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EDITORIAL

Religious Education for transformation

For some years now there has been a steady stream of literature that discusses education as or for transformation. This could be a reactive response to the attention that has been given to cognitive learning in all areas of the curriculum, something that became intensified with the introduction of outcomes based learning. In such a system, an holistic approach to education did not seem possible. Despite the writings and debates about the problems of outcomes based learning which tended to revolve around the fact that such a system disregarded individual needs and characteristics since it attempted to standardise the learning outcomes, as well as the fact that it was driven by a strong cognitive emphasis which did not address the ‘whole child’, outcomes based education settled in and has lasted the distance for nearly twenty years.

A related factor that was of concern to many religious educators through the nineties was that outcomes based learning also intruded into this discipline so that the religious education guidelines for many dioceses indicated that they had adopted an ‘educational’ approach, that is, the classroom program focused strictly on cognitive learning and experiential learning related to ‘faith’ or ‘spiritual’ activities were restricted to non-classroom activities. Likewise, the textbook based curriculum in the Melbourne Archdiocese asserted that it was knowledge and skills based – deriving from a version of Bloom’s taxonomy, and the expected outcomes were a future generation of Catholic students who were knowledgeable about their faith tradition.

It is not surprising that many educators have anticipated other outcomes arising from this curriculum since it addressed the intellectual abilities of the student but largely ignored the emotional and spiritual elements. One consequence has been the move to recognize that learning should happen at both the outer and inner levels of a student’s life in order for it to be transformative and slowly, this is gathering force.

Given some of the historical aspects of religious education, there has been, amongst some educators, a certain wariness that their teaching activities could be perceived as indoctrination. I recall students in a Master’s class several years ago who challenged me when I claimed that the aim of education was to bring about change. I soon realized that the word ‘change’ had triggered this wariness about indoctrination and I had to use an example from a subject other than religion to explain what it was I was talking about. For instance, I described my role as a music educator was to gain the interest and attention of my music students in my classroom programs so that they would make a commitment to joining the choir or taking part in extracurricular programs. Thereby, my aim was to ‘convert’ them.

Similarly, there may be many religious educators who, through a concern about indoctrination, may be resistant to the notion that religious education should be about transforming the individual and bringing them to new understandings and wisdom which will change their way of being in the world. And yet, this is where, perhaps, all religious educators need to be; to perceive that their work is transformative since education is about transformation; and that a way forward is to develop a religious education curriculum that addresses the intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions of their students’ lives. Only in this way can the educational needs of the ‘whole’ child be attended to. Such an approach is, at once, holistically student centred and, given the nature of religious education which has the additional dimension that aims to nurture the child in a relationship with the Divine, it would seem that religious educators should be leaders in this area. It is, indeed, a positive sign that the curriculum documents in some dioceses are beginning to move in this direction but professional development programs need to be offered to ensure that all teachers develop appropriate understandings to inform their practice.

This issue of the journal then incorporates some of these ideas. The articles contain reflections on the history of an innovative religious education program in Australia which was responsive to the context of the times; the role of parents in nurturing faith; and several discussions of topics in religious education curriculum which explore the breadth of the subject.

Marian de Souza
Editor
The Motor Mission: The Provision of Religious Education for Catholic Children outside Catholic Schools

Abstract:
Drawing extensively on primary source material and supported by the personal recollections of some of those who participated in the scheme, this paper will outline the history of the Motor Mission in Australia with particular reference to the rural and metropolitan Motor Mission in NSW. The significance of the contribution of the Motor Mission to the ministry of Religious Education of Catholic Children beyond Catholic Schools over the past fifty years will be explored.

The Catholic Apostolate known as the Motor Mission is a uniquely Australian response to the need to provide Religious Education to Catholic Children beyond Catholic schools. The unique circumstances of the Catholic Church in the Australian cultural and physical environment called for such a response. The Motor Mission originated from the pastoral response of the clergy and religious ministering to the families in the isolated outback areas of Australia. The name, Motor Mission, was derived from the need in this apostolate for a motor vehicle, as the distances to travel from school to school for weekly lessons, visiting homes and conducting sacramental programs were significant. The activity of the Motor Mission is part of the history of many of the metropolitan and rural dioceses of Australia (Fagan, 1983).

Historical Foundation
The historical roots of the Motor Mission can be found in the nineteenth century in the foundation of the two Australian orders of religious women, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart and the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Mother Mary McKillop was aware of the isolation of Catholic families and their children in small rural communities both in towns and on large outback farming properties. In response to this need, small convents were opened in isolated rural areas with only two or three sisters as the community. This ‘revolutionised religious life’ (Congregational Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph (ASSJ), The Scapular, December 1962/ January 1963, p. 10) and created the environment from which the apostolate of the Motor Mission grew. There are accounts of the vast distances travelled by Mother Mary and the sisters to give religious instruction in places with no Catholic schools and where priests seldom visited. Travelling in a borrowed horse and buggy or by Cobb & Co coach this missionary work engaged the entire family with the sisters attending to the religious instruction of adults and children alike.

The Annals of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan (1857-1938) (Good Samaritan Archives (GSA)) give an account the pastoral journeys of Archbishop Polding in the 1860s and 1870s by horse and buggy to the outlying districts of the Sydney region, including Campbelltown and Wollongong. Archbishop Polding was accompanied on these visits by two sisters to assist him in the work of catechetical instruction to communities where churches were being erected. Classes were formed and both children and adults received instruction and were prepared for the sacraments. The visitations were often extended over a number of weeks with the Sisters finding accommodation in the local presbytery, once again escaping from the norm of ‘enclosure’ of religious life at that time in the Catholic Church. This would allow time for the Sisters to ‘drive out many miles in the bush searching for souls’ (GSA, Annals, 1857-1938). In his letters, Archbishop Polding refers to Mother Mary De Sales Maloney, Sister Mary Angela Carroll, Sister Mary Agnes Hart, Sister Mary Gertrude Byrne and Sister Mary Benedict Lawn as sisters specially chosen by the Archbishop for this work. He gave clear directions on the nature of the catechetical instruction emphasising ‘the necessity of keeping to the words of the simple catechism’ (GSA, Annals, 1857 - 1938).

The Rosary Sisters (Missionary Sisters of Service)
In the 1940s an Australian congregation of religious sisters originally known as the Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady (The Rosary Sisters) was founded by Father John C Wallis, a priest of the Archdiocese of Hobart, Tasmania, Australia. As a young priest in the Archdiocese, Fr Wallis became aware of the needs of people in isolated rural communities. He had a vision, similar to that of Mary McKillop and Archbishop Polding in the 19th century, of a community of women who would go out to those people. Such a mission would be to enable people to deepen their faith and know they were an integral part of the wider Church community and supported in their commitment to their
families (Missionary Sisters of Service, 2004). In 1971, the name of the congregation was changed to the Missionary Sisters of Service. The congregational archives contain an account of the early work

In 1944 Alice Carroll, Joyce O’Brien, Gwen Morse and Kath Moore responded to the vision of a young priest and began a community of religious women in Launceston, Tasmania, Australia. Their rule was simple, allowing for freedom of action necessary for their missionary work. They left convents, drove cars and went into the outback. At a time when religious life was traditional and more restrictive, this community had an Australian pioneering spirit which responded to the needs of the times. (Missionary Sisters of Service, 2004)

The work of the community included the setting up and conducting of correspondence courses for children in remote areas, visiting isolated families and preparing children for the sacraments. The particular focus was the outback areas of Australia where settlements were so remote that the Catholic children did not have access to a Catholic school or in fact to any established schools. For many children all secular education was conducted by correspondence. This was later supplemented by School of the Air. Initially, the sisters called each of their homes Rosary House; because of this, in some places they were called the Rosary Sisters. With a motto of ‘into the highways and byways’, the sisters stayed in Church sacristies and family homes. They eventually obtained, in 1949, a mobile caravan pulled by a utility truck for their outback missions. The caravan was used in Tasmania until 1960. In announcing the commencement of the Motor Mission in the Diocese of Lismore the Diocesan Newspaper, Catholic Life, reports on the works of the Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady in Wilcannia-Forbes by way of comparison with the operation of the Motor Mission in the Diocese of Lismore

From their convents the Sisters set out for various country areas. Having a caravan attached to their car, the Sisters “camp” in the one locality for several weeks. During this time they prepare children for First Communion and instruct converts and older children. When this work is finished they move to another district. Contact is maintained with the children by correspondence lessons sent from their Home Convent. (ASSJ, Catholic Life, March 1960, p. 1)

In 1957, Bishop Martin Fox of Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese, a huge rural diocese that occupies the western half of New South Wales, invited the sisters to establish a mission in the diocese. The response of the community was to send four sisters from Tasmania to the central New South Wales town of Parkes. From there the sisters conducted correspondence courses for the Catholic children living in remote areas and travelled to all areas of the huge diocese to conduct classes for Catholic children and their parents. The Parkes community was the first mainland foundation for the sisters. It represented beginning of the Motor Mission in New South Wales. The work from the Parkes community continued until 1992. In 1969 a sister commenced a solo apostolate in Broken Hill (Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese) a large rural town close to the New South Wales and South Australian border. This work continued until 1983.

The isolation of Catholic children in rural Australia restricted their access to Catholic school education. This has been and will continue to be a challenge for the Catholic Church in Australia. Religion by Correspondence, Summer Camps/Retreats and the travelling Religious Education teachers became significant vehicles for the provision of Religious Education to these isolated Catholic children and their families.

New Challenges in the 1950s

With the rapid growth in the Australian population following the end of Second World War from 1945 into the 1950s, the Catholic Church in Australia was faced with a new challenge for its schools. Post-war migration brought to the cities and large rural centres migrants from a number of central European countries. Many of those migrants were Catholics who had not experienced a Catholic School education system, the like of the system that had flourished in Australia for over eighty years. They had no experience the uniquely Irish/Australian clerical prohibition placed on the parents of children in an attempt to encourage them to send their children to the Catholic schools. The commitment of these parents to the Catholic School system could not be expected. This post war migration together with the rapid increase in the local birth rate (known as ‘the baby boom’) resulted in the number of school age children increasing exponentially in the 1950s. In some areas where Catholic primary schools had been established they were unable to accept the number of Catholic children applying to enrol in the school. At the beginning of the 1960s it was evident that the problem for Catholic secondary education would be even worse. Parents were left little choice but to enrol their children in the local State school. Rapid urban population growth had resulted in an urban sprawl which saw new Parishes established on the outer fringe of the metropolitan dioceses. With the coming of large housing schemes in these areas designed to accommodate the growing population, the Parish Catholic school, if it had been established, was very quickly unable to meet the demands of the local Catholic population, and the majority of Catholic children in such parishes found themselves in the State schools.

It was in this climate of crisis in the mid 1950s, the hierarchy and some of the clergy in Catholic dioceses across Australia realised the necessity of providing for the Religious Education for Catholic children who found themselves, for whatever the reason, to be outside the Catholic School system of education. Once again, as happened in the later half of the 1800s to secure the
establishment of the Catholic School system, many of the Australian Bishops were to call upon the Religious orders to assist in the broadening mission of Catholic Education in their local dioceses. Archbishop Beovich of Adelaide described the call for the establishment of the Motor Mission ministry as one which would set in motion a framework of teaching that would bring faith education to the increasing number of Catholic children who could not be catered for by the overstretched Catholic school network (Trower, 1998, p. 141).

In 1956, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, acting on a request from Archbishop Beovich of Adelaide, established the first Motor Mission in the Adelaide Hills. The historical significance of this first official request from the Catholic hierarchy to establish this apostolate in the 20th century did not escape the Sisters of St Joseph. In their newsletter The Scapular, they wrote:

History has a way of repeating itself and, as in the beginning of the Congregation, South Australia was the setting for the first experiment in this direction, when in 1956 two Sisters and a car set out on the first apostolic journey in the Adelaide foothills, just ninety years after Mother Mary McKillop of the Cross opened her first school at Penola. (ASSJ, The Scapular, December 1962/ January 1963, p.11)

The success of the Adelaide Hills Motor Mission led to the establishment of similar missions in the Archdiocese of Adelaide at Barossa Valley and Peterborough to the north.

The establishment of the Motor Mission in South Australia came to the attention of the Archbishops and Bishops of New South Wales. The pressure experienced by the growth of the Catholic school age population was causing significant problems in the metropolitan Archdiocese and the rural dioceses of the state. In the Archdiocese of Sydney the established work of the Theresians and the Legion of Mary continued in a number of Parishes but was not able to keep up with the rapidly growing number of Catholic children enrolled in State schools. At the Clergy Conference in June 1957, Cardinal Gilroy called for the establishment of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in every Parish of the Archdiocese in accordance with the ordinance 711 from the Code of Canon Law (1917). It was hoped a swift and positive response from the clergy would address the rapidly growing problem for the Archdiocese.

In 1959, following a number of less than successful requests to clergy for a parish based response to teach the Catholic children in State schools of the Archdiocese, the decision was made to invite the Sister of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart to establish a Metropolitan Motor Mission in the Blacktown area of western Sydney. This was the first such Motor Mission in Australia. Following similar invitations to several other religious orders, metropolitan missions were established in 1960 by the Sisters of Charity at Liverpool, south western Sydney, Good Samaritan Sisters at Dee Why, the Northern beaches, and the Sisters of St Joseph at Central Bankstown. The Christian Brothers commenced teaching boys in Secondary schools in all of the established mission areas. In 1958, a new religious order, the Brothers of St Gerard, had been established in Sydney with the express purpose of caring for the Catholic children in State schools.

Sister Vincent Nelson rsc described the establishment of the metropolitan Motor Mission in the Liverpool/Mount Pritchard area of south-western Sydney, in 1960

The first thing was to become familiar with the parish itself, the extent of the parish, where the schools were, the knowledge of the streets, to meet the Principals of the schools and talk over with them the conditions that would apply as far as we were concerned; the days vacant for the actual lessons; also the number of children, the availability of rooms, the times the lessons would be. . . My next work was to meet with the ministers who were also in each school with their religious instruction. (Interview conducted 14 March 1995)

During the early 1960s rural Motor Missions were established in the Diocese of Lismore and the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn. The establishment of the rural Motor Mission in the Snowy River area in the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn, southern NSW, in 1960, is described in the newsletter, The Garland of St Joseph in July 1961.

