physician, cure yourself,’ and say, ‘Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.’” ²⁴ And he said, “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. ²⁵Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. ²⁶It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. ²⁷Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” ²⁸When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. ²⁹They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. ³⁰But he passed through the midst of them and went away. New American Bible, Luke 4:17-30.

Though there are numerous ways Jesus' teachings and ministry were radical criticisms of the religious-political system under which he lived, three aspects serve to further illustrate a break or dismantling of royal consciousness. The first is Jesus' readiness to forgive sin. He was accused of blasphemy when he told those whom he healed that their sins were forgiven. Brueggemann shares the observations of Hannah Arendt who said that this act was most dangerous. A society that has no mechanism in place for forgiveness of sin forces its members to live forever with the consequences of any violations. The management of the mechanism for forgiveness gave those in power enormous social control. When Jesus forgave, he evoked amazement.⁴⁰

Jesus' healing of the man with a withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath⁴¹ (Mark 3:1-6) questioned the Temple bureaucracy which forced people to be enslaved to the sacred sign. He put the person ahead of the rules surrounding the Sabbath. This action freed the community to question "the rules" and imagine sacred time differently. Both the crippled man and all the observers were transformed by the grace-filled occasion for freedom. His association with women and table fellowship also broke "the rules" "by inviting all, clean and unclean for nourishment."⁴² Oftentimes those who were poor were

³⁹Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 84.

⁴⁰Ibid., 85.

⁴¹Again he entered the synagogue. There was a man there who had a withered hand.

²They watched him closely to see if he would cure him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him. ³He said to the man with the withered hand, "Come up here before us." ⁴Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?" But they remained silent.

⁵Looking around at them with anger and grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and his hand was restored. ⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him to put him to death. New American Bible, Mark 3:1-6.

⁴²Mark 2:16, 14:3; Luke 19:1-10.

unable to keep ritually clean because they were forced to do the tasks that rendered them unclean simply to be able to eke out a living. This dismissal of the barrier between those who are “in” and those who are “out” implied that the dispensing of mercy was paramount and that all meaningful distinctions no longer existed.⁴³

The prophets, including Jesus, realized that to maintain control, the royal consciousness needs to numb its constituency. One way to control passion is to suppress cultural symbols. Symbols help hold the remembrance of experience. They may even allow for one to suspend time to make present the past realities. Brueggemann suggests a prophet must “offer symbols that are adequate to confront the horror and massiveness of the experience that evokes numbness and requires denial.” This is done by reminding the community of the historical past symbols that are already “vehicles for redemptive honesty.” The prophet must also help to express public fear by articulating the perceived condition from the perspective of God. Lastly, the prophet must help express “dread of endings” and then make hope real with the “language of amazement,” done best metaphorically through art, poetry and the creation of vocabulary.⁴⁴

Brueggemann feels that the newness of hope is not generated among the community but instead it is given to the community by the prophet. When the hope-filled message is received, it produces amazement at the true source of energy, their God.⁴⁵ He quotes Abraham Heschel who says that only those people in covenant can sing. Without acknowledging the anguish and loss, the community is not able to sing.

⁴³ Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 85.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

How does Brueggemann's notion of prophetic imagination apply to the U.S. Catholic Bishop's Framework? I submit that the Framework should function as prophet to the fourteen to nineteen year olds who are living in the world of excessive affluence and are functionally unable to recognize the value of integrity in their own work, restraint in consuming, or equity in light of business transactions. The royal consciousness of the present world-wide economic system allows for little to impede its progress. Students enjoy their indulgent spending and the use of all the electronic toys they can carry. They also realize that those toys keep them isolated from their families and hamper their ability to make real personal connections; they are lonely. They are fascinated by the media's presentation of other-worldly entertainment whether it be science fiction, envisioning other ways of being, or stories of the paranormal which imply life after death. The movies, television shows, and books kindle in them the longing for the Divine. They know they are missing something but don't know how or where to look for answers. They are bored with conventional religious practice which does not recognize their way of thinking or, their reality. It does not lead them in a recognizable way to anything.

A Catholic high school student's mandatory daily religion class, if it is truly catechetical, should function as their prophet. It should help name the oppressive world order in which they live and help them practice the imagining of a different system. What this Framework needs to do is help them find the fascination with the God of their longing through the radical hopefulness of the Gospel. To borrow from Heschel, the young people cannot sing if they have not heard the prophet critique the world of *their* experience and help them dream new visions and invite *them* into covenant.

I believe the Framework is not prophetic, not energizing, and will, in fact, work against the efforts of the U.S. Catholic Bishops. The very first mistake made with the Framework is the lack of invitation to the young people to choose a life connected to the Church. The U.S. Bishops may very well feel that the students are already Catholic because they grew up in Catholic families and may even have received the Sacrament of Confirmation, but today's students use their experiences to feel out ideas, both old and new. They measure what they were taught against what they "know" both emotionally and intellectually. Most adults will argue that high school students do not "know" enough about the world to make these assessments; however, these young people grew up in a time when both the news media and all forms of comedy question every action by a public figure, political or cultural, and every policy deemed news worthy. There are no longer heroes; there is no longer anything above comic criticism. Young people simply are doing what they have been taught by their cultural media. The notion of authority long held by the Church does not hold up when students have heard every horror story told about their clergy. They are also immersed in a sea of information whirling around them. They can easily find how others of different faith traditions practice and then gauge the "happiness" of those practicing what they are being told is "the one true Church of Christ"⁴⁶ against the others. Religion class will be perceived as a mandatory religious studies class without any personal relevancy.

When I was schooled in religion in Catholic grade and high schools, it was a time just after the Second Vatican Council when, by these U.S. Bishops' standards, the texts

⁴⁶USCCB, *Doctrinal Elements*, 18.

were considered watered down. Today, many problems are blamed on the education given to my generation of Roman Catholics. My teachers, however, made sure we heard what the Vatican II document *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* had to say about us. “All men are called to belong to the new People of God.”⁴⁷ The council fathers called the Church “The People of God,” and we were explicitly told that we were included. It did not say first, you have to follow all the commands, or receive certain sacraments. We were the Church. That message sunk in. It may well be why so many folks who do not attend Church or agree with official Church teaching still consider themselves Catholic. I do not believe our young people have heard that they are the Church. Certainly, there is no invitation in the Framework. Without the sincere invite, our students will be like “outsiders looking in” at the teachings of the Church.

For any type of religious program that implies it is catechesis, that is religious formation, not religious study; it must acknowledge and personally invite participants into the journey. There must be personal acceptance, not just recitation of facts. I fear without this invitation, this Framework becomes a wall between “the Good News” and the student inquirer. Students will study their coursework as they study their history or algebra, much more interested in their grade than the content. So many already see the teachings of the Church as a set of rules which they do not wish to apply to themselves. They may well conclude if this is the Church, and I don’t agree, then I must not be part of the Church. They will choose not to “buy in.” Students make most of their decisions with

⁴⁷The Holy See. “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum).” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_dei-verbum_en.html.

their consumer consciousness. I see them using their adolescent experience to judge and then walk away from the faith the way they walk away from any other unsatisfactory consumer product.

The General Directory for Catechesis, published in the U.S. by the U.S. Catholic Conference in 1998, is the direction of the universal Church, prescribed by the Second Vatican Council for “catechetical instruction of the Christian people”. It clearly states that catechesis is a journey, not a pedagogical action. It also echoes prophetic imagination as it calls the student to transformation. It speaks of liberty, inspiration and gift.

Being inspired by the pedagogy of faith, catechesis presents its service as a designated educative journey in that, on the one hand it assists the person to open himself to the religious dimension of life, while on the other, it proposes the Gospel to him. It does so in such a manner as to penetrate and transform the processes of intelligence, conscience, liberty and action making of existence a gift after the example of Jesus Christ. Thus the catechist knows and avails of the contribution of the sciences of education, understood always in a Christian sense.⁴⁸

There is no call in the Framework for liberty, creativity, or imagination. Admittedly it does express that the Framework itself is not for direct instruction and that it is expected that publishers will create suitable instructional materials. The only mention of methodology is that of apologetics. With the emphasis on the “Challenges” section of each course, the Bishops have made clear what the questions and answers are to be. There is no acknowledgement of the student-learners, and certainly no freedom if they cannot even form their own questions. Dr. Glenn Hudak, professor at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, insists that the questions are more important than the an-

⁴⁸*General Directory for Catechesis*, 147.

swers. He implies that in the questioning students free their imagination to examine “what if”. The Bishops have “rationalized reality” and told us the questions and answers. They stifled the free God and programmatized holy Wisdom much like those exercising royal consciousness as described by Brueggemann.

In *Losing Heart: The Moral and Spiritual Miseducation of America’s Children*, Dr. H. Svi Shapiro bemoans the loss of meaning in American culture and, consequently, American schools and the resultant poverty of the soul.