In January, 1960, a Motor Mission by Volkswagen was undertaken by the Sisters of St Joseph, to give Religious Instruction to Catholic children attending State schools chiefly in the Snowy river area. The scheme embraces three parishes and includes thirteen schools. The distance of these schools from Jindabyne ranges from three miles to one hundred and sixteen miles, totalling an average of 650 miles per week. The Sisters . . . two in Community . . . are stationed in Jindabyne.

Program consists of weekly instruction, of one-hour periods. The classes are divided into two groups . . . Senior and Junior. . . Outside school hours the Sisters undertake an extra hour’s period in each parish during which the children are assisted to memorise the Catechism questions, as set in the Syllabus. These classes are held where most convenient . . . Church . . . Convent . . . Home . . . The parents are most appreciative, and on the whole, cooperative. Other works include . . . visitation of homes, formation of sodalities . . . choirs from the schools. (July, 1961, p. 171)

By the end of 1964, rural Motor Missions had been established in every state of Australia and metropolitan Missions existed in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney.
The work of the Motor Mission involved not only the provision of Religious Education to the Catholic children attending State schools within the State school classroom and timetable; it also involved the visiting of the homes of the families of the children they taught and conducting of additional classes outside of school hours at the State school or on Parish buildings (including Sunday school). The Motor Missioners and lay volunteers transported children to and from the Church for Mass on Sundays and on other occasions and prepared the children for the Sacraments of Initiation. They conducted weekend retreats for upper primary and secondary school students. They supported and trained a growing number of dedicated parish based lay catechists equipping the volunteers for the challenges of the present task and providing them with the skills to assume leadership in the work for the future.

The motor vehicle remained a vital resource in this mission. Sister Vincent Nelson rsc recalled the importance of the motor vehicle in their metropolitan missionary work:

When I was appointed to the work we were given a station wagon. We picked the children up in the outside (sic) where there was difficulty in getting to places and we’d take them to their place of instruction which might have been a church or a hall for instruction and then take them home after the instruction and deliver them to their homes. (Interview conducted 27 March 1995)

For the early Motor Missioners there were many challenges regardless of the context of the mission, metropolitan or rural. Sister Shirley Fagan rjs recalled some of these challenges in an article published in Go-Spread the Good News, the gazette of the Sydney Diocesan Catechist Committee, in June 1983. These included the challenge of the working environment in a State school set up as a visiting teacher and the time constraints of the allocated 30 to 40 minute period a week as against the more liberal provisions of the Catholic school environment to which they were accustomed. Another challenge was the physical demand of travelling significant distances within a limited time in order to keep to the established timetables. Many Motor Missioners found lack of understanding and acceptance of their ministry from some within the church – priests, religious and laity – to be the greatest of all challenges. They were often faced with comments such as ‘You should be back teaching in the Catholic school’ and ‘You’re wasting your time with those children’. The apparent lack of response from some of their pupils and their families added a further challenge to that of the criticism received from those outside the ministry.

Sister Shirley Fagan (1983) then described some of the ‘many sunny and bright moments’ experience by the Motor Missioners. These included the readiness of the children, especially in the primary schools, to absorb all they were given; the openness, frankness and the lack of inhibitions of the pupils and the response of large numbers being prepared for the sacraments of confession, communion and confirmation. Many children received baptism as a result of home visitation by the Motor Missioners and parents were grateful because their children had Religious to care for them (they no longer felt that they were outcasts). Some parents returned to the practice of their faith; and as a result of the home visitations, Motor Missioners were in a position to help not only spiritually but also materially for many Catholic families who were in need.

When asked, in 1995, what were her most lasting memories and impressions from her work as a Motor Missioner, Sister Vincent Nelson rsc reflected:

The lasting impression I had was the love I had for the work, and if it were possible, I would go back on it. It was exacting and took a lot of time. It gave me a great deal of pleasure and I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. I loved being with the children and picking them up. They were very amenable to things and helping. Their parents were helpful in ways they could be and I have no regrets. I worked, I would have worked harder if I could but I loved every minute of it. . . The work has left me with all kinds of memories. . . It has left me with a lot of friends, particularly the catechists. (Interview conducted 27 March 1995)

The Motor Missioners continued to have a direct influence on the provision of Religious Education to Catholic children beyond Catholic schools until the mid–1990s. Other religious orders involved in the Motor Mission in New South Wales and across Australia included the Brothers and Sisters of St Gerard, Sisters of Mercy, Presentation Sisters, Schoenstatt Sisters, Marist Sisters, Sisters of the Society of Mary, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Brigidite Sisters, Missionary Sisters of Service, the Dominicans, and Religious of the Sacred Heart (Fagan, 1983).

The Motor Mission became an important structural element in the establishment of Diocesan/Archdiocesan Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) leadership and management in the 1960s. Initially active as much needed teachers in the local State schools, the Motor Missioners then responded to the increasing need for catechists by recruiting and training lay catechists and finally they supported local parish catechists in roles as regional and diocesan leaders. Motor Missioners provided leadership in all areas of the CCD ministry in the 1970s and 1980s. The work of religious in the CCD in this era involved the provision and development Religious education programs for both the Catholic students in the State schools and the lay volunteers who came forward to assist in the teaching of these children. In the 1990s they prepared the ministry for the transition to lay leadership of the ministry at the regional and diocesan levels. The new era of lay leadership commenced in the middle of the decade with the
appointment, in 1996, of the first lay Director of the CCD in the Archdiocese of Sydney, Mr. Peter Ivers.

References:
Catholic Life, March 1960, Diocese of Lismore, Congregational Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph (ASSJ)

The Annals of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan (1857-1938), Good Samaritan Archives (GSA)

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Nurturing Faith Within the Catholic Home: A Perspective from Catholic Parents who do not Access Catholic Schools

Abstract
Irrespective of years of genuine effort by the Catholic Church in Australia to support parents in their task of nurturing the faith of their children, the area of family catechesis still remains inadequately addressed. This study is the first major Australian qualitative study conducted with parents who do not access the Catholic school. In the Australian context, most studies in the area of faith development and religious education have been conducted with the parents of children who access the Catholic school system. This research provided insight into how Catholic parents who do not send their children to Catholic Schools, nurture the faith of their children within the context of family life. It identified how this particular group of parents nurture the faith of their children and the challenges faced in trying to carry out this responsibility effectively.

Throughout its history, the Catholic Church has regarded the family as the most influential factor in shaping and nurturing the faith of each generation. Church documents such as, Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) 1964; Apostolicam Actuositatem (The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity) 1965; Gravissimum Educationis (The Declaration on Christian Education) 1965; Familiaris Consortio (The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World) 1981; and Christifideles Laici (The Vocation of the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the World) 1989, to name a few, all confirm that parents are the first and primary educators of the faith for their children. These documents affirm parents in their endeavour to nurture the faith of children and shift the responsibility of this duty from solely religious education, which is the instruction of knowledge, to acknowledging that the family is the prime place of catechesis (Catechesi Tradendae 1979, #68).

Irrespective of years of genuine effort by the Catholic Church in Australia to support parents in their task of nurturing the faith of their children, the area of family catechesis still remains inadequately addressed. This became evident in recent research which investigated how Catholic parents, who do not send their children to Catholic schools, nurture the faith of their children within the context of the home.

The Study
This study examined and described how faith is nurtured within the home of contemporary Catholic families who do not access the Catholic school system. The context of the study is the Archdiocese of Perth, Western Australia and the study data collection was conducted between 2001 and 2004. The study focused on both the perceptions of faith as viewed by the participants and how they put their understanding of faith into practice within the context of the home. It enabled a group of parents who do not access the Catholic school system to make noteworthy input to the story of how faith is nurtured within the context of the Catholic home. The study has given voice to a group of parents whom have been largely understudied.

Methodology
The research was qualitative in nature. The target group for the study were parents of primary school aged children who did not access Catholic schools for the education of their children. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling procedure (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The parishes were drawn from two Regional Zones of Priests within the Archdiocese of Perth; a rural zone and a metropolitan zone. A total of eleven Catholic parishes within the Archdiocese of Perth participated in the study; each parish having distinctive demographics. The population was drawn from parents in the target group who attended Church and parents of children in Parish Religious Education Program (PREP), a parish based religious education program for children who do not attend Catholic schools. Thirty-six parents participated in the research.

The primary instrument for gathering data was face–to–face interviews. The interviews were semi–structured (Berg 1998; Rubin and Rubin 1995). The interview data were supported by field notes made through observations (Berg 1998). The study centred on four broad areas: the understanding of faith held by participants; how the participants understanding of faith was put into practice in their home; the challenges faced by parents in their endeavour to nurture the faith of their children and the types of resources participants would find useful in assisting them in their task to nurture the faith within the home. Each participant was interviewed once for about 45 minutes. The interviews were audio taped and then transcribed. To preserve the rich textual
Details collected in the interviews the data were coded and analysed using three coding methods particularly suited to ethnographic research: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Berg 1998; Rubin and Rubin 1995; Strauss 1991; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Transcriptions of the interviews were set up within the qualitative data analysis computer program QRS NUD*IST [Non-numerical, Unstructured Data, Indexing, Searching and Theorizing Tool] (N6). The findings are the results of careful application of the interview method and a detailed, rigorous and transparent analysis of the data collected.

Results and Discussion

The study identified three distinctive understandings of faith. The metaphor of ‘voices’ was used as an analytical tool to describe how each archetype spoke of a specific perception of faith. The three interpretive voices were identified as:

1. The voice of orthodoxy; speaking of a faith that is grounded in traditions with an emphasis on the literal interpretations of doctrines and Church traditions. While Groome (2002, p.178) states that to reflect the wholeness of Christian faith it needs to encompass three aspects: cognitive, affective and behavioural, the understanding of faith by participants who speak with the voice of orthodoxy reflects most strongly a dimension of faith that is intellectual and cognitive.

2. The voice of faith as a lived experience: speaking of a faith that has been constructed by the experiences of both faith and life. The understanding of faith expressed within the voice of faith as a lived experience strongly reflects all three dimension of faith described by Groome – Christian faith as a way of the heart; Christian faith as a way of the hands; Christian faith as engaging the head (2002, pp.178–192).

3. The voice of faith as an active struggle, speaking of a faith that does not have a clear focus in their lives. This group of parents does not reflect strongly any one given dimension of faith described by Groome (2002). This is not to say that parents in this voice do not have faith but it is apparent from the study that parents in this voice are searching to make sense of faith, and of life. The understanding of faith expressed by parents in the voice as an active struggle can be best described as tentative.

These voices were archetypes, or descriptions of distinctive styles. The names of the voices were not meant to be pejorative, critical, or negative. The names chosen were trying to reflect the sense and tone of the conversations and the concerns of participants. This is not to say that all participants fit exclusively into one voice, nor is it claimed that any one participant could be completely described in one or other voices, but it was felt that the archetypes that were these three voices fairly indicate the diversity among participants. The understanding of faith identified in each voice became the basis to describe the link between the understanding of faith held by the parents and the way faith is nurtured within the context of their homes.

Does the understanding of faith of the parents’ impact on the way faith is nurtured within the home?

For this group of Catholic parents, faith is an essential part of family life. In addressing the question does the understanding of faith of parents’ impact on the way faith is nurtured within the home, it became evident that there is a strong association between the understanding of faith of held by parents and the way the parents nurture faith within the context of the home.

A number of nurturing strategies have been implemented within the homes of this group of parents, the most common strategies being: Mass attendance; prayer; reading the Bible; conversations and discussions about faith issues; through witness and example; and attending the Perth Archdiocesan Parish Religious Education Program (PREP). These nurturing strategies reflect the fundamental tasks of catechesis which are: to promote knowledge of the faith, moral formation, and teaching prayer (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, #85–87). The way in which these strategies are implemented, that is, the nurturing style, is what set the three archetypal voices apart.

Teaching Prayer

Parents recognise that the teaching of prayer is one of the fundamental tasks of catechesis within the home (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, #85). Each parent spoke of praying at a time which was best for them. Such times include: meal time, at bed time, in the morning in the car on the way to school.

The main aim for teaching children prayers by parents in the voice of orthodoxy, is that they would know the “practice of piety” of the faith. The focus for these parents is mainly on the traditional prayers of the Church such as the Rosary. They teach their children to pray through memorising and learning prayers by rote. These parents feel that such a task is important in order to preserve the faith tradition. The way these parent approach the teaching of prayers matches the understanding of faith which focuses mainly on a dimension of faith that is intellectual and cognitive.

Parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience prefer a form of prayer that is less structured than that favoured by those in the voice of orthodoxy. Parents encourage personal prayers connected with the happenings of daily life. This is important to this group of parents as this voice believes if faith is to have an impact on life then it needs to be integrated. In the same way, for prayer to have an impact on life it needs to emerge from daily living. A further conviction revealed by parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience in relation to prayer, is the need for children to understand the meaning of prayers. In contrast to the parents in the voice of orthodoxy who teach prayer by
rote, parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience seem to demonstrate sensitivity to the readiness of the child. They are mindful of introducing prayers in ways that make sense to the child and employ strategies which make prayer time more manageable for their children. Parents in the voice of faith as an active struggle speak of the importance of prayer and the desire to pray with their children. However, these parents do not specify the ways they do so. Family prayer is not an active part of the faith life of these parents.

**Liturgical Education**

All parents within the study recognise that participation in the Sunday liturgy is fundamental to the nurturing of faith within the Catholic faith tradition. It was noted that Mass attendance by parents in this study on the basis of self-reporting, is unusually high compared to other studies which explored the development of faith within the home (Morse 1996). One possible explanation for the high rate of Mass attendance reported in this study is that the target group was approached either through a talk in parishes during the Sunday Masses or via their children in PREP classes.

Parents who lean towards orthodoxy view Mass attendance primarily as an obligation. In contrast, parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience view Mass attendance as a strategy to nurture faith growth. The main focus for these parents is the understanding that the Mass is an instrument which can assist in developing a deeper relationship with God. Parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience do not necessarily associate with the notion of faith as duty. They commented that they are aware that the liturgy is not child friendly so they devise ways of keeping children interested. The aim is to make Mass attendance a pleasant experience from a young age with the hope that their children will continue to yearn to attend Mass with the family as they grow older.

Parents in the voice of faith as an active struggle use Mass attendance as a tool through which these parents feel secure that their children are part of a faith community. They rely on Mass attendance as one way in which they introduce their children to the faith tradition.