For our children’s sake we have to confront this reality, however threatening it may be to our assumptions about our country and its values. If, as Naomi Remen has said, meaning is the language of the soul, then we must face the fact that our market-driven culture corrodes not just the structure of durable authentic meanings that might give significance to our lives, but the very essence of our humanity. With an intensity that has no previous parallel, our lives exist under a barrage of messages that endlessly repeat and drive home a view of the world that emphasize money and wealth, celebrity, sex, status, and the possession of material things. To grow up in America (and, we need to add, increasingly throughout the world) is to be socialized into a culture where nearly everything of significance derives from the values of the marketplace. It becomes harder and harder to separate the value of anything from the price it commands. Quite simply, the market has become the primary source of meaning and value in our world. Consuming is, in a very real sense, our religion, and it is linked to the very definition of who we are and how we live.⁴⁹

If we as a people are losing meaning, it is paramount that those of us in the Catholic school system help our young people recognize that fact and then envision a world lived much closer to the Gospel values we verbally espouse. We cannot expect memorizing questions and answers will build the skills our students need to imagine a world closer to the “Kingdom of God” that Jesus taught and that we educators teach he has ushered

⁴⁹H. Svi Shapiro, *Losing Heart: The Moral and Spiritual Miseducation of America’s Children* (Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 23-24.

in. We cannot believe systematized questions and answers comes close to the vision offered of catechesis by the universal Church, and we cannot expect these questions and answers would be recognized as proper pedagogy by Jesus the prophet-teacher whose message this system is supposed to convey.

Very subtly, in *The Educational Philosophy of the American Catholic Hierarchy in the 20th Century: An Analysis of Vatican and American Official Statements*, Michael Maher, Jr. articulates a key point, “the Magisterium has not written about the rights of students to the same extent as the rights of the Church and the state.”⁵⁰ The most obvious omission in the Framework is an acknowledgement of the student. Jesus, the prophet-teacher, practiced table fellowship, healed, and forgave sins of the individuals with whom he was engaged. Jesus was a radical because the one in covenant came first. There is no instruction in the Framework which addresses appropriateness of the material for the developmental level of the student. Additionally, there is no reference to cultural or societal context from which these individuals draw meaning. There is also a lack of acknowledgement of the cultural differences within Catholic students across the country, or socioeconomic differences from one neighborhood to another. Inner-city African-American Catholics have a very different experience of Church than the white students in the heartland. Latino students, the largest growing sector of the Catholic population in the U.S., are not validated. The one Spanish-speaking “Blessed” mentioned in the entire Frame-

⁵⁰Michael J. S. Maher, *The Educational Philosophy of the American Catholic Hierarchy in the 20th century: An Analysis of Vatican and American Official Statements* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 55.

work is Junipero Serra, a Franciscan missionary accused of torturing many of the Native Americans he is credited with converting.

Brueggemann cited that the role of the prophet was to give hope through symbols. Clearly the Framework recognizes the value of symbol and ritual; it gives an entire semester to the study of our sacraments and liturgy. However, it has reduced these symbols to academic study without the emphasis on wonder and yearning. It has done nothing to invite students to participate in the creation or incorporation of culturally meaningful symbols. It has not made the connection between the use of our rich textual symbols as “vehicles for redemptive honesty” or the “language of amazement.” Without recognition of the students, who see themselves as isolated individuals, the whole point of that semester is lost. If our religious art, including all media, visual, tactile, and auditory, does not touch a chord and bind them together as a people of God, then the significance of the collective worship taught falls on deaf ears. The sacraments course with repetitive specific emphasis on the importance of the clergy as opposed to the importance of the people of God harkens back to Brueggemann’s description of Solomon’s God kept in the Holy of Holies and accessible only through those in authority.

I believe this Framework is the result of a royal consciousness built from fear and the “dread of endings.” It is obvious that the Roman Catholic people of God no longer look to the Magisterium the way they did before Vatican II. The data quoted in chapter two makes that clear. I believe the Bishops hope to “fix” the Church by fixing their schools. Unfortunately, as I stated in Chapter II, there is a plethora of data and recommendations accessible to Church leaders about the direction of the Church and the needs

of the Church. Instead, she has chosen to dig up old texts and thinks that our post-modern students will become just like the modernist thinkers who lived before the horrors of the Second World War and the explosion of technology and instant information retrieval.

There is only one published critique of this Framework. Fr. William J. O'Malley, S. J., renowned author and recognized scholar in the field of Catholic education, teaches religion at Fordham Preparatory School in New York City. He expressed his concern and titled his article in *America* magazine, *Faulty Guidance: A new framework for high school catechesis fails to persuade*. He writes, "Inquires revealed that no veteran high school catechists were involved in the document; it is the product of theorists and administrators." He calls it "pedagogically counterproductive" and cites that "The Framework is inflexibly 'top down,' preceptive, rigorously certain." He is describing the Framework the way Brueggemann identified Solomon's bureaucracy, fascinated with wisdom which meant to rationalize reality. As a flaw in the Framework, O'Malley says that in the introduction of the Framework, the Bishops describe the "ends" to be that "each may come to know him (Jesus) and live in according to the truth he has given us." The word "know" is used, not in the sense of knowing with the whole self as was the primary understanding of the word as used within the context of the Hebrew Scriptures, but with a Greek understanding, "meaning to grasp as the result of logical research." He adds,

That seemingly slight semantic shift makes all the difference between persuasion (conversion) and indoctrination (brainwashing). This model syllabus does not aim at knowing God, but at knowing about God. The difference is vast. The exclusively cognitive smothers the affective. That's why so many Catholics are not "going to church."⁵¹

⁵¹William J. O'Malley, "Faulty Guidance," *America Magazine*, 14-21 September 2009.

He also states the text is “uninvolving” and makes no attempt “to make the material even vaguely relevant to their lives or felt needs.” He finds the material more suitable for graduate students in religious education.

The colorful O’Malley describes the way many loyal, Church-loving, high school religion teachers feel, “Thus I respond to the Framework with the loyal frustration of a Panzer commander ordered to advance on Stalingrad when the oil in my tanks is black ice.” Unfortunately most teachers who will have to use the Framework are in fear of losing their jobs and will not speak out against the obvious flaws. Publishers are equally loyal to the Bishops with the hopes of producing the materials which will be approved or even favored because beginning as early as 2003, only those texts appearing on the *Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series*⁵² are sanctioned for purchase by a U.S. Catholic high school. Any religion teacher in a diocese with a particularly strict Bishop cannot make any other choice.

It is still true that the teacher will craft the curriculum and set the tone of the classroom no matter which text is in use. Crafting one that is not openly contrary to the Framework and its apologetic style and still rings true to the prophetic style of the teaching of Jesus will take semantic gymnastics and a lot of prayer.

Chapter three of this paper has used the triune source of authority recognized within the Roman Catholic Church, Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium as the way to safeguard the deposit of faith, to critique the Framework as articulated by the U.S. Catholic Bishops. By the Church’s standard, the Framework falls short.

⁵²USCCB Subcommittee on the Catechism, “Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series,” <http://www.usccb.org/catechism/document/Currentlist.pdf>.

First, through a look at a definition of Tradition, the hierarchy's description of those who functioned in the classroom, the production of Catholic books, the Provisional Councils of Baltimore, and the production of the Baltimore Catechism, I tried to show a lack of involvement of the hierarchy in U.S. Catholic education. At no time other than the publishing of the Baltimore Catechism did the U.S. Catholic Bishops get directly involved in educational practice. It is interesting to note that the publishing of the Baltimore Catechism was itself a disaster. It met immediate criticism from both educators and theologians. A variety of editions were consequently published to correct problems with the Bishop's original volume, and the country-wide consistency which the bishops desired never truly existed.

The second part of this chapter, corresponding with the Magisterium, looked at the official documents produced by the Catholic Church. I included the universal Vatican documents *Rappresentanti in Terra* (1929), *Provido Sane Consilio* (1935), *The Catholic School* (1977) *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988), and *The General Directory for Catechesis* (1997), as well as documents specific to the U.S. Catholic Church *To Teach as Jesus Did* (1972), *In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (1990), and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (2005). By tracing these published documents, it was easy to see that the ideals by which Catholic education has been directed are not found in the Framework. The Framework's focus is clearly on the message and not on the students in direct violation of magisterial teaching. The Framework leaves out any connection with the present circumstances of today's student, additionally in violation of these documents. Furthermore, the Framework makes no

mention of culture or to the differing experiences of Catholic students from different ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds. Neither does it recognize the many students who are not Catholic who attend Catholic schools.

The educational documents examined here urge teachers to use all the information provided through the pedagogic sciences; the Framework asks today's educators to abandon these techniques and apply those useful for the students of the 1940's and 1950's. By stressing the apologetic approach of the past and providing the questions which students should be pondering, it provides preset ideals that the students must memorize. They are not encouraged to apply the Gospel message to their world. It forces imagination, wonder, and awe out of their study and will leave students who are searching for the Transcendent still searching for something that resonates with their experience.