**Moral Formation**

Moral formation is the third fundamental task of catechesis discussed in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, #85). Parents in this study did not explicitly name moral formation as one of the strategies for nurturing faith within the home. Parents, especially those in voice of orthodoxy, did speak strongly about their duty as parents to inform their children about the teachings of the Catholic Church.

One of the strategies used within the home to raise children’s awareness of what is morally acceptable, is through discussions. For parents in the voice of orthodoxy discussions on faith issues are mostly planned. Parents in this voice initiate discussions in order to educate their children in the teachings of the Church. The main purpose of such discussions is to raise awareness in their children about what is expected of them to live as Catholics. Discussions surround such topics as the Church’s view on: abortion, euthanasia, and contraception. Parents in the voice of orthodoxy introduce their children to Catholic literature and this becomes the basis for discussions.

Parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience also promote discussions within the home as a way in which to make their children aware of what is morally acceptable. Parents in this voice do not initiate discussions in the planned manner that many of the parents in the voice of orthodoxy employ, but rather, discuss faith issues through the events that arise in family life. Many of the parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience use television viewing of their children as a catalyst of raising their children’s awareness of the moral implications presented in the television shows. The main purpose of such discussions is to teach children a sense of what is acceptable in light of the values promoted in the Gospel.

The voice of faith as an active struggle did not speak of conversing with their children about faith issues. These parents seem to give this responsibility to a member of the extended family who they believe “knows” more than they do. These parents believe that they are not equipped to educate their children in Christian morality because they perceive moral formation as knowledge based.

**Promoting Knowledge of the Faith**

In conjunction with prayer and Mass attendance three other strategies are used by parents to promote knowledge of the faith. These are: sharing the faith story, the attendance of PREP and promoting the knowledge of the faith through lived experience.

**Sharing the Faith Story**

Most parents across the three voices speak of sharing the faith story of the faith tradition through Bible stories. Roberto (1992, p.3) claims that “sharing of our Catholic faith story happens when parents share stories from scripture.” The reading of Bible stories are a part of the bed time routine of most homes. Again, what is distinct is the aim for employing the strategy.

Parents in the voice of orthodoxy use the Bible as an avenue through which their children come to know about the faith tradition. The aim is to attain knowledge. A small number of parents in the voice of orthodoxy use this strategy as a tool for meditation and prayer. For parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience, the Bible is a tool through which they share stories with their children. They use Bible stories as they would other bedtime stories, as a form of entertainment and an opportunity in which to bond with their children.
Parents in the voice of faith as an active struggle encourage their children to read Bible stories but there is no evidence that they share in this activity with their children. The researcher suspects that this may be because they are not familiar with the Bible themselves and therefore feel that they are not equipped to instruct their children.

Parish Religious Education Program (PREP)
Roberto (1992) claims that another way parents promote the knowledge of faith is through the participation of catechetical programs within the parish community. Parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience and to some extent in the voice of faith as an active struggle, consider PREP to be a useful strategy in the nurturing of the faith within the home. Parents in these voices lack confidence in their own religious knowledge and therefore, rely on PREP for the education of religious knowledge of their children. The data reveal that PREP is rated highly among the nurturing strategies engaged by parents in both these voices because it gives them a sense of security that their children are learning the correct information about the faith.

In contrast, PREP is not one of the nurturing strategies named by parents in the voice of orthodoxy. Most parents in this voice have opted to take the responsibility for the formal religious education of their children. The avenue for the formal religious education of children is in the home. These parents want a faith education that is Catholic in nature rather than one that may promote only a Christian outlook.

Promoting the Knowledge of the Faith through Lived Experience
One of the most notable findings in the study is the way parents promote the knowledge of the faith through their lived experience. Roberto (1992), reminds parents that "we encounter God in the lived experience and events of everyday life … family life is a privileged locale for encountering God in everyday life experiences” (p.2). It appears that parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience have a greater awareness than those in the voice of orthodoxy and the voice of faith as an active struggle that faith nurturing opportunities can arise spontaneously within the daily events of family life. Parents in this voice maintain that such moments are valuable because they allow the family to discover God within ordinariness of family life. This understanding is at the core of the faith nurturing process within this voice.

The notion of nurturing faith through the spontaneous moments of family life corresponds with methods proposed in a wealth of literature on faith sharing within the family life and with Church documents on catechesis. The General Directory for Catechesis (1997) describes that catechesis within the home is a catechesis which is more witness than teaching, more occasional than systematic, more daily than into structured periods. Nurturing faith through the events of daily life also reflects the notion of Christian witness proposed in Catechesi Tradendae (John Paul II 1979, #68) “families help each to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day–to–day life lived in accordance with the Gospel.” Parents within this voice have an understanding, whether conscious or sub-conscious, that the family is the place in which the Gospel is transmitted by rooting it in the context of profound human values (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, #255).

Furthermore, parents in this voice have a strong commitment to faith as action. This finding is not surprising to the researcher for this strategy further acknowledges this voices understanding that faith is integrated with life experiences. For parents in this voice the call to be a witness of the faith is an important part of the how faith is promoted within family life. These parents have a conviction that in order for their children to understand how faith is integrated with life, parents need to demonstrate this understanding by witnessing faith to their children through actions. The actions of parents are based on Gospel values. This sense of faith witness is very distinct from the understanding held by parents in the voice of orthodoxy. The parents in the voice of orthodoxy would argue that they also witness faith through attending to the formalities of the faith tradition. The study recognises both approaches as valuable strategies for nurturing faith.

What challenges to nurturing faith are faced by parents?
Parents identify a number of challenges to nurturing faith. There is clear evidence that parents who do not access Catholic schools are aware of their role as nurturers of the faith and are doing their best to carry out this responsibility. It may well be that the parents in this study have greater awareness of their role as nurturers of faith because they cannot rely on the Catholic school system for the faith development of their children.

Parent Lack of Confidence
The first challenge parents identified is very personal in that it is a self acknowledgment of the perceived inadequacies they feel in their task of nurturing faith. There is an anxiety among parents, especially among those in the voices of faith as a lived experience and faith as an active struggle, about their own lack of religious knowledge. Because of their own perceived lack of religious knowledge, most parents are clearly not confident in their task of nurturing the faith of their children within the home. Parents associate successful faith development with religious knowledge. The parents in these two voices speak of their dependence on PREP as one of the main avenues for the faith development of their children.

The biggest desire named by these parents is a Catholic school education for their children. This desire stems
from the perception that they themselves lack sufficient religious knowledge. The desire for a Catholic school education is twofold. Firstly, parents hanker for support in strengthening their efforts they are making at home to nurture faith. They believe a Catholic school education can lead their children to an understanding of how to live a faith that is integrated with life, while at the same time their children would also be educated in the knowledge of the faith. The second reason parents desire a Catholic school education is that they long that their children belong to a community in which they are surrounded by like-minded people who value the same moral and spiritual beliefs. Even though most of these parents are regular Church-goers they do not feel part of the parish community because they do not have their children in the Catholic school. These parents feel that they are a marginal group of the faith community.

Societal Influences
Societal influences also are a challenge to nurturing faith within the home. Parents across the three voices are concerned about: the influence peer group pressure exerts on the faith of their children; the strong influence of the media on family life and the demands from outside influences on family life. Even though these may be seen as the fears and concerns named by most parents in society, these parents spoke of the influence these had on nurturing faith of their children within the home (Kelly and De Graaf 1997).

Demands on Family Life
Families live in a busy world and parents feel the pressures of demands placed on the family. The demands on family life that inhibit the nurturing of faith include: sport commitments and other extra curricular activities, and electronic interferences such as the television and the internet. Parents in the three voices all speak of these pressures. What is clear is that parents acknowledge that time is a key ingredient to nurturing faith. They are aware that within family life one of the first matters that can be neglected is the spiritual well being of the family. The pressures of nurturing faith within the demands on life are major issues particularly with parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience. Parents in this group acknowledge that outside stresses placed on family life drag them away from the practices of the faith. They admit that first to be abandoned when life becomes busy are family prayer and Mass attendance. The voice of orthodoxy do not speak of demands that are obstacles to the nurturing of faith within family life as they have scheduled prayer time as part of their daily routine which is not negotiable.

In relation to the influence of the television within family life, parents across the three voices view the influence of television as an impediment to enriching family life. The concerns regarding parents of the power of the media in the moral development of their children are not unfounded. Parents in all voices describe how television has become a priority in the home and the impact television has on communication within family life and prayer life with the household. The major concern of these parents from a faith development point of view is the continual bombardment of values presented to the children that are countercultural to the values endorsed in the Gospels. These same concerns regarding television also pertain to the use of the internet and the accessibility of teenage magazines.

A small group of parents both in the voice of orthodoxy and the voice of faith as a lived experience speak of embracing the television as a means of communicating with their children values and attitudes in the light of Catholic teaching. The purpose by this small of group of parents is to use the media as an educative tool in the moral formation of their children.

The Support of the Church
There is strong opinion among parents in this study that the Parish Church structure is not supporting their efforts to nurture faith within the home. There is a clear perception among parents that the parish structure does not adequately address the faith formation of its faith community. Parents named the desire for the Church structure to address the issue of faith formation in order for parents to be more able and more confident in educating their children in the faith. Furthermore parents, especially those in the voice of faith as lived experience, articulated that from their experience there appears to be a lack of openness to young people in parish communities. These Catholic parents believe that the Parish Church structure does not accept the young as members in their own right as the Church does not actively seek out the young and make them feel welcome.

The growing number of interfaith marriages is a growing phenomenon within the Catholic Church within Australia. A quandary faced by a small group of parents is how to live within two faith traditions. The children feel more welcome in the other faith tradition because these Churches are more responsive to the needs of children and seem to cater for their needs at a more appropriate level. Even though this group represents a minority group, it is significant as it clearly demonstrates the extent that some parents endure to keep their faith tradition alive in their family. This finding has made a contribution to the way some parents try to maintain the Catholic tradition within the home.

What resources do parents desire to assist them in the nurturing of faith within the home?
In addressing the support parents’ desire in assisting them to nurture the faith of their children within the home, many parents are unaware of the Church support structures, even though limited, that are available to them. Some parents shared that they have turned to other Christian faith traditions for support in the nurturing of faith. This search by parents strongly suggests that parents yearn for support in their task of nurturing faith of their children. The concern that is highlighted is that the Catholic Church does not make

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explicit the support it offers or can offer to parents to assist them in their task.

Parents asked for a variety of resources. Parents in the voice of orthodoxy desire resources such as religious publications for the family which are explicitly Catholic in nature. Parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience name an extensive variety of resources which they believe would be helpful in assisting them in nurturing faith. These include two levels of support; the first being materials relevant for parents and children, and the second being support at a parish level. Parents within this group seek such resources as books and pamphlets informing them of contemporary Church teachings; literature on faith development of children; and explanations of formal prayers. The resources parents desire for their children include not only written resources such as modern prayer books, but also up-to-date CDs with interactive activities that lead children to discover aspects of faith knowledge in a way that are fun and are age appropriate. The support parents desire at a parish level. Include such things as adult faith formation; faith sharing groups; and parent support groups. The findings show that the parents in the voice of faith as an active struggle desire resources that can help them in nurturing the faith of their children. Parents in this small group did not specify the types of resources they desired.

Conclusion

Even though the results of this study may contribute to what is already known about the way faith is nurtured, what is unique about this study is that it makes known how these nurturing strategies are operational within the home. Parents have a strong desire to nurture the faith of their children within the context of the home and there appears to be a crisis when it comes to supporting parents in their task. The crisis centres on parishes being slow to promote ongoing faith formation specific to nurturing faith within family life. Such perceptions call for the Church to re-examine the pastoral support it offers parents within parish groups. The General Directory for Catechesis (1997) states, “the Christian community must ... help parents by whatever means works best, to prepare for and assume their responsibility, which is especially delicate today, of educating their children in the faith” (# 226). Therefore, the support of the Church through the parish community is paramount. Bishops and Priests need to confront this crisis as the Church in Western Australia, and indeed Australia, embraces the 3rd millennium. The Church needs to support parents at a parish level by firstly offering opportunities for them to grow in their own understanding of the faith and then to recommend ways of sharing this faith with their children within the home. In light of what emerged through the responses of parents who do not access a Catholic school for the education of their children, it is reasonable to conclude that Catholic parents who do not access the Catholic school system do try to nurture the faith of their children within the home. This task is not an easy one, but one that they take seriously. The challenge is how to support these parents to carry out the task as the first and foremost educators of faith within the context of the home. Support for parents can be assured if the Church recognises the importance of the role of family catechesis and sets up structures with parishes to educate and support parents in their task. This study confirms that despite years of genuine effort made by some sectors of the Church this pastoral and catechetical area still remains inadequately addressed within the context of the Australian Catholic Church.

References


Carmel Suart is a consultant for the Catechist Service Team within the Catholic Education Office of WA. She was co-author of the Catechist Program *The Truth will set you free*. This program is widely used throughout Western Australia as a valuable resource for those teaching parish based religious education. This program has also been adopted by a number of interstate dioceses for their own parish programs.

Currently she is working in the area of family catechesis. She has considerable experience and skill in the area of adult education as well as domains of developing the faith within the family context.

Brendan Hyde identifies four characteristics of children's spirituality: *the felt sense, integrating awareness, weaving the threads of meaning,* and *spiritual questing*. These characteristics can be observed in children if those who work with them know what to look for and are alert to the time, place and space in which children find themselves.

This book provides ways in which schoolteachers and parents can nurture and foster these particular characteristics of children's spirituality. It also considers two factors, material pursuit and trivialising, which may inhibit children's expression of their spirituality.

*Children and Spirituality* will be of great interest to educators, policy makers, parents, and others who work with and seek to nurture the spirituality of children.
From the Vatican to the classroom: Examining intertextuality and alignment among Church, local diocesan and school religious education documents – PART 1

Abstract
This is Part 1 of a paper that examines this subject. “Contemporary educational practice is saturated with texts…” (Freebody, 2003, p. 204) They inform, guide and shape policy, procedures and practices within schools both systemically and locally. Religious education is filled with such texts: Church and diocesan policy documents, curriculum documents and classroom religion programs. But to what extent are these documents aligned with each other? Does the classroom religion program reflect diocesan curriculum documents and policy and in turn, do diocesan policies and curriculum documents authentically translate official Church policy? This presentation demonstrates how an analysis of the crafted language in educational texts can reveal how that text both reflects and constructs a particular reality. What messages are conveyed? Do the documents in fact say what the authors intend? Do they relate to, and support, other relevant documents? Systemic Functional Linguistics is a rigorous analytic tool that affords clear insights into the crafted language of educational texts. As one way of portraying the usefulness of such a tool in gaining insights into how language constructs particular messages, this presentation will exemplify what it reveals about the conveyed experiences and realities among Church, diocesan and school religious education documents.

Introduction
Religious education is central to the Catholic school, both in its educational and religious life dimensions. Essential to a school’s educational dimension is the classroom religion program. However, this document is not an isolated one, which stands alone, owned by a particular school community. It is related to, and ideally reflects, a number of other key policies and documents both from the wider universal Church and local diocese.

Documents refer – however tangentially or at one removed - to other realities and domains. They also refer to other documents… It is important to recognise that, like any system of signs and messages, documents make sense because they have relationships with other documents. (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p. 67)

It is the nature of those relationships with which this paper is concerned. To what extent are diocesan and school documents and policies aligned with Church documents from the Vatican? Ideally there is a relationship in the first instance between Church and diocesan documents, and then secondly between diocesan and school documents. The nature of these relationships is revealed in the crafted language of the documents.

The language of texts provides critical starting points for analysis in terms of how the language functions (Freebody, 2003; Halliday, 1994) in the texts to present a particular document’s reality (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). Text is not an incidental representation of a person’s or persons’ viewpoint/s - the language chosen is intentional. Ball (1994) argues that words are ordered and combined in particular ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded; and that discourses are not only about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority (pp. 21-22). Indeed, Gill (1996) rejects the notion that “language is simply a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world” and argues that discourse has a “central importance in constructing social life” (p. 141). She goes on to suggest, “discourse is involved in establishing one version of the world in the face of competing versions” (p. 143). The version of the world to be established is confined within a particular context and is constructed with specific reader/s in mind (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). It is the particular versions conveyed by religious education policies and documents, within the specific context of the Catholic school, which are of interest to this paper.

In order to understand how language functions to construct particular versions or meanings of religious education, extracts from key Church documents that are significant to religious education, particularly to the classroom religion program are analysed. This analysis affords insights into the nature and purpose of religious education as constructed by the universal Church. Following this analysis and discussion, Part 2 of this topic suggests a process (adapted from the analysis) that could evaluate to what extent diocesan and school documents convey clear and unambiguous messages
and meanings as intended by their authors. In other words, to what extent do Catholic school policies and documents concerning religious education reflect key universal Church policy, and second, to what extent do they convey clear and unambiguous messages to the key stakeholders?

Analysis of Extracts from Church Documents
To facilitate an understanding of how religious education is constructed at the universal Church level, extracts specific to religious education in the Catholic school context, are drawn from the two key Church documents, The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) and the General Directory for Catechesis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997). The analysis of these extracts utilises the analytic method, Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth, SFL). SFL as proposed by Halliday (1975) is a way of analysing text that affords insights into how language functions in crafted texts; it is concerned with how people use language to produce meaning. SFL, with its focus on the function of grammar, affords insights into how the ideational function, which describes the human activity involved, the interpersonal function describing the roles and relationships of the people involved and the tone of the language used, as well as the textual function, are constructed in these documents (Collerson, 1994; Eggins, 1994; Halliday, 1975, 1994; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000).

Freebody (2003) offers a procedure involving working through a set of steps as a means of applying SFL to the analysis of text:
1. Who or what is in it? Who or what are the participants? We start here by looking at the nouns or nominal functions. Who or what are the active or working subjects or objects – the participants – in the text. What kinds of work do they do? What is done to them? This initial step explores how the text builds its field.
2. What gets done? What are the verbal processes that the text shows ‘getting done?’
3. Are some of the ‘doings’ … the processes… shown here as nouns, as things, rather than processes?
4. What participants are shown to act in the text – who does the ‘doings’? In other words, what participants

The above method of analysis is utilised with extracts from The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) and the General Directory for Catechesis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997).

Church Document 1: The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School
The relevant section of the document The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) includes paragraphs 68, 69 and 70 from “Part IV: Religious Instruction in the Classroom and the Religious Dimension Formation”, as outlined in Table 1.

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1 Because of the nature and length of these explorations, this topic is divided into two papers:
- Part 1 analyses the language of the extracts taken from Church documents;
- Part 2 (to be published in a later issue of the Journal of Religious Education) suggests a process that can be implemented to assist in constructing and evaluating the meanings conveyed in local school documents concerned with religious education.
Part IV: Religious Instruction in the Classroom and the Religious Dimension Formation

68. There is a close connection, and at the same time a clear distinction, between religious instruction and catechesis, or the handing on of the Gospel message. The close connection makes it possible for a school to remain a school and still integrate culture with the message of Christianity. The distinction comes from the fact that, unlike religious instruction, catechesis takes place within a community living out its faith at a level of space and time not available to a school: a whole lifetime.

69. The aim of catechesis, or handing on the Gospel message, is maturity: spiritual, liturgical, sacramental and apostolic; this happens most especially in a local church community. The aim of the school, however, is knowledge. While it uses the same elements of the Gospel message, it tries to convey a sense of the nature of Christianity and of how Christians are trying to live their lives. It is evident, of course, that religious instruction cannot help but strengthen the faith of a believing student, just as catechesis cannot help but increase one’s knowledge of the Christian message.

The distinction between religious instruction and catechesis does not change the fact that a school can and must play its specific role in the work of catechesis. Since its educational goals are rooted in Christian principles, the school as a whole is inserted into the evangelical function of the church. It assists in and promotes faith education.

70 Recent Church teaching has added an essential note: ‘The basic principle which must guide us in our commitment to this sensitive area of pastoral activity is that religious instruction and catechesis are at the same time distinct and complementary. A school has as its purpose the students’ integral formation. Religious instruction, therefore, should be integrated into the objectives and criteria which characterise a modern school.’ School directors should keep this directive of the Magisterium in mind, and they should respect the distinctive characteristics of religious instruction. It should have a place in the weekly order alongside the other classes, for example: it should have its own syllabus, approved by those in authority; it should seek appropriate interdisciplinary links with other course material so that there is a coordination between human learning and religious awareness. Like other course work, it should promote culture, and it should make use of the best educational methods available to schools today. In some countries, the results of examinations in religious knowledge are included within the overall measure of student progress.

Finally, religious instruction in the school needs to be coordinated with the catechesis offered in the parishes, in the family, and in youth associations. (pp. 61-63)
A noticeable aspect of these paragraphs is that direct human activity is significantly limited. Of the twenty-two foregrounded agents only one is a human participant, school directors. All other foregrounded agents are abstractions and nominalisations, thus promoting it as formal and authoritative (Collerson, 1994, p. 182) specifically directed to Catholic school educators.

Noting the frequency of the foregrounded agents provides further insights into the specific subject matter of these paragraphs (Freebody, 2003). The key participants in this section of the document, as outlined in Table 3, are the school, including school directors, accounting for 40% of all foregrounded agents; religious instruction for 36%; together accounting for 76% of the total. Catechesis, referred to only 20% of the time, is a minor element of this section.

The prominent elements in these paragraphs are first, the school and school directors and then religious instruction, clearly indicating the focus of these paragraphs is the school in relation to religious instruction. In order to examine this focus more closely the school and school directors’ roles are analysed. What do they do? What is done to them? Table 4 provides an overview of these participants and the processes with which they are associated.
The school’s role is clearly stated in paragraph 69, “The aim of the school, however, is knowledge”. Knowledge, as an assigned attribute to the school’s aim, is significant, because other attributes such as faith development or religious formation were not explicitly assigned. Although the school’s aim was not stated as catechesis, it is however, expected to play its role in catechesis: “A school can and must play its specific role in the work of catechesis.” However, this role is not elaborated in any way.

The statement then went on to expand the school’s goals associating them with the active process, “are rooted in Christian principles”. So in addition to the quality of knowledge, the school’s goals stem from Christian principles. The school is recognised as an arm of the Church by the inclusion of the active process “is inserted” with the circumstances “into the evangelical function of the church”, but its role in faith education is described only as “assists in and promotes faith education”.

School directors’ roles have been acknowledged as critical elements within the work of the school. They are referred to twice in the section and in both instances given agency directly over the work of religious instruction: “School directors should keep this directive of the Magisterium in mind, and they should respect the distinctive characteristics of religious instruction”. The directive of the Magisterium to which this statement refers is that made by Pope John Paul II in 1981: “Religious instruction, therefore, should be integrated into the objectives and criteria which characterise a modern school”\(^4\). School directors are responsible for both integrating religious instruction into the school’s curricula and maintaining it as a distinctive curriculum area. Significantly, they are not charged with any responsibilities related to catechesis.

To understand more fully the nature of religious instruction in schools, its place as a foregrounded agent together with its associated processes and circumstances can be examined as outlined in Table 5.

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\(^4\) Address of John Paul II to the priests of the diocese of Rome, March 5, 1981, *Insegnamenti*, IV/I, pp. 629 f.
Table 5: Religious Instruction’s Associated Processes & Circumstances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>PROCESS TYPE</th>
<th>CIRCUMSTANCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction</td>
<td>cannot help but strengthen</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>the faith of a believing student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction (and catechesis)</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>Relational - identifying</td>
<td>at the same time distinct and complementary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction</td>
<td>should be integrated</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>into the objectives and criteria which characterise a modern school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>should have</td>
<td>Relational – attributive possession</td>
<td>a place in the weekly order alongside the other classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>should have</td>
<td>Relational – attributive possession</td>
<td>its own syllabus, approved by those in authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>should seek</td>
<td>Mental - perceiving</td>
<td>appropriate interdisciplinary links with other course material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>should promote</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (&quot;&quot;&quot;)</td>
<td>should make use</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>of best educational methods available to the schools today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction in the school</td>
<td>needs to be coordinated</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>with the catechesis offered in parishes, in the family, and in youth associations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religious instruction in its foregrounded agency position is associated with mostly material processes of action indicating its active - rather than passive – role, and is directly linked to circumstances related to the school in the following ways:

- should be integrated into the objectives and criteria which characterise a modern school;
- should have a place in the weekly order alongside the other classes;
- should have its own syllabus, approved by those in authority;
- should seek appropriate interdisciplinary links with other course material;
- should promote culture;
- should make use of best educational methods available to schools today. (¶70).

A noteworthy point is that seven of the nine processes have been modified by the modal adjuncts, should and needs to. Halliday (1985) explains that modal adjuncts serve to “express the speaker’s (author’s) judgement regarding the relevance of the message” (p. 50), while Derewianka (2000) argues that, “someone with a high degree of authority, status, power or expertise may choose to use high modality in order to convince someone to do something or to believe something” (p. 66). The modal adjuncts should and needs to express medium degrees of modality (must, ought to and has to are the stronger degrees expressing high modality). These statements regarding religious instruction are in fact commands, proposals of obligation (Halliday, 1985). The authors clearly outline the place of religious instruction within the school, and in using the modal adjuncts should and needs to, have expressed their judgement regarding the degree of obligation with which these commands are to be enacted. Without exception, these commands are focused on education; not one is concerned with catechesis, referred to only in a minor way at the end of the section, when it is noted that religious instruction needs to be coordinated with catechesis.

Religious instruction has been described by quite specific processes and expectations, which are directly linked to the school and its curriculum. Clearly it is an educational enterprise that has not been linked with students’ faith development. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) has stated that religious instruction is the work of the school. The references to a syllabus and other disciplines indicate that it is a curriculum area.

SFL has revealed several critical points regarding the process of religious instruction in this section of the document The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988). First, the aim of the school is knowledge and religious instruction is the school’s core role. School directors have been charged with the responsibility of implementing religious instruction into the school curriculum. The school is also obliged to play its role in
catechesis. However, the matter of who is directly responsible for seeing that catechesis is part of the school’s role is not addressed and nor is it made clear as to how this should occur.

**Church Document 2: General Directory for Catechesis**

In the same manner that relevant paragraphs of the previous document, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) were analysed, the relevant paragraphs of the document (as shown in Table 6), the *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) is also analysed using SFL.

**Table 6: General Directory for Catechesis**

Catechesis and Religious Instruction in Schools.

**The proper character of religious instruction in schools**

73. Within the ministry of the word, the character proper to religious instruction in schools and its relationship with the catechesis of children and of young people merit special consideration. The relationship between religious instruction in schools and catechesis is one of distinction and complementarity: “there is an absolute necessity to distinguish clearly between religious instruction and catechesis”. (220)

What confers on religious instruction in schools its proper evangelising character is the fact that it is called to penetrate a particular area of culture and to relate with other areas of knowledge. As an original form of the ministry of the word, it makes present the Gospel in a personal process of cultural, systematic and critical assimilation. (221)

In the cultural universe, which is assimilated by students and which is defined by knowledge and values offered by other scholastic disciplines, religious instruction in schools sows the dynamic seed of the Gospel and seeks to “keep in touch with the other elements of the student’s knowledge and education; thus the Gospel will impregnate the mentality of the students in the field of their learning, and the harmonization of their culture will be achieved in the light of faith”. (222)

It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction in schools appear [sic] as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge. It should not be an accessory alongside of these disciplines, but rather it should engage in necessary inter-disciplinary dialogue. This dialogue should take place above all at that level at which every discipline forms the personality of students. In this way the presentation of the Christian message influences the way in which the origins of the world, the sense of history, the basis of ethical values, the function of religion in culture, the destiny of man and his relationship with nature, are understood. Through inter-disciplinary dialogue religious instruction in schools underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school. (223)

**The school context and those to whom religious instruction in schools is directed**

74. Religious instruction in schools is developed in diverse scholastic contexts, while always maintaining its proper character, to acquire different emphases. These depend on legal and organizational circumstances, educational theories, personal outlook of individual teachers and students as well as the relationship between religious instruction in the schools and family or parish catechesis.

It is not possible to reduce the various forms of religious instruction in schools, which have developed as a result of accords between individual states and Episcopal Conferences. It is, however, necessary that efforts be made so that religious instruction in schools respond [sic] to its objectives and its own characteristics. (224)

Students “have the right to learn with truth and certainty the religion to which they belong. This right to know Christ, and the salvific message proclaimed by Him cannot be neglected. The confessional character of religious instruction in schools, in its various focuses, given by the Church in different countries is an indispensable guarantee offered to families and students who choose such education”. (225)

When given in the context of the Catholic school, religious instruction is part of and completed by other forms of the ministry of the word (catechesis, homilies, liturgical celebration, etc.). It is indispensable to their pedagogical function and the basis for their existence. (226)

In the context of state schools or non-confessional schools where the civil authorities or other circumstances impose the teaching of religion common to both Catholics and non Catholics (227) it will have a more ecumenical character and have a more inter-religious awareness.