Walter Brueggemann's *The Prophetic Imagination* was the inspiration for the critique from the scriptural aspect. The message of the Church today must echo the message of Scripture. The prophets, including Jesus who is central to the Framework, brought the liberating message of God to their people. This Framework needs to do the same for our students who are most heavily influenced by an oppressive culture of affluence and selfishness. Instead of the Church offering insights to our students that help them dream new and radically loving ways of being, the Bishops offered a curriculum which overstates their authority as Church hierarchy, thereby placing the Church as a wall between God and the students. The Church should be presented as an invitation or vehicle into relationship with the transcendent God of their longing. The Curriculum Framework also fails to connect their religious study to the students' life experiences and does nothing to invite

them to contribute their unique character to the Church. Without the direct invitation into relationship with God without reservation, or to use more ecclesiastical language, without covenant, the lessons will simply become another school subject, a grade which affects their GPA, instead of the Framework's explicit goal of "growth in one's relationship with the Lord." And without the explicit invitation into relationship with the Church, students may come to understand the Church without truly feeling they "are" the Church.

It seems clear that the Framework of the U.S. Catholic Bishops fails in consistency with all three of the articulated sources of authority recognized by the Catholic Church. Chapter four will continue this critique from a pedagogical point of view. It will address curriculum design specifically suited to our post-modern students.

CHAPTER IV

A CRITIQUE OF DOCTRINAL ELEMENTS OF A CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATECHETICAL MATERIALS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE OF HIGH SCHOOL AGE THROUGH THE LENS OF POST-MODERN CURRICULUM

Today more than ever . . . we are called to serve man as such, and not merely Catholics; to defend above all and everywhere the rights of the human person, and not merely those of the Catholic Church. Today's world, the needs made plain in the last fifty years and a deeper understanding of doctrine have brought us to a new situation . . . It is not that the Gospel has changed, it is that we have begun to understand it better. Those who have lived as long as I have . . . were enabled to compare different cultures and traditions, and know that the moment has come to discern the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to look far ahead. Pope John XXIII on his deathbed May 24, 1963

Introduction

Chapter IV of this study will critique the Framework from a professional educational perspective by presenting the postmodern curricular classroom as an alternative to apologetics. One major flaw of the Framework is a lack of acknowledgement of the students to be taught. I will begin with a description of the students, how the present cultural world has formed them, and consequently the way they look at the world. I will follow this with a description of the post-modern ideas on curriculum and the inherent clash between a postmodern refusal to assume there is absolute authority or truth and the Roman Catholic hierarchy's insistence on the absolute truth that is God and its interpretive right over matters of faith and morals. Next, this study will focus on Patrick Slattery's belief that postmodern curriculum is not only consistent with theological content but also sup-

ports it. He offers a proleptic eschatology as way to give immediacy addressing the current culture with the view to changing it in the future. It will also focus on theologian Mary Grey's call to remember the creative and nourishing Spirit of God and the invitation of the Spirit into the postmodern Catholic school classroom. Lastly, I will concentrate on how a proleptic eschatology not only aligns well with that of the Roman Catholic Church and the vision of education as espoused in the educational documents published by her hierarchy but also the needs of our post-modern thinking students. This educational viewpoint may be the only way to present catechetics to our youth in a way for them to not only grasp the teachings to be able to articulate them academically but also choose to accept them as a consistent application of the Gospel message and relevant way to negotiate and make meaning in their world.

Our Students

Shirley Steinberg and Joe Kincheloe write in *Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood* that there is a dramatic cultural shift in childhood but few notice, especially those who care for children. They believe that the explosion of information technology is in large part responsible for the changes seen in our students and their development through childhood.¹ What is seen as a contemporary crisis in childhood is the information children have about the adult world and their inability to process this overwhelming amount of information in isolation because of absent parents and a non-existent community. Steinberg and Kincheloe refer to the contemporary crisis as “fear in

¹Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe. *Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 1.

isolation” because there is no one available to help children feel “safe” even in the ideal suburban setting.²

The hyper-reality created by the media for the benefit of the media, particularly the television industry (our “free” babysitters) has exaggerated its own importance in the cultural milieu. We are all affected, but our students are taught through the media the basic skills necessary to negotiate their identity, values, and sense of well-being.³ The concentration of the power to shape our children has fallen into corporate hands; and these corporations use their influence to produce a “kinderculture” that is profitable to them.⁴ In addition, large corporate organizations, including entertainment and news venues, not only control information coming to us, but they are also able to alter our perception of history and theology in alignment with their corporate ideological needs.⁵ As a classroom teacher, I find it impossible to change the perception my students have of many historical movements or events when they have first learned about them through movies or television. As entertaining as works of fiction like the *DaVinci Code* are, students with an altered sense of authoritative interpretation will always choose the version they saw in the theater as reality over the one presented in class.

TV makes kids conversant with marital, sexual, business-related, criminal, violent, and traditionally restricted content.⁶ The resultant worldliness of the post-modern

² Ibid., 3.

³ Ibid., 9.

⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁵ Ibid., 15.

child is hated by the same culture responsible for its creation. Children are often described as know-it-alls or wise guys because children with extensive knowledge of the adult world are threatening to the adult population. No longer do adults know more than children. Instead adults are viewed as less knowledgeable because their technology skills may be weaker than that of their children.⁷

In school children receive developmentally appropriate vocabulary but it is now hard to determine what is appropriate when hyper-reality disintegrates traditional developmental markers. These children do not follow the standard pedagogical paradigms or developmental sequence expected by their teachers. They are no longer docile and obedient. The educational separation of children by age may have worked in the late twentieth century but this is now simply a veiled attempt by adults to cover up cultural changes and allow them to feel the old-fashioned warm memories of their childhood. Kincheloe puts it well when he writes, “how quaint school must look to our postmodern children.”⁸

Segregated from active participation in the social order, children see adults as over-regulating them in the disguise of control. Play has given way to skill development. Most middle and upper class children have so many after-school activities they would be within their rights to ask for a personal driver. Few students pass through the elementary and middle school days free of sports practices and inter-state tournaments. High school students are taught they need to pack in as many extra-curricular activities as possible to

⁶ Ibid., 47.

⁷ Ibid., 46.

⁸ Ibid., 47.

gain an advantage over others vying for acceptance at the same universities. Structure now permeates all aspects of a child's life because in the present economy the pressures for them to succeed at more advanced levels constantly increases.

The know-it-all, attitude-laden prototype child of films such as *Home Alone* is the hero of the post-modern culture. The child who is bored and an under achiever in school is only under achieving there because school is childish, naïve, boring and confining.⁹ The post-modern child's righteous resistance to his controlled and over ordered life thrives on disorder.¹⁰ Attempts to reinforce order are the result of parental and societal fears as juvenile crime statistics soar and the types of juvenile crime escalates. The return to family values espoused by many in the political arena is, however, no more than political rhetoric when corporate America demands more and more time from parents and legislatures demand more and more "quantitative cost benefit outcomes" for the public investments in quality child care.¹¹ Additionally children under twelve in the 1990's belong to a generation only half the size of that of their baby-boomer parents. As a result, they do not engender the same attention societally or politically that their parents' generation had.¹²

A particular danger of the post-modern condition of electronic media saturation is the production of the hyper-real child. Real children in real situations of added family burdens along with their schoolwork and extra-curricular activities are now somehow re-

⁹ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰ Ibid., 49.

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

¹² Ibid., 45.

placed in the cultural mind by the media produced children of the TV sit-com. This blurring of real life skews the boundaries of information and entertainment, commercials and politics, childhood and adulthood. Pressures for the children to be the same as the kids they see on TV only increases their stress, while adults seeing the same models wonder why the real children just can't keep up.¹³

This information about the changes in the post-modern childhood has significant implications for schooling. Not only must children be "handled" differently as far as discipline but curriculum must change to compete with corporate America. Significantly, from the context of the authoritative notion of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church which produced the curriculum Framework, students no longer have the perception of authority on which the Church predicates its Framework. It seems the American Catholic Church has forgotten that the world that surrounds children shapes their lives. They have chosen to believe domestication of the passionate youth will change their attitude about the Church. As they look to ways of re-exerting their authority and negate children's exploration, invention, and play they are actually working against the students' natural evolution into personhood.¹⁴ It is only through the student's integration of their acquired information that our students can grow into healthy faith-filled individuals.

Post-Modern Curriculum Theory

As Leila Villaverde explains in *Secondary School: A Reference Handbook*, curricular practices effect schooling, the students, and the greater society. "Curriculum is not

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 49.

as neutral as suspected and it can have great influence on a student's abilities and enjoyment for learning in and out of school."¹⁵ I believe curriculum is critically important as reflected in religious education because the faith life of the student, as well as the way the student incorporates faith in the way he or she negotiates the world, is predicated on curriculum.

Post-modern philosophy began influencing curriculum in the 1970's. Curriculum was redefined as educators thought about "the nature of knowledge, how knowledge was constructed, and how it was learned." Inroads were opened into the understanding of the self and society. Many more groups and subgroups were able to participate as curriculum examined power relationships and cultural influences. Post-modern philosophy even re-envisioned what could be considered curriculum.¹⁶

Post-modern thinking led a movement away from pre-determined education, evaluation and lesson planning. It recognizes variety and difference and suggests inquiry-based learning. A postmodern curriculum stands in contrast to the scientifically assessed, skill or task-based, highly-controlled, long accepted Tyler rationale. Instead this system sees the student as central in the educational process, actively engaged in the process of learning the content, and how that content is relevant and applicable to their situation. The postmodern curriculum places emphasis on the inquiry process as well as the pre-determined learning goal.

¹⁵Villaverde, Leila E., *Secondary Schools: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 61.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

Interpretation in post-modern curriculum is critical, and the material for study is examined from a variety of differing viewpoints. All content is considered in the light of the history, sociology, philosophy, culture, politics, and ethics that have gone to shape it. Special attention is given to exposing contradictions, limitations, and self-serving ideologies. Fundamental questions about the way of living in society are explored. This curriculum does not see a value in memorization of a list of unrelated facts. The postmodern curriculum promotes holistic understanding. Teaching is about the connecting of different subjects so teaching teams, coordinated classes and integrated or cross-curricular lessons serve as an ideal model for meaning-making.¹⁷

Teachers, themselves, have autonomy in their planning specifically to address the spontaneous questions and particular learning needs of the students. Though a post-modern classroom is overwhelming to those who try to model themselves after their own control dominated educational experience, the students fair well because they see relevance in the material. Their engagement increases and, consequently, so does their mastery of content.

The skill set developed with this curriculum reaches beyond that which can be measured with standardized testing. Kincheloe and Steinberg have identified postformal thinking as a postmodern correlation to the cognitive development of Piaget's formal operational stage. Some of the tenets of postformal thinking include metaphoric cognition, that is seeing relationships between seemingly unrelated things, empathy arrived at by perceiving different frames of reference, understanding of varying levels of connections

¹⁷Jeffrey Glanz and Linda S. Behar-Horenstein, *Paradigm Debates in Curriculum and Supervision: Modern and Postmodern Perspectives* (Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, 2000), 133.

between concepts and trends including a connection between living organisms and non-living structures through the study of the ecosystem, and most importantly related to Brueggemann's prophetic imagination, the connection between logic and emotion "stretching the powers of imagination."¹⁸

Some postmodern cultural theorists "regard pedagogical work as the cultivation of independence of mind, self-reflexivity, and an interdisciplinary erudition." There is a continuous reflection on learning and practice for both students and teachers. Because content is the subject matter and the human persons engaged, relationship development and a modeling of a love of learning will be an important component of the postformal classroom. Trust will develop as teachers show that they value students and are willing to adjust to fit the needs of the students. Expectations in the postmodern classroom are greater because both teacher and student must be fully engaged. Knowledge is seen as parts to a larger whole and students as agents of discovery.¹⁹

In *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum*, William Doll reminds his readers that there is risk involved in this form of curricular development. The continued transformation is much too difficult for those in power outside of the classroom to pin down. Politicians can not control the efficiency of teachers or construct standardized tests on which to gauge student growth and teacher salaries. This form of curricular development recognizes the teacher as professional and, subsequently, forces teachers to know their content, be cognizant of the implications and connections with other disciplines, under-

¹⁸Villaverde, *Secondary Schools*, 79.

¹⁹William Pinar, *What Is Curriculum Theory?* (Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 2004).

stand the history of their content area and how politics has shaped it. They must be secure enough to allow for students' discovery and committed enough to stay apprised of popular culture to stay current in their fields.

A post-modern curriculum allows us to question the “social, political, and human failures for which our century may come to be known: war, genocide, famine, poverty, enslavement, ecological devastation- all done under the aegis of rational thought and procedures, and in many cases with good intentions.” Doll believes the art of education is developing the right amount of “essential tension.” He adds, “This is an art born not of faith in the rightness of our ideologies but our ability to be playful with serious commitments. Such a paradoxical blending becomes key, if we are to make our future age better, not poorer, than the one in which we now live.”²⁰

Doll also gives us a new set of educational R's. The late nineteenth century taught reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic; Doll says our teaching must be rich, recursive, relational, and rigorous. Learning is not transmitted but made through dialogue and reflection. The shift to the post-modern curriculum is a shift away from hierarchical structure, patriarchy, industrial commercialism, and false nationalistic pride.²¹ If we believe that only external forces shape us, then that force moves us and we only respond or react. We give up our human agency.

Doll finds the cognitive implication of the post-modern paradigm to be self-organization and reminds us that Piaget taught

²⁰William E. Doll, *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993), 156.

²¹Ibid.

that self-organization is the essence of life itself, that which underlies the processes of assimilation and accommodation, especially as these interact to give life its harmonious and developmental qualities. Either process without the other leads to self-defeating and life-ending extremism. Through the inter- or transactions of assimilation and accommodation, growth, maturity, and development occur.²²

Another component of a post-modern classroom which has direct correlation to democratic ideals is the development of community. The teacher must take on role of leader but not dictator. Leadership must facilitate a safe, fascinating, imaginative place where no one owns the truth and everyone has the right to enter into the dialogue. The classroom must be a caring and at the same time critical environment where knowledge is developed and experience is valued in meaning-making. Dialogue flows from metaphor and story. When logic is used as key formulation for truth, it becomes definitional and deadens creativity and play.²³ It is interesting to note that Jesus on whom the entire Framework is predicated, specifically taught using parables which he seldom explained. He expected his audience to question, interpret, make meaning and change based on his stories.

In *Paradigm Debates in Curriculum and Supervision: Modern and Postmodern Perspectives*, an article entitled, *Can the Modern View of Curriculum be Refined by Postmodern Criticism* by Linda Behar-Horenstein, the author asks about the instructive value of student interpretation. Many well meaning modernist thinkers will see the post-formal classroom as chaotic and directionless. Behar-Horenstein offers the notion of ap-

²²Ibid., 158.

²³Ibid., 159.

plying questions to the curriculum to exemplify the challenges imposed by an intentional curriculum verses the taught curriculum. Her questions include challenging the purpose of the curriculum, its relevance outside the classroom, the present students learning needs, the prior experience of the students, a current discipline-knowledge base, flexibility, its ability to empower, its ability to foster growth in conceptual thinking, problem-solving behaviors, the proper assessments associated with the learning experience, and self-selected representations of the students.²⁴ I am sure the Bishops responsible for the Framework will question the educational outcomes if the teacher cannot direct students to choose to interpret their lives within the context of the teachings of Jesus based on their experiences. The postmodern curriculum specialist will say there is risk, but it is balanced by the production of full engagement and deep reflection that it is a disservice to our students if we do not take the risk. I would add memorizing the questions and answers of the predetermined questions from the Framework will not assure the educational outcomes the Bishops expect either.

A Problem with the Roman Catholic Church

If postmodernity invites multiple ways of knowing and is open to discovering truth outside of a specific context, there is subjectivity and open interpretation.²⁵ If postmodern thinking challenges the superiority of any one method or mode of analysis and knowledge is co-produced between teacher and student, there can be no assent to a Magisterium that claims it “exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent

²⁴Glanz and Behar-Horenstein, *Paradigm Debates*, 38.

²⁵Ibid., 142.

when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to a irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.”²⁶

Here lies the problem for the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church has always taught that there are fundamental truths and that these truths center in the revelation of God. The Church views her role as a caretaker of the teachings of Christ and that it is only through the teachings of Jesus that people will come to know truth.

Though many important Church figures acknowledge the value of a postmodern challenge of “excessively rational mentality,” they question a “spontaneous preference for feeling over the will, for impressions over intelligence, for an arbitrary logic and the search for pleasure over ascetic and prohibitive mortality.” Cardinal Martini sums up the way the Church sees postmodernity, “Human existence, therefore, is a place where there is freedom without restraints, where a person exercises, or believes he can exercise, his personal empire and creativity.”²⁷

Pope John Paul II, a student of philosophy himself, wrote the encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio* or *On the Relationship Between Faith and Reason* to address the Church’s concerns about relativistic philosophy.

The currents of thought which claim to be postmodern merit appropriate attention. According to some of them (postmodern philosophers), the time of certainties is irrevocably past, and the human being must now learn to live in a horizon of total absence of meaning, where everything is provisional and ephemeral. In their de-

²⁶*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 88.

²⁷ Carlo Maria Martini, S. J., “Teaching the Faith in a Postmodern World,” *America Magazine*, 12 May 2008. http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=10811.

structive critique of very certitude, several authors have failed to make crucial distinctions and have called into question the certitudes of faith.²⁸

. . . the positive results (of complex systems of thought) achieved must not obscure the fact that reason, in its one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity, seems to have forgotten that men and women are always called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them. Sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as a person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially upon experimental data, in the mistaken belief that technology must dominate all. It has happened therefore that reason, rather than voicing the human orientation towards truth, has wilted under the weight of so much knowledge and little by little has lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being. Abandoning the investigation of being, modern philosophical research has concentrated instead upon human knowing. Rather than make use of the human capacity to know the truth, modern philosophy has preferred to accentuate the ways in which this capacity is limited and conditioned.²⁹

Additionally, the current pope, Benedict XVI, at Mass in April 2005 prior to his election as pontiff stated, “Having a clear faith, based on the Creed of the Church, is often labeled today as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, which is letting oneself be tossed and swept along by every wind of teaching, looks like the only attitude acceptable to today’s standards. We are moving to a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as certain and which has as its highest goal one’s own ego and one’s desires.” And two months later, while addressing educators on June 6, 2005, he said, “Today, a particularly insidious obstacle to the task of education is the massive presence in our society and culture of that relativism which, recognizing nothing as definitive, leaves as the ultimate criterion only the self with its desires.”