In other circumstances religious instruction will have an extensively cultural character and teach a knowledge of religions including the Catholic religion. In this case too and especially if presented by teachers with a sincere respect for the Christian religion, religious instruction maintains a true dimension of “evangelic preparation”. (228)

75. The life and faith of students who receive religious instruction in school are characterized by continuous change. Religious instruction should be cognizant of that fact if it is to accomplish its own ends. In the case of students who are believers, religious instruction assists them to understand better the Christian message, by relating it to the great existential concerns common to all religions and to every human being, to the various visions of life particularly evident in culture and to those major moral questions which confront humanity today.

Those students who are searching, or who have religious doubts, can also find in religious instruction the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply.

In the case of students who are non-believers, religious instruction assumes the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel and is ordered to a decision of faith, which catechesis, in its turn, will nurture and mature.
In order to determine the field built by these paragraphs the SFL analysis commences with listing the key foregrounded agents with their associated processes as in Table 7.

**Table 7: Foregrounded Agents & their Associated Processes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The relationship it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>Is one of distinction and complementarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>is called to penetrate and to relate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction</td>
<td>makes present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Gospel</td>
<td>sows and seeks to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction</td>
<td>will impregnate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It (religious instruction)</td>
<td>appear [sic]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>must present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>should (not) be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>should engage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this dialogue</td>
<td>should take place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presentation of the Christian message</td>
<td>influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction</td>
<td>underpins, activates, develops and completes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction</td>
<td>is developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These (different emphases)</td>
<td>depend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction</td>
<td>respond [sic]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>have the right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this right</td>
<td>to know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The confessional character of religious instruction</td>
<td>cannot be neglected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction</td>
<td>is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It (religious instruction)</td>
<td>is part of and complemented by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>is indispensable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction</td>
<td>will have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction</td>
<td>will have and teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The life and faith of students</td>
<td>maintains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction</td>
<td>should be cognizant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction</td>
<td>assists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those students</td>
<td>can also find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction</td>
<td>assumes and is ordered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, it can be seen that *Religious instruction* is clearly the focus of these paragraphs, accounting for 18 of the 28 foregrounded agents or 64% as shown in Table 4.10. Students are referred to three times whilst other agents including gospel, rights, different emphasises and so on, account for 7 of the foregrounded agents or 25%.

**Table 8: Frequency of Foregrounded Agents.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Numerical Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Instruction</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In light of its central place in these paragraphs, only *religious instruction*, as a foregrounded agent is examined in the SFL analysis. To understand how religious instruction functions in these paragraphs, the processes and circumstances with which it is associated when in the foregrounded agent position are listed in Table 9.
Table 9: Religious Instruction’s Associated Processes & Circumstances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Process Type</th>
<th>Circumstances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>is called to penetrate</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>a particular area of culture and with other areas of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (religious instruction)</td>
<td>makes present</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>the Gospel in a personal process of cultural, systematic and critical assimilation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction in schools</td>
<td>sows</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>the dynamic seed of the Gospel and with the other elements of the student’s knowledge and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction in schools</td>
<td>seeks to “keep in touch”</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It (religious instruction)</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>Existential</td>
<td>necessary therefore that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious instruction in schools</td>
<td>appear [sic]</td>
<td>Mental - perception</td>
<td>as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It (religious instruction)</td>
<td>must present</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It (religious instruction)</td>
<td>should (not) be</td>
<td>Relational – attributive</td>
<td>an accessory alongside of these disciplines but rather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>should engage</td>
<td>Material - action</td>
<td>in a necessary inter-disciplinary dialogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Through interdisciplinary dialogue) religious instruction in schools</td>
<td>underpins, activates, develops and completes</td>
<td>Material – action</td>
<td>the educational activity of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction in schools</td>
<td>is developed</td>
<td>Material – action</td>
<td>in diverse scholastic contexts, while always maintaining its proper character, to acquire different emphases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It religious instruction in schools</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>Existential</td>
<td>however, necessary that efforts be made so that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>respond [sic]</td>
<td>Material – action</td>
<td>to its objectives and its own characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(When given in the context of the Catholic school,) religious instruction</td>
<td>is part of and completed by</td>
<td>Relational - attributive</td>
<td>other forms of the ministry of the word (catechesis, homilies, liturgical celebration, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It (religious instruction)</td>
<td>is indispensable</td>
<td>Relational - attributive</td>
<td>to their pedagogical function and the basis for their existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious instruction</td>
<td>should be cognizant</td>
<td>Mental - cognition</td>
<td>of that fact (the life and faith of students are characterised by</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(In the case of students who are believers) religious instruction assists (them) to understand Mental - cognition better the Christian message, by relating it to the great existential concerns common to all religions and to every human being, to the various visions of life particularly evident in culture and to those major moral questions which confront humanity today.

Those students (who are searching, or who have religious doubts) can also find Material - action in religious instruction the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply.

(In the case of students who are non-believers,) religious instruction assumes Relational – attributive the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel and to a decision of faith, which catechesis, in its turn, will nurture and mature.

In this document, religious instruction in its foregrounded agent position is mostly associated with material actions, clearly indicating it is to play an active part in the school’s core business of education rather than a passive one. Other processes include relational attributes identifying characteristics of religious instruction, thus clarifying its nature more explicitly, and mental processes of perception and cognition indicating its intellectual function. A further critical observation is that most of the processes are modulated by the adjunct modals, “should” and “must” signifying these processes as proposals of obligation (Derewianka, 2000; Halliday, 1985).

Paragraph 73, entitled “The proper character of religious instruction in schools”, begins by stating that the nature of religious instruction in schools and its relationship with catechesis, “merit special consideration”. This relationship, described as “one of distinction and complementarity”, is further qualified in the next sentence by an existential process, “there is an absolute necessity to distinguish clearly between religious instruction and catechesis.” So from the outset of this section, the authors have left no doubt that while complementing catechesis, religious instruction is to be distinguished from it; it is a distinct, separate process. The paragraph then goes on to outline the character of religious instruction in more specific ways.

The second part of paragraph 73 clearly articulates the role of religious instruction in schools in specific and highly obligatory language. The section opens with another existential statement of obligation “It is necessary therefore, that religious instruction should…” and the list of what it is to achieve is explicitly stated through material active processes that are modulated with obligatory modals in most cases:

• appear [sic] as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demand and the same rigour as other disciplines;
• must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge;
• should not be an accessory alongside of these disciplines;
• should engage in necessary interdisciplinary dialogue;
• underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school.

Without exception, all of these processes emphasise both the academic nature of religious instruction and the active role it is to take in schools. It is to be planned, prepared, and taught in the same way as other academic key learning areas in the school’s curriculum. It is not simply to be “an accessory alongside of these disciplines.” In addition, religious instruction is to “engage in necessary interdisciplinary dialogue”, and it
is through this dialogue that religious instruction “underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school.” In this section of the document, the Congregation for the Clergy has unambiguously stated that religious instruction is not only to exhibit all the necessary attributes associated with any school discipline, but equally critical is the statement that religious instruction, “underpins, activates, develops and completes” all other disciplines. In other words, not only is religious instruction to be an educational subject in similar ways as other subject areas are educational, but also that other subjects are defined in terms of religious instruction.

An element described in this document but not in the previous is its references to students. Paragraph 75 focuses on the students who receive religious instruction and notes that they “are characterised by continuous change”. The authors point out that religious instruction “should be cognizant of that fact if it is to accomplish its own ends”. This is a critical statement for teachers of religion, as it endorses the right of religious instruction programs to consider, acknowledge, and cater for students’ diverse backgrounds. Students are described as believers, searchers and non-believers. For believers, religious instruction “assists them to understand better the Christian message”. The use of the mental process, “understand,” outlines the cognitive characteristic of religious instruction given in the school context. Implied here is that these believing students who have already received the Christian message in a faith context through other forms of the ministry of the word, will now be able to understand this message better because of the educational function of religious instruction. In the case of those students who are searching, the text does not give religious instruction agency; rather it gives the students agency:

Those students who are searching, or who have religious doubts, can also find in religious instruction the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them [sic] the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply. (¶75)

Paragraph 75 acknowledges that religious instruction cannot impose faith; it does not have that function. It acknowledges that students’ faith formation is a personal choice. It has been left to the students themselves: “Those students who are searching, or who have religious doubts,” to find or not find faith in the program, “Those students … can also find in religious instruction the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply”.

And finally, for those students who are non-believers, religious instruction “assumes the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel and is ordered to a decision of faith, which catechesis, in its turn, will nurture and mature”. Here again, no specific task is assigned to religious instruction, as it is simply described as “assuming the character”. Nothing explicit is expected of religious instruction and it appears that again it is left to these students themselves to take from it what they need, and if they decide to seek faith it is left to the role of catechesis, not religious instruction, to nurture and mature such faith. The reference to catechesis in this section of the document is significant, as it is the one and only time it is referred to, and the reference is to faith not knowledge, thus the text further strengthens the distinct natures of both religious instruction and catechesis.

Insights gained from the SFL analysis of paragraphs 73, 74 and 75 of the document General Directory for Catechesis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) centre on the nature and roles of religious instruction in schools, its place in the context of the Catholic school and its effects on students. Religious instruction as the dominant foregrounded agent in these paragraphs is associated with mainly material action processes, which serve to clearly outline its active task in schools, the main one being, that, as a “scholastic discipline” it presents the Christian message. Its characteristics described through the use of attribution processes of identification, are academic and educational. Within the context of the Catholic school, religious instruction is shown to provide the educational function for other aspects of the Church including catechesis, homilies, and liturgical celebrations. Finally, it is acknowledged that the level of religious instruction’s impact on students’ faith development is left to them. In other words, religious instruction cannot be held accountable for students’ faith development and commitment.

Discussion of Findings - Church Documents

Both Church documents state that religious education in the Catholic school comprises two processes: (1) religious instruction, and (2) catechesis. However, both also emphasise these two processes distinct but at the same time complement each other. Two further aspects are also made clear in both documents: first, religious instruction is the work of the school, as it is not linked to either the family or the parish; and second, religious instruction for the most part is an academic, educational process. In saying this though, the General Directory for Catechesis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) presents a clearer understanding of religious instruction than was presented in the earlier 1988 document The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education), as it directly assigns agency to religious instruction. It explicitly describes and qualifies its nature and purpose by linking academic and educational attributes directly with religious instruction.

The relationship between catechesis and religious instruction is articulated explicitly in both documents: they are each distinct but at the same time complementary. The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic
Education, 1988) refers to this complementarity in terms of students’ own faith, indicating that for believing students religious instruction will strengthen their faith, just as at the same time their knowledge of the faith is increased by catechesis. The General Directory for Catechesis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) goes further than this, suggesting that religious instruction’s confessional character (¶74) is dependent on how the message is received and responded to by students. To educate is clearly the role of the school. However, the school is also required to play its part in the work of catechesis, but how it is to achieve this remains ambiguous. Overall though, according to both documents, religious instruction is the prime responsibility of the school, and catechesis the prime responsibility of the parish.

**Conclusion**

Once the nature and purpose of religious education in the specific context of the Catholic school as it is constructed in the Church documents is known, it can then be determined to what extent such understandings are conveyed in diocesan and school religious education documents. Part 2 of this topic will go on to investigate the nature of the intertextuality and alignment between Church and local Catholic school documents and suggests a process to assist in both the construction of the text, and how to evaluate its clarity of meaning during such document formulation.

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Talent, tolerance and tact: on avoiding the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth: A question of talent

In Matthew 25:14-30 there is the startling parable of the investor who went on a journey, and who, before he left, gave to three of his servants large amounts of money. To one he gave ten talents of silver, to another five and to the third one. When the investor returned after a long time he called the servants to account. The two who had taken risks and realised a healthy profit he rewarded. The man who hid his talent and, therefore, did not even gain bank interest was severely punished. He was cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is a harrowing tale to those of us disinclined to take risks.

In Jesus’ day ‘talent’ meant a weight of money and one talent weighed a lot. Sometime in the fifteenth century this gospel story acquired a new meaning, the idea that we have natural gifts and capacities and that like the money in Matthew’s parable they are there to be developed, not hidden in a field.

Some people do not develop their talents because nature or social conditions conspire against them. My father would have made a good teacher. But his family, the times, the condition of working class Catholics in Australia, the inadequate state of Catholic education in country towns and villages, the comparative isolationism of Catholics, the Depression and the War all got in the way.

Then there are those who are stopped more or less deliberately from developing their talents. Ideology, authoritarian leadership, the misuse of power, fear, ignorance, corruption and incompetence are just some of the enemies of talent that can infest states, churches, religious orders, schools, and families.

Some people choose not to develop particular talents. But this could be just ‘opportunity cost’. A person with several abilities would rather be a teacher than a merchant banker; someone outstanding at sport wants to be a musician instead; someone who would make a good Catholic priest might value or need intimacy and marriage more.

Bildung and self-formation

Once, talent came to mean ‘natural capacities’ in the fifteenth century, the concept was taken up by philosophers and theologians. In the twentieth century, one of these was Hans-Georg Gadamer. In Truth and Method (Gadamer 1989) Gadamer discusses the idea of Bildung. Bildung according to Gadamer is the concept of self-formation, education, or cultivation (Gadamer 1989, p9). It is the ‘properly human way of developing one’s natural talents and capacities’ (Gadamer 1989, p10). Bildung is an inelegant word in English but an elegant idea. For Gadamer it is one of the guiding concepts of humanism.

The notion of Bildung begins in medieval mysticism, Gadamer says, and by the eighteenth century it means “the properly human way of developing one’s talents and capacities” (Gadamer 1989, p10), which Kant goes on to see as an act of freedom by the acting subject. For Kant this is one of a person’s duties towards themselves. Kant bases his ethics on our duties. Hegel uses bildung as Kant does but, as Gadamer notes, Wilhelm von Humboldt, not being a Kantian, pushes it further. After von Humboldt bildung evokes the ancient mystical tradition according to which each of us carries in our soul the image of God, after whom we are fashioned, and which we must each cultivate in ourselves (Gadamer 1989, p11).