²⁸The Holy See, “Fides et Ratio,” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_15101998_fides-et-ratio_en.html.

²⁹Martini, “Teaching the Faith.”

There is no hope that postmodern curriculum development will be embraced or endorsed by the Catholic Church. The Church will always condemn postmodern philosophy and equate it with relativity. However, there may be an acknowledgement that interaction with our postmodern is necessary. In a talk that opened a door to dialogue with the postmodern, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, S. J. retired archbishop of Milan, Italy, stated to the General Chapter to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome on May 3, 2007:

Perhaps this situation is better than the one that existed previously. Christianity has an opportunity to show better its character of challenge, of objectivity, of realism, of the exercise of true freedom, of a religion linked to the life of the body and not only of the mind. In a world such as we live in today, the mystery of an unavailable and always surprising God acquires greater beauty; faith understood as a risk becomes more attractive; a tragic view of existence is strengthened with happy consequences in contrast to a purely evolutionary vision. Christianity appears more beautiful, closer to people, and yet more true.³⁰

Patrick Slattery in the second edition of his *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era* offers a possible meeting point for the two diametrically opposed views. A long time student of Catholic education, Slattery can understand the hierarchy's viewpoint and can offer them their own eschatological vision of prolepsis as a point where postmodern thought can engage Catholic education.

Proleptic Eschatology

The Catholic Encyclopedia explains eschatology to be “the branch of systematic theology which deals with the doctrines of the last things.” The last things generally mean death, judgment, heaven and hell. Eschatology has also come to address the fear of

³⁰Martini, “Teaching the Faith,” para. 30.

living in a time when we realize that the unstoppable developments in science and technology will not produce endless progress and an acceptable standard of living for all. It speaks not only to the questions of personal immortality, but also to the future of the human race, the sustainability of the planet, and the way we look at time. Some equate discussions in eschatology to hope based in scripture, primarily Hebrew scripture.

The dictionary defines prolepsis as the assigning of something of interest like a character in a story or an event to a time earlier than the chronological one with which they are associated; the representation of something in the future as if it already existed or had occurred; or the use of a descriptive word in anticipation of its becoming applicable. It is really a suspension of time or overlapping of logical time sequences.

Slattery defines proleptic events as “any experience that transcends linear segmentation of time and nourishes holistic understanding.” He uses proleptic eschatology as a way to express an eschatological view of hopefulness for the future lived within the present moment. He also uses the term “synthetical” moment as times when one experiences a moment of clarity or understanding; and links this knowing to the way Roman Catholics and Episcopalians view Eucharist and Jews view the Passover experience. Slattery reminds us that the Lutheran theologian Jürgen Moltmann, when reflecting on proleptic time, offers that “the true present is nothing else but the eternity that is imminent in time.”³¹

Slattery states,

³¹Patrick Slattery, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 85.

Proleptic eschatology offers a way to access the strength and determination for justice even in the midst of personal tragedies like disease, addiction, or suicide, or amid the global turmoil of terrorism, mass starvation, genocide, war, or the rampant sexual abuse of children. Proleptic eschatology can give us optimism of the will and provide a context to advance what John Dewey called “social consequences and values” in order to counteract malaise and despair.³²

Applying proleptic eschatology to education, we can follow progressive educational advocate John Dewey who questioned the value of learning for some possibly non-existent future. He felt learning just to prepare for the future was a contradiction. Students who feel they must learn for some distant time will feel alienated from the particular academic field, a common problem in mathematics. Slattery also contends that educators who teach that students need particular material for some time in the future offer up a modernist lie. He adds, “We must find a way to create meaningful discussions in each present moment rather than imposing a rationale for delaying meaning and purpose. This is the proleptic task; it is also the urgent ethical mandate of contemporary living.” He believes any alternative to a proleptic vision in education could be considered malpractice.³³

Proleptic Eschatology and Postmodern Curriculum

Education, especially religious education, must address the hopelessness, poverty, gender and sexual bias, dislocation, and exploitation of workers, environmental decay, racism, corporate scandal, violence, and all other assaults on the global community. The imagination, energy, and insights of our young people are needed, and they must be in-

³²Ibid., 84.

³³Ibid., 86.

vited to participate in bringing the Kingdom of God into fruition. In the Roman Catholic faith, the anointing at Confirmation, done usually in the eighth grade, has theologially already assigned them to this task. However, a traditional curriculum development model which focuses on material to be covered and standardized testing undermines prophetic imagination and the true goals.

Slattery includes Donald Oliver and Kathleen Gershman in his chapter on *Post-modern Schooling, Curriculum and the Theological Text*. Oliver and Gershman point out that awareness grounds our knowledge in being, not in methods or techniques. Educational curriculum needs to present an interpretation of lived experiences rather than restrict study to a static set of course requirements to be completed. “Likewise, theology is an autobiographical process, a cosmological dialogue, and a search for personal and universal harmony.”³⁴ Steering way from the transfer of predetermined authoritarian dogma and opening up time for the discovery of meaning within the fear-filled circumstances of daily living will answer the concerns of Brueggemann who is worried that our American churches have lost the ability to engage in prophetic imagination.

Slattery also reminds us of the work of Madeleine Grumet who says, “Meaning is something we make out of what we find when we look at texts. It is not the text.” Slattery adds, “The curriculum as theological text seeks to uncover the wisdom that has been lost in our preoccupation with discreet parcels of knowledge that are measured on standar-

³⁴Ibid., 93.

dized tests in modern schools. The challenge of postmodern schooling is to recover a fuller meaning of wisdom.”³⁵ He adds,

the theological texts have been used by religious fundamentalists, cult leaders, gurus, extremist pastors and imams, and other preservers of unexamined truth to further eliminate dialogue. The theological text has been converted into the rigid curriculum that we have been warned about: a voiceless, breathless prescription for a code of behavior to reach nirvana, perfection, salvation, and eschatological bliss espoused by those who would propose their religion as the curriculum in an appeal to a premodern world. . . . The model of the theological text as a religious curriculum must be inverted if it is to be appropriate for the postmodern era.³⁶

I truly believe the U.S. Catholic Bishops have the best interest of the students and Church in mind. I also believe they have examined the theological texts and entered into that crucial dialogue with their associates. I believe they have made meaning for themselves from the theological texts they present and have chosen to act on those texts, their lifestyles an obvious commitment to the Gospel. Unfortunately, the U.S. Catholic Bishops believe that their word through the use of their Framework can suffice for meaning-making for all. They have forgotten the joy and discovery in that dialogue. If “theological text” is seen as springing from the “Word” or Logos, long taken as a way of expressing God-present in the unfolding of God’s revelation around us, along with the word spoken and alive within the community of students sharing in proleptic dialogue with the full Church and communion of saints, then not only is there learning within religious tradition; there is identity-building within the students and meaning making which will produce the type of religious citizens which is the aim of the bishops. The Bishops have articulated that they designed this Framework “to help those same young people develop the

³⁵Ibid., 94.

³⁶Ibid., 104.

necessary skills to answer or address the real questions that they will face in life and in their Catholic faith.”³⁷

Mary Grey, in her *The Outrageous Pursuit of Hope: Proleptic Dreams for the Twenty-first Century*, offers her readers hope centered in the part with a renewed look at the Spirit. Christians, who profess a Trinitarian God, see this Spirit as a reflection of the third person of the Holy Trinity. She thinks that there has been a real neglect of the Holy Spirit and a focus on Christocentrism. The maleness of the person of Jesus has been used to standardize many patriarchal systems and she questions whether we have put too much emphasis on Christ. The Framework includes six of eight classes presented to our high school students on the nature of Jesus. Postmodern culture equates negative perceptions of patriarchal hegemony and what Dorothee Sölle calls Christofascism or Church support of repressive regimes and the exaggerated rationalism of the West with all that is Church. Gray asks whether we can find a new language of the Spirit to speak to our postmodern world. I think this can become the space where our students can engage in real dialogue with the Church. The Catholic school classroom can be the place where they can use “a language of connection which respects difference, and is based on a renewed, more modest universalism, without reproducing the old dominant, hegemonic language, suppressing difference, forcing unity where none could coexist with justice.”³⁸

Educational institutions must address the despair and hopelessness of this generation. The Church has even referred to a “culture of death” as found within the U.S., a cul-

³⁷USCCB, *Doctrinal Elements*, 1.

³⁸Mary C. Grey, *The Outrageous Pursuit of Hope: Prophetic Dreams for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 2000), 62.

ture of selfishness, commercialism, isolation. The “culture of life” proposed by the Church is a philosophy that human life, at all stages from conception through to natural death, is sacred. As such, a “culture of life” is claimed to be opposed to practices seen by its proponents as destructive of human life, often including embryonic stem cell research, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, greed, selfishness, poverty and war. The expression owes its origins to Pope John Paul II, who first used it in a tour of the United States in 1993. Speaking to journalists at Stapleton International Airport near Denver, Colorado, the Pope denounced abortion and euthanasia, stating that “The culture of life means respect for nature and protection of God’s work of creation.”