Gadamer lived in Germany from 1900 until 2002. He lived through the First and Second World Wars and the growth of Nazism in the 1930s. He was used to barbarism. In Truth and Method, Gadamer discusses ‘humanism’ in such terms that we have to constantly subdue the animality from which we stem, especially the barbaric forms it can take. We have to be vigilant. We can contain our tendency towards barbarism only by a process of education and formation. There are some models for this but no scientific rules. Martin Heidegger, Gadamer’s teacher, rejected humanism altogether. He thought it contributed to Nazism. Gadamer too was against the kinds of humanism, especially those stemming from Kant that claimed there were scientific rules to determine what humans should be like. For Gadamer true humanism is “rather an unending quest for civility in human affairs that can only be achieved or exercised in the process of culture and the cultivation of one’s own talents” (Hahn 1997, p9).
L. E. Hahn (1997), in the *Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* notes that Gadamer’s humanism has its origins in the Renaissance, and the biblical notion that humans are created in God’s image (Hahn 1997, p9-10). The way we live up to our parentage, that is as children of God, is to let our talents flourish and so to become ever closer to God. Our dignity comes from our being in God’s image. That is why, when he speaks of humanism in *Truth and Method* (Gadamer 1989,p9 and following) Gadamer begins with *bildung* which has its theological origins in the Renaissance and the Middle Ages.

Gadamer notes that the Latin for *bildung is formatio* and the English is ‘formation’. ‘Formation’ is often a word loaded with ambiguity for older Catholics. In a pre-Vatican II Church it often went in tandem with ‘training’ as in ‘Christian Brothers’ Training College’. ‘Training colleges’ were also called ‘houses of formation’.

In the hands of enlightened formation staff and teacher trainers ‘formation’ and ‘training’ often meant ‘developing one’s natural talents and capacities’. Formation then meant ‘cultivating in yourself the image of God in which you are fashioned.’

But not all formers and trainers were enlightened. Some of the training of young priests, brothers and sisters in those days might have been designed by Cinderella’s ugly sister. Cinderella went to the ball in a pumpkin coach and the prince fell in love with her but she had to flee at midnight, leaving her glass slipper on the step as she ran. The day after the ball he sent his servants to find the girl who had won his heart, by trying her slipper on all the young women they could find. When the palace flunkies came to Cinderella’s house her wicked sibling insisted on trying on the slipper. It did not fit her foot, so she cut off her big toe. Then it fitted. Arguably, it was too often like that with the training of young Catholic religious. If you did not fit into the habit they cut bits off. Then you did.

People formed in this ‘one size suits all’ way then went into Catholic schools as teachers and too often they applied the same logic. Hence the ambivalent, even angry, feelings among some older Catholics. Some older Catholics detest the word formation. Some of formation’s victims felt they were forced to be something they were not and some were damaged by this process.

Another word that evokes ambivalent feelings in some older Catholics is ‘vocation’. In Catholic terminology ‘developing one’s natural talents and capacities’ combined with ‘cultivating in yourself the image of God in which you are fashioned’ might be described as ‘following your vocation’. Vocation in this sense means living the life to which you are called. But ‘vocation’ like ‘formation’ was at times objectified by Catholics so that some roles in the Church were called ‘a vocation’.

This objectification led to a calling to the priesthood or religious life being called ‘a vocation’ while other ways of being Christian were not. They were simply examples of ‘living in the world’.

Once the idea of vocation was objectified, the thought of a template against which everyone would be measured became a logical next step. Often it stopped individuals developing their talents and cultivating in themselves the image of God that God had placed there. Of course, in this objectification of ‘vocation’ and ‘formation’ anything outside Christianity was not even considered. That God might be calling folk to be Buddhists, Jews or Muslims, or even Protestants was beyond imagining.

Gadamer claims that *bildung* is a better word than ‘formation’ because in the German it has a mysterious ambiguity; it contains in it both *nachbild*, which means image or copy, and *vorbild*, model. This mysterious ambiguity stops the word becoming objectified. *Bildung* is not achieved by technical construction. We cannot have a template with which we force all to comply; *bildung* is a constant and continuous process that goes on all our lives. *Bildung* has no goals outside itself. It does not lead to the use of templates because the template for a human life does not exist (Gadamer 1989, p16). Humanity is not something humans have, or a skill we can learn and retain, once and for all. It is a direction we attempt to follow and something we try to cultivate (Hahn 1997, p10).

It is this mysterious ambiguity that makes Gadamer’s discussion of *bildung* important. Restoring the mysterious ambiguity is necessary if we are to talk of formation because the social conditions that allowed the objectification of formation and vocation in the past no longer exist. Students will not accept such an approach and teachers cannot impose it. And, hopefully those whose task it is to form the young no longer have such an objective view. There is also the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 to take into account. There, Jesus condemns those who fritter or throw away their chance to be as fully human as they can. The condemnation surely also applies to those who on purpose or through ignorance or neglect stop the young from developing their talents.

Here Hannah Arendt can help because like Gadamer she says there is no template for being human, or none that we can see as we cannot stand outside ourselves. Like Gadamer, Arendt presumes that we all live in some kind of plurality in which everyone is unique but in which, if we are to flourish, we need community based on symbolic relationships.

**The human condition**

In *The Human Condition* (1958) Arendt says that the human condition is one of plurality, symbolic relationships and renewal through the birth of new generations.
We are plural because while we are all equally human it is “in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live” (Arendt 1958, p8). This plurality is the basic condition of both communication and speech. If we were not equal we could not understand each other, hear those who came before, plan for the future, or educate our young. If we were not distinct we would not need speech, action or education (Arendt 1958, p175-6). Amoebas do not need to talk to each other.

Arendt notes that one of the tasks of education is to connect the perspectives of social participants who inevitably view the world from different standpoints. We need to form a relationship or an ‘intersubjective ground’ between us. Paul VI said largely the same thing when he noted that human progress is ‘nothing other than the chronicle of the results obtained by dialogue with other people, with the environment, with the people who have come before us, and in a sense, with those who will come after us’ (Hebblethwaite 1993, p6). Through the construction of this ‘intersubjective ground’, we overcome the problems of plurality without abolishing the reality of individual perspectives or the mysterious ambiguity of bildung (Young 1990, p27).

It is in these relationships between individuals that revelation occurs. The revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are with others, neither for nor against, in sheer human togetherness (Arendt 1958 p180). This is the process of humans revealing their unique personal identities and thus ‘making their appearance in the human world’ (Arendt 1958, p179).

This can be done only when we acknowledge that the web of significant relationships, which gives our lives meaning is made up of essentially symbolic relationships, sustained through physical media (Arendt 1958, p183-4). They are not physical relationships as such, and are not in any sense absolute. The web of significant relationships that constitutes a community exists only in its actualization. When the power that holds a community together is not actualized the community will collapse because power cannot be stored for emergencies. Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company. That is, where words still disclose realities and deeds continue to establish relations and create new realities (Arendt 1958, p200). Communities perish where words are used to veil intentions and deeds are used to violate and destroy. Power springs up between us only at the moment we act together, and it dissipates the moment we disperse (Arendt 1958, p200).

We construct relationships as ‘symbolic participants with our own subjectivity’ (Arendt, 1958, p. 200). That is, to have a true community the individuals have to be free to agree and to disagree. That we can speak and listen and agree or disagree is an assumption of reciprocity, of equal subjectivity, which keeps alive the radical possibility of equality between human beings.

The necessity for speech in the building of relationships is such that we can never be content with the silence of others. We cannot interpret the other’s silence as agreement (Arendt 1958, p198-9). We need to know that they accept us, that they have heard. We need dialogue to reduce plurality by negotiating meaning. Dialogue is about the alignment of meaning; then it is reflective so that we can formulate the meaning of the rest of the dialogue.

Having overcome the problems of plurality by establishing symbolic relationships through dialogue we find in the fact of each new generation of individuals the constant reminder that there is the possibility of new symbolic forms, of new and unanticipated ways of life (Arendt 1958, p247). Here we have set up an educational form of the hermeneutic circle.

As Arendt says, the fact of new generations being born is the miracle that saves the world. These new generations are the milieu in which we educators spend our lives. It is an occasion of both hope and joy that should force us to be open to change. We are reminded every time we go to work, that human affairs will not grind to a halt when we die; the educational enterprise will not finish with us (Arendt 1958, p274). This applies just as much to religious education as it does to any other educational enterprise. The frisson for those of us forming young Catholics is that we cannot know what they will create, or what God will create in them and so we cannot tell, except within certain limits, what the Catholicism of the future will be like.

The limits of ambiguity

There are limits, of course, to mysterious ambiguity because, aware of the danger of unchecked innovatory potential as we are, we have developed protective institutions like schools, churches and rules about interpretation to manage it. We need protection against fragmentation and degenerative change (Young 1990, p27). We need protection against ourselves so we set boundaries to change. Here authority and fixed texts play a positive role. This is especially so in areas where purely human invention reaches its limit.

Arendt explains this by distinguishing between ‘the human condition’ and ‘human nature’. She says that humans can answer the question, ‘Who am I?’ easily, by saying, ‘I am a human, whatever that may be’ (Arendt 1958, p11). Of course it takes each of us our whole life to know what this means. That is what bildung is about.

But the question, ‘What am I? Do I have a nature or essence?’ is outside our ken. Quoting St Augustine she concludes that only God can answer that. The ‘question about the nature of man is no less a theological question than the question about the nature of God; both can be settled only within the framework of a divinely revealed answer’ (Arendt 1958, p11). For believers, revelation explains what we are. This explanation sets limits. Even those who do not believe in God, let alone revelation usually believe there are limits to what we can answer to
the question, ‘What am I?’ Montesquieu argues for liberalism but with a hard core of principles (James 2007, p502). The Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz says, ‘The scriptures constitute the common good of believers, agnostics and atheists (James 2007, p486). David Tracy, who does believe in God, makes the point that interpreters, even in a time when interpretation itself is in crisis, have to keep returning to the classics (Tracy 1986, p7). These are the traditions that are there; they have formed us. In this sense all humans are born with a long memory.

The urgency, whether we are believers or not, is to find new ways of interpreting ourselves and our traditions, to be open to change and to sort out what are the traditions that constitute our relatively fixed point (Tracy 1986 p8).

For this we need imagination. Erin White notes that this is a critical concept for Paul Ricoeur for whom all the classics of a culture are addressed to the imagination. The task of the imagination is to invite the reader or listener to consider new possibilities:

> It is in imagination that the new being is formed in me. Note that I said imagination and not will. This is because the power of letting oneself be grasped by new possibilities precedes the power of deciding and choosing (White 1986, p275).

Ricoeur asks the rhetorical question:

> Do we not too often think that a decision is demanded of us when perhaps what is first required is to let a field of previously unconsidered possibilities appear to us? (cited in White 1986, p275)

This insight of Ricoeur’s addresses the notion that the meaning making that is religious education is an appeal to the imagination rather than a matter of doing as we are told; or in Austin Farrer’s words, ‘religion is more like response to a friend than it is like obedience to an expert’ (Farrer 1964). Hannah Arendt adds, ‘It is an appeal to action not behavior’. It is a matter of seeking human freedom to become who we are called to be and we can do this only by continually trying to understand better who we are called to be (Kelly 1998, p28). Religious education is a quest for human freedom and is a never-ending process. But it is first a matter of being grasped by new possibilities.

Linking this back to doing as we are told, human freedom is a matter of coming to know and do God's will. But no existing human structure can be definitive in terms of the will of God. No authority, vocation, church, or institution. All we can do is to continually work at interpreting and constructing cultures that embody fully, respect for all human persons and for the whole of creation. In this sense humans create God's will (Kelly 1998, p29).

I noted above that we need still points; but not too still. Over-managing creative potential is as threatening to true formation as the risk of letting it run unchecked. We are potentially a self-forming species. But we are prone to objectify our own creations and to regard them as natural and unchangeable aspects of the human condition (Young 1990, p27). That is one of the mistakes of conservative hermeneutics. Arendt calls it erecting a ‘man-made world only after destroying part of God-created nature’ (Arendt 1958, p139).

It is what leads some educators to objectify learning in such a way as to cut off creativity and is the basis of a traditional education such as occurs in education by objectives. In most approaches to religious education the tendency to objectify our own creations has extra force as these human creations are claimed to be creations of God, thus they are sacrosanct and untouchable. Such an objectification results from a positivist approach to the text whether it is ‘the scriptures’ or ‘tradition’.

**The chance to say no**

However, it is risky to honor human freedom and the vocation of the individual. It presumes the right, the necessity for some, of rejecting or accepting only in a modified version, the traditions of the community. The hearer must have the right to say, ‘No!’ It also presumes that local communities have the need to be different. In so far as the problems local people have are local, while the whole Church community’s stories and beliefs are more general or shared, there is not only a right but a necessity sometimes for the local community to say ‘No!’ or ‘Not like that!’

Both the desire to transmit the tradition and the acknowledgement of individual choice take place with the presumption that tradition is not an object passed on as it is. It is an ever-changing living subject, and not only does tradition change but we change too (Kelly 1998, p25). So objectives in education, even in religious education are at best tentative. Knowing the endpoint of the educational process is impossible. All education has to maintain that mysterious ambiguity that stops the word becoming objectified.

Education is a matter of creating the present while acknowledging that this means recreating the past. It also has a future component. Anything that forecloses on the future, that has an absolutist set of objectives, cannot be educational because such objectives of their nature attempt to preclude change and preclude creation.

Education, of its nature cannot be anything else but oriented to change because it is first intergenerational and then communicative and it takes place in a world that is unfinished. ‘We are participants in an unfinished Church not observers of a finished Church,’ to slightly alter John Dewey. Similarly, the English theologian Nicholas Lash comments about the Church, ‘Its history still has some way to go’ (Kelly 1998, p33).
Plurality
Plurality in a general sense means the acceptance of diversity. *Bildung* presumes plurality because it has no template for human life and it allows individuals to develop their talents. Current religious educators in Australia need to presume that religious education takes place in a plurality. It does not take place in a monoculture where it is thought that ‘reality’ comes without quotation marks (Tracy 1986, p47). Pluralism acknowledges the social nature of all understanding and that all interpretation has many possibilities and so ends in diversity (Tracy 1986, p51).

This is important for Catholic religious education because not only is there pluralism in the broader Australian society, there is also pluralism within Catholicism. Of course this pluralism in the Church is a bounded pluralism. While every interpretation differs because of the local context, the prior and accompanying texts of the culture and the individual or community doing the interpreting, the dictionary or level one meanings of words place limits on what can be interpreted from them. Defensible interpretations are limited to a group of ‘family resemblances’, otherwise people could never pragmatically co-ordinate cultures and form relatively peaceful human societies.

Living tactfully
Tolerance, pluralism and freedom are necessary to Christian humanism. Some boundary is necessary for this humanism to be part of religious education. Not all interpretations are defensible if religious education is to remain Catholic. Religious education, because it has some answers that seem to explain what humans are, has to resist the temptation to intolerance, to stifling all doubt, and to refusing to listen to those who disagree. We are all called to develop our talents and warned we will be thrown out into the dark if we do not.

These are some general principles for more fully human behaviour and for sound religious education in schools. Gadamer points out we need to go further in our quest for self-formation, education, or cultivation. We need to exercise *tact*. He defines this as “the special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them, for which knowledge from general principles does not suffice” (Gadamer 1989 p16). Tact is essentially tacit and unformulable. Like *bildung* living tactfully is a life’s work.

Tact often involves passing over something and leaving it unsaid. We notice that the other person has a wooden leg for example and we do not draw attention to it:

But to pass over something does not mean to avert one’s gaze from it, but to keep an eye on it in such a way that rather than knock into it, one slips by it. Thus tact helps one to preserve distance. It avoids the offensive, the intrusive, the violation of the intimate sphere of the person (Gadamer 1989, p16).

Gadamer, quoting Helmholtz says that while tact is a matter of manners and customs it is considerably more. Tact is not simply a feeling and unconscious, ‘it is a mode of knowing and a mode of being’ (Gadamer 1989, p16). We need to have a sense of the aesthetic and the historical or acquire it if we are to have real tact (Gadamer 1989, p17). It is a way of life not something we can turn on and turn off. Clive James notes that tolerance is all very well, but it can be withdrawn (James 2007). Tact, as Gadamer is using it, cannot be withdrawn because it is a way of life that one can choose to live. It is a case of:

Keeping oneself open to what is other – to other, more universal points of view. It embraces a sense of proportion and distance in relation to itself, and hence consists in rising above itself to universality. To distance oneself from oneself and from one’s private purposes means to look at these in the way others see them (Gadamer 1989, p17).

Conclusion
The careful servant in Matthew 25:14-30 is condemned to outer darkness because he was afraid. He hid his talent in the ground and did not even gain bank interest. He was placed in a situation of mysterious ambiguity where his knowledge from general principles did not suffice. When he had to think for himself he lacked courage and imagination. He had nothing useful to contribute and his choice led to his destruction. Teachers of religious education are working in a milieu that is similar to that of the parable. The human condition is one of plurality and mysterious ambiguity where knowledge from general principles is not always enough. Gadamer proffers a way to be imaginative in an ambiguous and plural world, or at least to avoid making a mess entirely and ending up out in the dark. He suggests that we live a life of *bildung*, and especially, that we develop a tactful approach to life. The tactful person is open to what is other, has a sense of proportion and distance in relation to the self, and so rises above the self to look at the universe in the way others see it. The details of this approach are left to each of us to discover.
References

Endnotes:

1 The task of the imagination is to invite the reader or listener to consider new possibilities:

   It is in imagination that the new being is formed in me. Note that I said imagination and not will. This is because the power of letting oneself be grasped by new possibilities precedes the power of deciding and choosing.

   Do we not too often think that a decision is demanded of us when perhaps what is first required is to let a field of previously unconsidered possibilities appear to us?

Paul Ricoeur in White p275.

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Tolerance is the act of enduring with patience or impunity, of allowing a range of variation. Tolerance is one of the signs of civilised living, a hallmark along with pluralism and freedom of a liberal democracy.

Tact: The special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them, for which knowledge from general principles does not suffice¹. It is essentially tacit and unformulable; living tactfully is a life’s work.

It often involves passing over something and leaving it unsaid: But to pass over something does not mean to avert one’s gaze from it, but to keep an eye on it in such a way that rather than knock into it, one slips by it. Thus tact helps one to preserve distance. It avoids the offensive, the intrusive, the violation of the intimate sphere of the person (Gadamer p16).
It is a case of:

Keeping oneself open to what is other – to other, more universal points of view. It embraces a sense of proportion and distance in relation to itself, and hence consists in rising above itself to universality. To distance oneself from oneself and from one’s private purposes means to look at these in the way others see them (Gadamer p17).

Bildung: the ‘properly human way of developing one’s natural talents and capacities’. Bildung is the concept of self-formation, education, or cultivation (Gadamer p9).

Bildung evokes the ancient mystical tradition according to which each of us carries in our soul the image of God, after whom we are fashioned, and which we must each cultivate in ourselves (Gadamer p11). Bildung is a better word than ‘formation’ because in the German it has a mysterious ambiguity; it contains in it both nachbild, which means image or copy, and vorbild, model. This mysterious ambiguity stops the word becoming objectified.

Bildung is not achieved by technical construction. We cannot have a template that we are forcing all to comply with; bildung is a constant and continuous process that goes on all our lives. Bildung has no goals outside itself. It does not lead to the use of templates because the template for a human life does not exist (Gadamer p16).

Humanity is not something we have, or a skill we can learn and then have once and for all. It is a direction we attempt to follow and something we try to cultivate (Hahn p10).

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“Christianity came with Western civilisation [when] political colonisers and missionaries arrived [in Papua New Guinea/PNG] about the same time.” (Gaqurae, 1985, p. 207). From 1884 onwards education was often used as a means to Christianize/civilize and reform the PNG Melanesian society. This has been pointed out by contemporary writers including John Kadiba (1989), Peter Smith (1989), John Dademo Waiko (1993), and Herwig Wagner and Hermann Reiner (1986) to name but a few. This formal education presupposed a Western institutional (or school) approach, and was first introduced by the Christian missions and later by the colonial government. The colonial government and missions accepted the times in which they lived and basically endorsed the educational system that took shape during the 1960s and that, then, moved on towards independence (in 1975) and into the 21st century. From the 1950s/1960s onwards education came under the scrutiny of the National government’s education policy with the use of English as the recognized medium of curriculum and instruction in both the government and church schools.

This policy direction based on the Government’s constitutional frame work was motivated by the move toward political independence to develop human resources and economy nationwide, given the global trend arising in a third world economy. It is worth noting that equal participation in social and economic development is emphasized in the education policy during the 60s and 70s. In a study of participation and educational change and its implication for reform in PNG, Thirlwall and Avalos (2003) made the assertion that “participation as a social organizing principle is embedded not only in the national constitution’s framework but is also part of the social fabric of the different cultures that make up the PNG nation.” (pp. 2-3). However, as well as making contributions to social change and economic development, education often lacks widespread participation of those (e.g. teachers) who will implement such change, and those (e.g. students) who will experience its effects. One common hindrance to participation is the official policy of conducting classes in English resulting in passivity on the part of the people who received the education. Notice this quotation from K. Powell:

I remember being completely inhibited during my first years at school. I could no longer make fun through speech. My quick wit was no use to me. I was like a vegetable. I was controlled by limits of my vocabulary. My days were spent listening to my teacher. Many questions I wanted to ask remained unasked because I did not have the ability to express them in English. Eventually I found it much easier just to sit and listen rather than to speak. So I sat and listened. (Waiko, 1993, pp. 129-130).

The above description of a student’s experience in this passive learning system records the “cultural impact of the colonial education policy which promoted English as the ‘language’ of curriculum and instruction, and thus ‘alienated many students from their cultures’ (Waiko, 1993, p. 130). In general, the educational approach (at the formal and non-formal level) was marked by the pattern of a teacher-centred method and passive learning on the part of students; it makes students passive learners, with active/dynamic participation being minimal. In this passive system of learning, a small number of elite pass through to the higher levels attaining the full benefits of wages and employment. Yet, the majority of students do not so benefit in this educational system (Waiko, 1993). In a similar vein, Dennis Maclaughlin and Tom O’Donoghue (1996) in a study of community teacher education in PNG warn the reader about the Western set of perspectives educators bring to the education system in PNG:

Students entering tertiary institutions in Papua New Guinea, in the main are induced into a milieu consonant with the goals and structures of higher education of western countries, a process which in many respects is very much alien to the cultural experiences of most students. This class of perspectives may precipitate sets of varied and complex problems, thus hindering personal and professional growth among students (p. 3)

According to Maclaughlin and O’Donoghue, while both national and expatriate educators “say [that] they espouse the intellectual standards and the pursuit of academic excellence that western universities often proclaim in order to maintain international recognition
… they may exhibit behaviours that may lie someway along a continuum” (p. 3). They further write:

One pole has been described by Paulo Freire as ‘banking education,’ when he participated at the Eighth Waigani Seminar [in Port Moresby] on Education in Melanesia. The education process is simply ‘to make the entries in the empty heads of educates’ (p.3).

[Hence] … their teaching may fail to recognize a Melanesian perspective on education (p.3).

Given the above quotations, the need for balance in teaching and learning in the PNG cross-cultural context is often wanting, though it is an ongoing tussle. In a similar vein, for example, Michael A Mel (2000) who is one of the contemporary voices of indigenous ways of knowing and learning in a study on indigenization of trainee teachers in PNG says that ‘the encounters between the PNG culture’s ways of knowing and those that were introduced through colonization have produced some complex tussles as the local people have wrestled with how to find a balance between values and beliefs that are at times so different from their own’ (p.15). Although education in the church and government has done a lot to reform the PNG Melanesian society, educational authorities and implementers of the educational policy (e.g. education planners, teachers) are now questioning its destructive orientation, in particular, on indigenous cultures and values of PNG. Joan Kale and Jaking Marimyas (2003) of the Curriculum Development Division of the PNG Department of Education, in a study on implementing multilingual education point out that obviously political and educational leaders, community (and church in general), have become dissatisfied because they see the national system of education as trapped with the following set of problems:

- Separating children from their culture and from community activities,
- Making children feel like failures who no longer value village life, traditions and obligations,
- Starting school in a language the children do not speak,
- Creating unrealistic expectations in the children, their families and their communities concerning employment opportunities,
- Using a curriculum which is no longer relevant to the needs of Papua New Guinea and its people,
- Failing to prepare children to use resource development opportunities within their communities, and
- Failing to give all children opportunities to go to school and to encourage children to stay in school (p. 2).

Basically, minimal emphasis has been placed on integrating PNG indigenous cultural systems; its values and forms in education. The reason being, that indigenous cultural systems (values and forms) were often rendered a hindrance to modern Western development and change in PNG. For example, Michael Olsson (1985) speaking in a similar context says that tension exists between the traditional values of social relationships and the work ethic, hence using the educational process to stress the importance of “social obligations will eventually have an adverse effect on work efficiency. Less work translates into less production, and less production means less profit” (p. 221). Moreover he says:

In the long run, however, productivity can only be increased where cultural identity is strong in education. Clearly, deculturation eventually destroys the social conditions necessary for maintaining a productive work schedule. But an ‘active’ system of education tries to engage all as participants in a search for new alternatives that maximize benefits for as many people as possible (p. 221).

Thus, in the words of Olsson, ‘while education is meant to maximize the opportunities of the individual to actively participate in social, economic, and political development’ its very operational structures both directly or indirectly decrease cultural and/or social conditions necessary for active participation, and thus, ‘prepare people for passive participation in things as they are now. So education is caught in the middle. Its stated objectives’ according to the government’s constitutional frame work ‘demand preparation for active participation in social and economic development which leads toward an equalization of opportunities for increased goods and services.’ But the practical realities mean that its institutionalized structure and deculturation ‘encourage passive participation that plagues the colonial-style education system.’ This has the flow-on effect of benefiting a skilled minority elite in the formal employment sector at the expense of the large unskilled majority in the informal sector (1985, p.220).

Looking at the bigger picture in today’s terms, PNG remains largely a rural subsistence sector based population of some 80% compared to the 20% or so urban based population (Crocombe, 2001). Here we have yet another dimension of tension between the active and passive systems, and the formal and informal sectors. Generally, the educational system during the colonial period including most of the years since independence from 1975 to 1995 onwards was paternalistic, creating greater dependency.

Given the above problems, some reforms have been sought beginning in 1995. The current reform of National education includes the formal school curriculum that aims to liberate students and
community people, and enable and promote creativity encouraging a more active participation. One of the areas that has come into focus under the current national education reform is that of integrating PNG traditional (informal) educational patterns of learning with the Western (formal) school system ways. It encourages appropriate education to meet PNG needs; and it encourages the integration of school and community knowledge; placing equal emphasis on practical and academic subjects. The shift could be seen as a move from a deductive to inductive educational approach; from prescriptive curriculum to an out-come based curriculum approach or to use Freire’s (1997) terms, shifting from ‘domesticating’ to a ‘problem-posing’ approach (pp. 64-65).

While the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG) is the focus, it is crucial to understand that ELCPNG does not function as an island, it is part of the process of education and change that has been going on within the nation. Theological education training in the ELCPNG clearly belongs to the formal Western-style schooling, in particular, preparing church ministers for ministry in the modern aspects of PNG life. It is important that any changes suggested for the better functioning of the seminaries of ELCPNG should be of such a nature so as not to alienate the educational stream of the church from the educational policies of the national government. In general terms much of the task of change has already transpired in the primary and secondary schools of PNG that need to meet the national standards for registration purposes, but it has not really flowed on to the seminaries – they have tended to remain in somewhat of a time warp. Tradition and church established custom has tended to prevail. These customs reach into the Lutheran ways of being that go back to pre-colonial times (e.g. Germany), but also include other places as well, including USA and Australia (Wagner & Reiner, 1986).

Part of the problem is how to establish a continuity that remains connected to the roots whilst being open to modern change and development. After all, many of the students, if not all, that pass through the ELCPNG seminaries, will have already been trained in the ways of education, practised in the primary and secondary schools of PNG. What is clearly evident in PNG is that not only do the national educational reforms have major implications for the way primary and secondary education is organized in the church schools, but it should flow over into the way that the theological seminaries train, mould, and model their post secondary students. I write this material with some autoethnographical insights - my life with my father and my own experience is reflected in this journey. The trend has been an educational system that has become more sophisticated, but in this journey it has taken on more and more of a Western approach, replacing traditional values with non-PNG values. As Thomas Groome (1991) suggests, the ways learners are taught and the kinds of teaching/learning environments created in theological education reflect political choices.