Grey reminds us that as read in Genesis 1:1, God’s spirit hovered over the water. “The creative power of the Spirit at the dawn of creation, breathing life into all creatures, is a fundamental trajectory of the Spirit faith traditions.” And that “the intuition of Spirit as energy of connection acquires a new dimension by intermeshing of God’s Spirit and the human spirit.” Psalm 51 reads “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new right spirit within me.”³⁹ She adds, “The Spirit is watchful for the moment where the crack in the discourses of violence appear, where humanity at last admits vulnerability in having no answers, and commits itself at last to a different kind of listening.”⁴⁰ It may be that the Church and the world at large stands to benefit from listening to our young people speak into the culture of death a new language of hope.

³⁹Ibid., 67.

⁴⁰Ibid., 73.

Our students are raised with too much information and not enough explanation and deliberation. They need to learn and practice community participation. Any discouraging of theological self-reflection is counter to the needs of the students. Strict adherence to canonicity and formal catechesis actually reinforces cultural and individual isolation that the students may find intellectually comfortable but ultimately disturbing. I see students who study the doctrines of the Church saying, basically, I will reproduce this information for a test, but I am not going to think about it unless forced to do so. They also see a dogmatic church as a stultifying set of regulations. They basically say if this is the Church, I am not part of this Church. Grey believes prophetic dreaming is specifically what keeps hope alive. “Prophetic imagination or prophetic dreaming is what stimulates diverse groups forming society into becoming a culture of life, a biophilic, life-loving culture, to use an ecological term. It is also an authentic dimension of being and becoming church.”⁴¹

Slattery’s vision for postmodern curriculum calls for community cooperation, a holistic rather than reductionist processing of educational content permeated with a theological milieu, and a “multilayered interdisciplinary curriculum that appropriately integrates theology into every dimension of the educational process.”⁴² He is not advocating this for students in religious schools but for all students in all schools. Within the religious classroom and religious schoolhouse it becomes a responsibility to engage his vision. Proleptic eschatology helps replace both the modern sense of time and also the

⁴¹Ibid., 41.

⁴²Slattery, *Curriculum Development*, 109.

modern view of a directional progress. Engaging proleptic eschatology will be a way to align Catholic theological virtues and a curricular mindset acceptable to our student. The notion of theology permeating all disciplines is already being articulated by the hierarchy as they toss around the notion of “Catholicity.” Proleptic eschatology is the opening that allows for the students to engage all that they are taught within varying disciplines and bring their prophetic imagination, hopefully informed by the Gospel of Jesus, to a depressed, fear-filled disjointed world and, at the same time, practice community dialogue and meaning-making.

Slattery proposes a reflective environment in schools encouraging flexibility, ecumenism, critical thinking, narrative inquiry, visits to museums and nature trails, dialogue with grandparents, multicultural professionals, community activists, politicians, health and social service professionals, and religious leaders. He states “the quality of reverent relationships will replace the quantity of correct answers on tests as the focus of education.”⁴³ Relationships are key to community building, a skill sorely lacking in our present young people, and are directly addressed in Catholic educational documents. “Those virtues—faith, humility (piety), charity, self-denial, and friendship—tend to be both social virtues and those that sustain genuine communities.”⁴⁴ Slattery also calls on active community involvement in environmental, health and social services, and ethnic preservation. He hopes to see the borders between community and school dissolve. The Catholic school already tries to take measures to ensure community involvement. Com-

⁴³Ibid., 110.

⁴⁴Ibid., 111.

munity service has become the norm in Catholic schools and Church based catechetical classes. Most of the extra-curricular clubs at the high school in which I teach are purely service based clubs. Those with a more personal focus like book club and the language clubs, all choose to do some type of related service project.

Lastly, it is only through participation in postmodern teaching techniques that we will be able to meet the mandates in the authoritative documents of the Church. There is no other way to meet the 1929 assertion of *Rappresentanti in Terra* which demands active participation of the students. It will be impossible to get children “eager to attend their catechism classes” or to fulfill the mandate “the most successful and tried means should be employed” as called for in *Provido Sane Consilio*, or teach “the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their age and circumstances and provide spiritual aid in every way the times and conditions allow” as dictated in *Gravissimum Educationis*. The 1988 Vatican publication *The Religious Dimensions in a Catholic School* insists we understand the “religious questioning of young people today” We cannot “respond to the questions which come from the restless and critical minds of the young” if we do not provide a safe space for them to formulate and engage those questions.

Catholic educators are already practicing many of the principles found in the postmodern curriculum. We need to assert to the Bishops that these techniques work and are answering what previous documents have demanded. The Bishops must be willing to let go of their desire to control the students and model with confidence the teachings and values of the Gospel. Catholic classrooms willing to tap into “the trajectories of the Spirit

within Jewish and Christian traditions as a resource” will be allowing God, or her Spirit to take over our classrooms, our imagination, the culture and ourselves.

Conclusion

Chapter IV has looked at the corporate construction of childhood as presented by Shirley Steinberg and Joe Kincheloe and determined that our students live in an overly regulated world, saturated with information coming to them through the internet, television, and movies. These children receive much more information than previous generations of children. They feel in many ways superior to adults because they have access to so much information and are technologically more adept than adults. Unfortunately, they receive this information without the resources to process it. Our children live in a much more isolated way than we did. There is not as much access to parents or guardians who work outside the home, nor a larger community responsible to nurture them. They have become a generation who live in fear and hopelessness.

Postmodern curriculum has been developed from postmodern philosophy and may address some of the tension in the lives of our students. Postmodern curriculum prepares children in classrooms which feature the student as the directors of their own studies. These classrooms help students make meaning from the content presented by helping students dialogue by examining every facet of the content, from its history and connection to politics to the way it has been used to shape the present society. Everything in the postmodern classroom is up for examination and challenge. Because the students are not simply required to memorize a string of disconnected facts, their engagement deepens and meaning-making takes place.

The Roman Catholic Church is opposed to any notion of postmodernity. It would certainly not entertain curriculum based on this seemingly freewheeling preoccupation with the challenge of authority. The Catholic Church equates postmodern philosophy with relativism, which it sees as capricious, groundless, self centered and self serving.

Professor of Curriculum Development and Philosophy of Education, Patrick Slattery and theologian Mary C. Grey offer ways of bringing dialogue between postmodern culture and a fear of relativism. Slattery offers his vision of proleptic eschatology, a vision which suspends time inviting us to realize a hope-filled future in the experiences and dialogue of today. He asks that we reject the educational lie that there are things that must be learned for some time in the future. Instead, he calls educators to a way of engaging students with the beauty and mystery of the content in the here and now for the purpose of engendering imagination. Imagination can bring our depressed students the hopefulness needed to build a better world. In the context of religion students, they can use prophetic imagination to build a world aligned with God's vision for the kingdom as expressed in the Lord's Prayer.

Mary Grey asks us to make room for the Spirit of God. She reminds us that Christians have been Christocentric for so long that many see the hegemonic problems prevalent throughout world history supported by the Christian Church. When we engage the creative Spirit of God in our classrooms, we relinquish control and allow God to nourish the students. We make a space for imagination and playfulness which may be the prescription needed for those oppressed by control and fear.

I believe the postmodern classroom is the only way to be faithful to the documents of the Church which direct Catholic education. I also see it as the best way to reach postmodern youth who balk at any type of imposed authority. I, like Cardinal Martini, think this may be a good time for Christianity to show its ability to make sense of the world around us and offer a way to live authentically and collectively. I believe if the students are given space to dialogue with the Church, they will come to choose God's influence on their identity and be empowered to engage in prophetic imagination and the production of a world much closer to the one God envisions.

CHAPTER V

LOOKING FOR LOVE

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.¹

Introduction

In this culminating chapter, I review what was said in chapters one through four and then explore some of the concepts that seemed to be preferred in the coursework offered in the Bishop's Framework and others that seem to have been neglected. I also call attention to deliberate language choice made by the Bishops. I concede this document is a curriculum framework and not a complete curriculum or working text, but I hope to call attention to that which the Bishops see as the primary point they wish to impress on the students. I will discuss the necessity by Roman Catholic Canon Law that every U.S. diocese, that is the territory or churches subject to the jurisdiction of a bishop, follows this Framework. Lastly I will offer a few suggestions based on the writings of David Purpel and Pope John XXIII's opening address to the second Vatican Council to the bishops for their consideration before final implementation of this Framework.

¹*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 25.

Review of Chapters I through IV

Chapter I of this study began with a twelve year timeline approaching the publication of the 2008 Framework. It shared the concern the U.S. Catholic bishops expressed about the state of the textbooks available and their fear that the courses offered in Catholic school were becoming relativistic. Most Reverend Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B., D.D., archbishop of Indianapolis and chairman of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, said, "While these series often treat certain doctrinal themes quite well, we have noted a relatively consistent trend of doctrinal incompleteness and imprecision. I am convinced that the doctrinal incompleteness is due to the prevailing cultural principle of primacy of plausibility." He attributed our postmodern culture's desire not to offend or exclude as cause of the deficiencies in the resources along with deficiencies in preaching and liturgy. "The primacy of plausibility must be overshadowed by our deep commitment to proclaim the fullness of the truth in season and out of season."²

It next put the publication of the Framework in the context of the history of Catholic education and curriculum. Throughout the history of the Catholic Church in the United States, the hierarchy had much more pressing problems than the state of the individual classroom and did not become involved in the day to day practice of Catholic education. I described the work found in *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, published in 1993. This set of investigations spanning almost ten years of research, is an in-depth

²This article appeared in the Sept. 18 Criterion, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, IN. Most Rev. Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B., D.D. is the Archbishop of Indianapolis. Available online at: http://realliferadio.consultmq.com/files/realliferadio/jim20_-_Plausibility,_Buechlein,_Archbishop,_Whole.pdf.

study of post-Vatican II Catholic high schools. Researchers Anthony Bryk, Valarie Lee and Peter Holland found the religious education in post-Vatican II field sample schools to be grounded in the developmental process and to be effectively encouraging students to freely choose the faith.

Chapter I also expressed my concern with a swing back to a pre-Vatican II mentality which expects students “to learn,” and unconditionally accept, the mind of the Church. I can only see this type of curriculum fostering two different responses in students. The first is fundamentalism, which will produce rigid Catholics who will not be able to answer the questions of challenge that come from an ever changing postmodern society, as well as undermine all the work already begun in terms of dialogue and cooperation with our brothers and sisters of differing faith traditions. The other response is disengagement. Our sophisticated young people could come to see the Church as a useless, backward, superstitious entity that has no place in their world. If these students are never introduced to the documents of Vatican II, which specifically sought ways to engage the world and offer hope in times of hopelessness, we as Catholic educators will have failed our charges. The students, who are hungry for an outlet for their spirituality, will be left unfed.

Chapter II detailed both the introductory comments and the individual courses that comprise the Framework produced by the U.S. Catholic bishops. The bishops included Challenge questions at the end of each course because the bishops fear our Catholic students are incapable of articulating their faith. I included all the Challenge questions to indicate what the Bishops valued to be the most important ideas in the classes, to indi-

cate their language choice, and to show the fear the bishops have of losing control of the flavor and direction of the Catholicism as expressed in the United States.

I presented the sociological data published by both the Gallup organization and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate of Georgetown University along with trends discussed in *American Catholic Laity in a Changing Church* and *Laity: American and Catholic Transforming the Church* which indicate that Roman Catholics do not believe they must blindly follow the directives of the hierarchy and do not express their faith the way the hierarchy would like. I believe this data is the cause for the writing of the Framework. I think it has caused fear in the hierarchy and the feeling that they are losing control. The Framework is their way of reining in the U.S. public. Controlling the education of the high school students, they hope to produce the pre-Vatican II people which will make them comfortable.

The chapter then presents the similarity between the Framework as published in 2008 and the textbook series *Our Quest for Happiness*, the most popular series published before the Second Vatican Council and *The Baltimore Catechism*, a highly structured series of questions and answers students were expected to memorize and recite, again used in the context of Catholic education before the Second Vatican Council. This blatant use of the antiquated texts is the hierarchy's way of reaching back in time. The use of the Baltimore Catechism for the challenge questions asks young people to memorize and not engage with material. The lack of imagination keeps control in the hands of the hierarchy.

This will backfire on the hierarchy. Catholic school students strive for outstanding GPAs, they understand their need to take AP classes and pack in multiple extra-curricular

activities in order to get into the best colleges. Their teachers, in all subject areas, hold masters degrees and teach classes which continually draw students to deeper more engaging levels. Already religion classes, generally of the same rigor but not given the honors or AP level credit in their calculated averages, lower their GPA and cause resentment among the best and brightest. Class taught as if it were 1950 will become a laughingstock.

Chapter III critiqued the Framework from the context of that which is accepted as the triune authority within the Catholic Church, Holy Scripture, Tradition, or the lived experience of the Church passed from one generation to the next, and Magisterium, or the Church's teaching authority. I felt this was the ideal criterion for a critique because the Church believes the whole deposit of faith is protected by Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium. I found, with regard to Tradition, that the U.S. Catholic hierarchy had little concern about the day to day activities of classroom teachers. Teaching orders of religious women and men took over this responsibility and did so at very little cost to the Church. The hierarchy directed classroom educational practice once in the history of Catholic education in the U.S. They produced the first edition of the Baltimore Catechism as a guideline for teaching the doctrine of the faith. It was immediately rejected by both theologians and classroom educators and revised versions were subsequently published and used in its place.

I found the magisterial teachings of the universal and local Church to be forward thinking. Many beautifully written documents addressed varying problems and attitudes. They encourage teachers to use the most updated techniques and to find ways to encour-

age students to come to and enjoy class on faith matters. They enjoin teachers to listen to the questions of students and to make time to learn and engage secular culture within the classroom experience. They encourage imagination. It seems the bishops have violated both the letter and spirit of these documents.

Scripturally, using prophetic imagination as understood through the writings of Walter Brueggemann, I found it was important for students to mourn over the problems facing their world, create their own images and symbols to express their feelings and invoke a God who freely works within the world. This Framework fails to point out the snares that seem to be slowly sucking the life and hope from this generation. It fails to create the space for students to engage in creative ways to meet their culture head on and it does not speak of hopefulness or community outside of discussion of the mind of the Church.

From the perspective of Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium, I found the Framework negligent. I find that the Tradition indicated educational practices should be left in the hands of professional educators. Educators, as indicated by Fr. William O'Malley, were not included in its preparation. I also found that the Framework, with its vision in the past, violates all the mandates of the magisterial teachings. I cannot imagine this document would receive consent from Rome. And lastly, I found no reference in the Framework to the Church as hope-filled or to have prophetic voice. Whether the bishops like the direction the documents and character of Vatican II has taken the world, those documents were produced by the full body of the Church and are of the highest authority. Their fear may have blinded them to this fact.

Chapter IV critiqued the Framework from a pedagogical perspective. It first addressed the life experiences and childhood construction of the students. Based on the work of Shirley Steinberg and Joe Kincheloe and their description of the postmodern student, I determined the Framework gave no attention to the students' perspective. I also examined postmodern pedagogical techniques which seem better suited to the postmodern students than apologetics. After discussing how the Roman Catholic Church would never accept anything labeled as postmodern because she believes postmodern philosophy preaches capricious relativity, I offered the proleptic eschatology of Patrick Slattery and hopeful prophetic theology of Mary Grey as a common space for dialogue.

Slattery offers a vision of education where time is suspended and the future is reality within the experiences of the past and workings in the present. He believes the present gives rise to the future so that everything done in the present must be seen as relevant for the students and purposeful for the production of a worldview consistent with the Gospel of Jesus. The Church cannot deny this vision because it is within this proleptic space that the sacrament, Eucharist, the source and summit of the faith, is celebrated and nourishes the community. Surely the Church would not deny her young people this educational nourishment. Grey offers hope through the prophetic imagination engendered through study of the Holy Spirit. Catholic students studying the Spirit can be invited to envision their own situations brought closer to the image of God Kingdom on Earth. Given this opportunity students are able to stay well in the dogmatic confines of the faith and participate in meaningful postmodern curricular technique.

The True Value Expressed by the Bishops

The Introduction to the Framework, page one of the Bishops' writings, not only describes the goals of their work but the course construction and preferred teaching approach. Traditionally, each Catholic document begins with a piece of scripture which sets the tone. The Framework begins, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete," from the Gospel of John 15:11. I think this does set the tone. The Bishops are "telling" the students. They are not inviting, serving, or engaging the students. They are telling them so that their joy may be deposited in the students. It is wonderful that the bishops desire joy for the students, but it seems they have forgotten how joy blooms and is nourished. Without playful exploration there is nothing joyful about lectures on doctrine and dogma.

Love

Love as the prominent guiding value of Christian education has not received as much attention as I would have expected. Though I counted the word love thirty-six times on the pages describing the first six mandatory courses outlined in the Framework, only two of these courses *Who Is Jesus?* and *The Mission of Jesus Christ, the Paschal Mystery* focused on the centrality, beauty, and unconditional love of God. The bishop's brief one page introductory statement makes no reference to love. The first course, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture*, makes one reference to love in the introduction. "Students will pay particular attention to the Gospels, where they may grow to know and love Jesus Christ more personally." Nowhere in the following course description do we find any reference to love of Jesus or love of God. Most mentions of love within the

courses required for students are mandates for Christians to love God or their neighbor. I find it particularly disturbing that in the course on sacraments that there is no mention of love in the context of the celebration of Eucharist, the action which the Catechism calls “a sacrament of love”³ and “the sum and summary of our faith.”⁴

In the five elective courses, of which only two chosen by the Bishop or his representative will be taught, the notion of love is also neglected. The first possible elective, on *Sacred Scripture*, mentions love as the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit under St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, but does not elaborate. The second offering on the *History of the Catholic Church* has no mention of love. This blatant contradiction of the second and third courses of the Framework, which explain how *Jesus Christ Teaches Us About Ourselves* and the *Moral Implications in the Life of a Believer*, implies that either the lived history of the Church, whose mission it is to build the kingdom of God on earth, is not an example of Christian love, or that the manifestation of love is not an important focus. The third elective, *Living as a Disciple of Jesus Christ in Society*, the course offering closest to what we now offer as a social justice course, mentions love under the teaching of the fifth and ninth commandments, You shall not kill and You shall not covet what belongs to your neighbor but not as a guiding influence for all the course teaches. The fourth optional course, *Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ*, a Christian lifestyles course, mentions love in context of our call to love God, and under marriage. Love is not mentioned under the sacrament of Holy Orders or reference to consecrated life. The last optional

³*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1323.

⁴*Ibid.*, 1327.

class, *Ecumenical and Interreligious Issues*, which one would think should address our loving cooperation with other faith traditions to solve the problems in this world does not mention love.

It seems to me that reminding students of God's love for them and invitation into the Church should be central, as the quote from the Catechism of the Catholic Church at the beginning of this chapter indicates. Love should appear in every course. It is fortunate that we see a healthy dose of love in one class of the student's freshmen and one class of student's sophomore experience, but I cannot image teaching the sacrament of Holy Orders without a reference to love and service. No reference to love in the history class seems to imply that Christians do not practice what they preach, and a lack of reference in the course on ecumenism makes me wonder why we even offer a course in ecumenism.

I was equally surprised that there is only cursory reference to the Holy Spirit, third person of the Trinity, in the first six mandatory courses. The most detailed reference comes in course four on the nature of the Church. The Holy Spirit is credited with establishing the Church. This same reference to the establishment of the Church is seen in the optional classes on the history of the Church and ecumenism. There is no mention of her creativity and no mention of Spirit with any pronoun other than those implying male characteristics, and no mention of the Spirit at work in the world. It is odd that the work of the Spirit, whose job it is to be presently at work in the world is not brought up with the students.

The Role of the Magisterium

It should be no surprise that the preferred material of study is the authority of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. I found that the curriculum contained definitive reference to the teaching authority of the pope and bishops at least once in each of four of the six mandatory classes and in three of the five optional classes. More than one tenth of the material presented in course four, *Jesus Christ's Mission Continues in the Church* explains the teaching office in the Church: the Magisterium. The coursework includes the teaching role of the pope and bishops, their indefectibility and infallibility, the law of the Church, the role of the bishops and priests as the sanctifying office of the Church, and the Magisterium as the governing office of the Church.

The Bishops say in the one page of opening remarks,

The Christological centrality of this framework is designed to form the content of instruction as well as to be a vehicle for growth in one's relationship with the Lord so that each may come to know him and live according to the truth he has given us. In this way, disciples not only participate more deeply in the life of the Church but are also better able to reach eternal life with God in Heaven.

It becomes clear that the point of their high school religious study is to assure students will participate in the life of the Church, the way the hierarchy envisions their role in the Church, and ultimately reach their heavenly goal of salvation. The Framework reads, "Belonging to the Church is essential."⁵ There is no invitation.

Additionally throughout this Framework the bishops have chosen male language. They use this gender specific language when referring to God in all three persons of the

⁵USCCB, *Doctrinal Elements*, 18.

Blessed Trinity and in referring to students. This purposeful choice is hurtful. It is in direct contradiction to the U.S. Catholic universities which sponsor schools of theology. Most departments of theology have written statements forbidding this purposeful gender specific language. John Paul II used references to women in statements to all people. This language choice, mentioned at the November 2003 annual meeting of the USCCB by members of the Standing Committee on Catechesis, seems to be a way the Bishops are asserting their authority and reacting to those who favor women's ordination.

Recommendation to the Bishops

The work done at the yearly U.S. Catholic Bishops meetings, where this Framework was approved, does not hold magisterial authority unless the work is submitted to the Vatican and receives a *recognitio* or formal Vatican approval. Although perfect acceptance by all bishops does imply its acceptance, application for *recognitio* has not been made. It is my understanding that an individual bishop could see this document, without *recognitio*, as a suggested guideline instead of an educational mandate. Before forcing the hand of every U.S. vicar of education⁶ and diocesan director of religious education⁷ to strictly follow this document, I would humbly ask each bishop to reread all the magisterial documents and then consider convening his own educational committee to discuss the issues raised in this study. I would ask that he look at the Framework from the vantage point of students and not with the eyes of fear.

⁶ that is, the priest in charge of education in a particular diocese.

⁷ generally a professional educator responsible to the vicar working with the superintendent of schools for the development of religious education programs.

Dr. David Purpel, in his introduction to *Moral Outrage in Education* sums up the goals for education on which he has based his career. They include, to frame education as a moral, cultural, and social endeavor, and to convince others to do likewise, to reduce unnecessary human suffering, to speak to the limits of critical rationality as a mode of human liberation, to affirm a moral credo that informs and energizes educational policies and practices, to advocate a moral credo that affirms the dignity of each person and the preciousness of life that emerges from a dedication to a just and loving community, to speak out against the cruelty and injustice of hierarchy and competition, to integrate this vision with a sense of awe and mystery of the universe.⁸ I cannot imagine better goals.

If the Framework simply included, alongside dogmatic presentation, guided debate on the reason for the needs of limits on rationality, constructive ways to affirm the dignity of every person and the preciousness of life, examination of the problems associated with competition and hegemony, ways to create just and loving communities as well as ways to support the environment, it would engage students, invite them into an active role in the Church, and give them hope to build the kingdom as they, through the sacrament of Confirmation, have been anointed to do. If the Framework enjoined active participation in kingdom building through classroom activity, the students would not only come to see their Church as an active participant in formation of a better world but could participate today in the hope-filled activities that shape tomorrow.

Pope John XXIII in his opening address of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962 said,

⁸Purpel, *Moral Outrage*, 3.

In the daily exercise of Our⁹ pastoral office, it sometimes happens that we hear certain opinions which disturb Us – opinions expressed by people who, though fired with a commendable zeal for religion, are lacking in sufficient prudence and judgment in their evaluation of events. They can see nothing but calamity and disaster in the present state of the world. They say over and over that this modern age of ours, in comparison with past ages, is definitely deteriorating. One would think from their attitude that history, that great teacher of life, had taught them nothing. ... We feel we must disagree with these prophets of doom, who are always forecasting worse disasters, as though the end of the world were at hand. Present indications are that the human family is on the threshold of a new era. We must recognize here the hand of God, who, as the years roll by, is ever directing men's efforts, whether they realize it or not, towards the fulfillment of the inscrutable designs of His providence, wisely arranging everything, even adverse human fortune, for the Church's good.

And on transmitting the truth, he added

And our duty is not just to guard this treasure, as though it were some museum-piece and we the curators, but earnestly and fearlessly to dedicate ourselves to the work that needs to be done in this modern age of ours, pursuing the path which the Church has followed almost twenty centuries.¹⁰

Though these words were spoken over forty years ago, they need to be spoken again. The U.S. Catholic bishops are reacting to the prophets of doom instead of a confident understanding of the Spirit of God. How can they be taken seriously by our postmodern youth, or sophisticated adult population, if they do not act out of the conviction which they teach? They need to show by example, their joy and love in reaction to the people of God, the Church, trust in the wisdom of the Gospel message, and faith that God is present in our midst.

⁹Pope John XXIII uses the royal plural.

¹⁰Full text of the opening remarks are available at <http://www.ourladywarriors.org/teach/v2open.htm>.

Conclusion

Originally trained in the sciences, I have specifically worked during my adult life to acquire the credentials necessary to teach in the department of theology in Catholic schools because I cannot imagine an education to be complete if presented outside a moral context. I cannot imagine education that does not prepare one to assist others and tackle the problems of this world without reference to the notion that all life is precious. I cannot do that without reference to the fact that all people are made in the image and likeness of God. Raised within the Roman Catholic Church, I am most comfortable with the vocabulary and images the Church uses to express the Divine. With that said, I believe my place is teaching the best expression of the revelation of God that I can offer my students and that place is within the Roman Catholic school system. I love the Church and know she is so much more than is offered within the Framework. I will teach what is assigned to me because I still believe this is better than no education in the faith, and will work to include exercises that may make the lessons more palatable. I will, however, continue to express my displeasure with the Framework as offered, without fear because, as noted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and canon law

In accord with the knowledge, competence, and preeminence which they possess, [lay people] have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church, and they have a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful, with due regard to the integrity of faith and morals and reverence toward their pastors, and with consideration for the common good and dignity of persons.¹¹

¹¹*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 907.

I know the Holy Spirit enlivens the Church and her ministries, making gentle correction when necessary, despite any efforts on the part of the faithful. As She continues to support a school system which long ago should have fallen apart in the wake of rising financial troubles, She will correct and enliven the education ministry. I know that all that is necessary to prepare our postmodern students to take leadership roles in the Church and broader society will be afforded them whether or not these directives come through the Catholic high school classroom.

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