Most often, the methodology employed in theological educational training in the seminaries of the ELCPNG denies students the possibility of being actively engaged as participating subjects in events and communities marked by relationships of inclusion and mutuality. This creates a disparity between students and learning for in fact relationship and mutuality characterizes PNG students’ existence/being. Social relationships, commitments, and participation are very strongly entrenched in the PNG traditional system. Basically, relationship(s) ascribe great importance to one’s identity (or existence) as a member of a family and community in the traditional society. Here one would/could say he or she is (exists or has meaning) because he/she participates. Thus learning methodologies ought to reflect this characteristic. Some authors have noted the need for the same phenomenon in theological educational training in the seminaries of the ELCPNG. Indeed, this essay grows out of and is motivated, in particular, by three academic articles written by former expatriate seminary lecturers of the ELCPNG. These articles have significant titles:

“Search for Alternatives” (Erikson, 1974)
“Why are Changes so Difficult to Make” (Riecke, 1993)
“Cultural Anthropology, Teaching Methodology and Theological Education” (Schiller, 1999).

Erickson’s 1974 paper was presented one year prior to independence of PNG. He pointed out that an intellectual pursuit alone in theological education training is not the full answer to preparing church ministers (or pastors) both at the seminary and for later life of ministry in the community/congregations of PNG. He noted that much of the lecture materials being presented at the seminary were not always being absorbed and remembered by students and the academic standards being reached were unsatisfactory (i.e. poor test results) and that student sermons not only lacked the interest, originality and impact but were foreign to the village congregational style of preaching. Also he observed that recent graduates often lost touch in the eyes of village congregations because they were not gainfully adjusting their style and approach to village situations in regular work as pastors, could not apply theology to village needs, concentrated on sacramental duties rather than preaching and teaching, become domineering in authority, alienating their flock and had difficulty in communicating warmth and concern for the people. Erickson argued that academically, seminary education training had narrowed the definition of pastoral work and had stripped it of all open-ended flexible ministries for creative pastors. He felt that these problems challenged many of the basic
assumptions in training pastors for congregational ministry in PNG.

First, he [Erikson] questioned whether the academic institutionalized approach to training pastors was the best model for PNG. Secondly, he argued that unhealthy authoritarian attitudes held by pastors and the irrelevant nature of their teaching and preaching were learnt and reinforced at the seminary. Finally, the lack of warmth and love, and the inability to apply theology to a village situation came about because students had spent too long in an artificial and isolated environment (Schiller, 1999, p. 55).

These issues raised by Erickson were further highlighted in more recent times, in the article by Kurt Riecke in 1993. He was surprised at how true Erickson’s observations still were within the seminaries of the ELCPNG. Erickson, almost two decades before had provided the context for much of Riecke’s discussion. There had been little or no real change in the way theological educational training was conducted in this later contemporary situation. Riecke argued strongly for the integration of a theological educational methodology placed within the life context of PNG so that students would not find their academic theology as remote from their experienced life situations.

It is clearly evident that Riecke agreed with Erickson’s assessment. First, he observed that there was a growing emphasis on the seminary as an academic institution and this was more than it had previously been. The approach to theology was theoretically systematic in all the major principle divisions of theological studies. Theology thus becomes an academic pursuit with the attaining of degrees and accreditation for degrees; the pull toward intellectual elitism is irresistible, and the academic aspect of education is more important than the holistic personal growth of the student. Secondly, he noted that the primary methodology is knowledge-oriented lecture-based presentations even though poor learning results prevailed. Thus, the pedagogy derived from lectures tends to resist dialogue and turns students into passive learners. Thirdly, he realised that most of the lecturers themselves had been trained in this passive system and have perpetuated this habit of lecturing as a major tradition in theological schooling. The implication is that the basic methods and attitudes used at the seminary are later perpetuated in the student’s ministry following ordination. Fourthly, he shared some critical concerns on the cost of seminary education which was rising dramatically, beyond what the church could sustain including the maintaining of its infrastructure and staffing levels. Finally, he argued that the traditional division of biblical, systematic, historical, and practical theology is not adequate for dealing with a holistic approach to theological education and suggested that a more integrated curriculum would benefit students.

Six years after Riecke’s observations, the issue resurfaced in 1999 when Greg Schiller first presented his insights. Schiller’s criticism was focused on teaching methods. In his experience as a lecturer, he particularly observed that students learned better through learning strategies based on cross-cultural approaches rather than the standard lecture approaches. Schiller, therefore, agreed with Erickson’s and Reicke’s negative assessments on the lecture method. His suggestions for improving student learning in a cross-cultural situation such as PNG are worth considering. He advocated that cross-cultural educators can be aided by knowledge and skills learned from cultural anthropology. Generally, the three expatriate theological educators described above had noted that the predominant pedagogical method of the ‘lecture’ undermined the PNG students’ participation in learning. Many students felt trapped by the Western model and looked forward to a more culturally responsive method in theological educational training in ELCPNG.

There clearly needs to be a re-discovery of what it means to learn in a PNG context and with a PNG approach. Erickson (1974) suggested that theological seminars should discover and know what the educational and ministry context is for PNG Melanesian society. He focused on the suitability or unsuitability of using Western educational concepts for ministry and training set in an institutionalized approach. Here, the seminaries have seriously failed PNG, particularly in terms of student participation in creating skills suited to congregational ministry and needs. The seminary isolates students from real life issues and turns them into passive participants.

Riecke (1993) made the same point but added a further concept: Theological education should be done in an integrated approach on both the informal and formal level. Riecke also examined the problem of theological educational training from the perspective of an institutionalized approach. He suggested that a holistic approach should involve educators, students and community together on their own cultural terms and context. This develops ‘not only intellectual knowledge but challenges them to an integrated growth of their personality, character, spirituality and skills’ (p. 35). He proposed such integration at both informal and formal theological levels of training, based on the life-theme approach. Integration would include courses with a much more practical orientation, with the main point being the life-theme of all Christian teaching. This works at two levels. It needs to start with the love and concern that the theological student has for the people and not necessarily on the knowledge such a one has accrued (obtained). The second is the need for a holistic theology that includes knowledge of biblical, dogmatic, ethical, historical and practical theology.
Thus, the starting point of theological educational training is with the assessment of life-situations and the needs of the people, leading into theological discussion and the providing a life-relevance.

Riecke recommended an inductive teaching method as appropriate for PNG, especially as it can combine openness for an experimental and problem-centred approach. Such a pedagogy would utilize forms of teaching other than just lecturing, thus opening for students a wider scope of participation. It would demand extensive field-work as part of the curriculum of theological seminaries providing regular contact with congregational reality, because both the lecturers and students can easily get lost in the academic routine of the classroom. Extensive field work would enable the students to remain for the majority of their studies within the context of their customary surroundings, continually confronting them (the students) with the needs of their community in a fundamental and everyday way. The problem is that of an ordained elite that is out of contact with the understanding of the community in general. For that reason the role and identity of ministers has to be thought through and dealt with in a proper and more thorough way. Ministers have to be trained for a wider range of responsibilities, especially the training of lay-people and their role as agents of change in view of the current rapid changes within PNG. Furthermore, ‘the ecumenical situation ... provides new challenges for church workers, which have [will need] to be dealt with during training.’ This ‘overall approach [to] theological education has to be a holistic one, developing not only the student’s intellectual knowledge, but challenging them [him/her] to an integrated growth of personality, character, spirituality and skills’ (p. 34)

To counter this problem Schiller (1999) approached the importance of theological education in a PNG context by presupposing a cross-cultural learning style as the norm. Schiller’s recommendation for an alternative approach to theological educational training combined non-formal and informal with the formal academic program. The integration indeed strengthens the PNG traditional pattern of learning. In this sense, Schiller considers that ‘cultural learning preferences ... suggest that learning would in fact be more effective and efficient ... as more serious coordination of non-formal and informal learning methods with the academic formal methods now emphasised’ (pp. 70-71). His discussion focuses on cross-cultural learning by adapting teaching methods to a culturally preferred style of learning.

Schiller’s propositions imply that the approach in theological education should be an ongoing reflection on lived PNG experience, not simply the traditions of the past. The stress on context and lived experience indicates that this alternative way of doing theology involves a paradigm shift – from deductive to inductive theology; from a paternalism that creates dependence and passivity to a liberating, enabling active participation that promotes a dynamic creativity. There needs to be an ongoing creative tension between the needs of the people and the demands of a modern world.

Together, the three theological educators point to a reform in theological educational training and its methodological approaches. Put another way, these articles call for ‘new alternatives’ to theological educational training in PNG. The starting point is the students in ministry, and then a training methodology that they can identify with and understand. Therefore, the conclusion is that the seminary must go back to the congregation or community to find the cultural symbols and indigenous ways of learning.

In a similar vein, perhaps the comments by Mclaughlin and O’Donoghue (1993) on teacher education in PNG may also be applied to theological education. They state that, ‘Any attempt to provide [an] understanding of the [ELCPNG and to develop an approach to training church ministers for ministry] should include an appreciation of the traditional philosophy and strategies used to educate [the indigenous people of PNG]. For thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans [their] educational systems [existed], PNG had its own way of educating its members’ (p. 2). Moreover, they further assert that:

Traditional education reflected as well as promoted cultural beliefs and customs that once underpinned, and to some extent still underpins, Papua New Guinean society. Its aim was to honour and sustain the Melanesian Way. Clearly it was successful since until recently traditional village life provided purpose and means for survival and identity of Papua New Guineans. This cannot be said of modern education...

The purpose of such a review is not to generate any nostalgic yearnings for an idyllic past. Rather, it hopes to provide an appreciation of how Papua New Guineans understood their own context and generate an appropriate education to respond to it. Such an appreciation would seem to be essential for Papua New Guinean teacher educators (p. 2).

Burke (cited in Mclaughlin & O’Donoghue, 1994, p. 2) suggests that the important task for lecturers is to ‘research their own traditional ways of knowing, not to romanticise their culture and past, but to protect against intellectual colonialism ... Thus Papua New Guinean lecturers can deal critically with the present realities of the teachers’ colleges in order to improve them. Perhaps it is important too for seminary lecturers to research their own traditional ways of
knowing. Thus, Lutheran theological education could then deal critically with the present realities of theological seminaries in order to improve them. This can take place by developing training approaches that students can understand and identify with in their own learning contexts. It is not directly about curriculum as such, although that cannot be ignored, rather it is about learning habits, methodologies and ways of being and doing that are thoroughly Papua New Guinean. One of the unfortunate side-effects of the past has been that Western ways have been seen as superior, and most PNG ways have been marginalised.

The deep roots of our research insights and understanding can be found in the work of Paulo Freire (1997) and Thomas Groome (1991). Furthermore, Earl and Dorothy Bowen (1991) along with James E Plueddemann (1991) have deepened our understanding of what it means to teach within cultural contexts. Recognising and knowing PNG learning systems presents a range of useful dialogues that exist between praxis and cross-cultural learning. These insights and analyses are essential for the consideration of a PNG epistemology that is deeply embedded at times and somewhat difficult to isolate. Extending this thesis is Freire’s praxis that links ontology and epistemology. This praxis can be observed in the process of problematizing, an approach to learning which emphasises that all true knowledge is generated in the face of problems which arise from reality. Thus epistemology and ontology are intertwined, for knowing arises from the learner’s existential situation and his/her critical consciousness of that reality.

For Freire, such consciousness is collective for it has dialectic interaction with reality. Thus, knowledge is an active or dynamic process; and entails a dialectic and/or dialogical relationship between knower and known which encourages active participation rather than passivity. Clement (2004) reiterated Freire’s process of learning in which the learner is a knowing being engaging with reality, where knowing is a function of a person’s critical consciousness in relation to interaction with the surrounding actualities of a person’s existence, whether, it be the natural world or social structures.

Groome’s (1991) shared praxis encompasses Friere’s praxis. However, his ontology reflects that of an existential approach and is justified theologically on the incarnational principle central to Christianity, and thus, qualifies the intent of his approach as Christian education in particular. Groome maintains throughout his writings that his praxis embraces people’s whole being as they interact with their social-political context. Therefore, the aim is practical application of values where epistemology is subsumed under ontology which means that knowing is an ontological activity. This, however, is referred to as ‘epistemic-ontology’ – the uniting of epistemology and ontology, knowing and being. This means that a person’s authentic being is always realized in relationship. Therefore, Groome’s Christian education demands a pedagogy that is grounded in and shapes people’s ontic selves – their identity and agency in the world. That is, the pedagogy must engage and form people’s consciousness of their own being in time and place with the intent of true freedom for all.

In this sense, the interest of Groome’s pedagogy is to enable learners to attend to the consciousness that arises from their whole being as agent-subjects-in-relationship. Thus, stressing however, the mutuality of partnership, participation and dialogue, where there is mutual responsibility for one another’s learning, rather than one which encourages dependency and passivity; it is community life-sharing in Christian education that shares and reflects in dialogue. Generally, this makes Groome’s praxis approach an incubation approach, as a way of achieving dialogue between faith and the cultural context. The model focuses the learner and learning into dialogue and reflection on action through the process of problematizing arising from issues of the student/learner’s immediate real world. In this action the student engages in the ‘act of knowing.’ In this way of being/doing the personal needs of the learner are at the focus point of the pedagogical process, commonly known as learner/student-centred in contrast with subject/teacher-centred education.

Praxis deals with the retaining of an approach that is both participative and dialogical and grounded in reflection and action. These components basically originate from the learner and set in motion thinking that is generated, developed and produced from a starting point that takes its origin from the position of the learner. Hence present action can come under critical review that is internally generated, not an externally imposed review that is largely predetermined and controlled. Rather, it is generated from within the cultural context together with the personal and local setting that then enables that person/student to move to a yet wider frames of understanding and reference. All the time the learner is an active participant, not a passive recipient. Out of this there can develop a dynamic participatory action that is future oriented – keeping a healthy connection between thought, action and reflection. Thus two elements of praxis, namely the sense of personal generation of ideas and personal evaluation/criticism of ideas, are held together in a dynamic and active educational process. In a deep sense praxis is a hands-on-approach; it is not just a theoretical abstract of complicated ideas written out in a classroom/lecture theatre. The theory needed in a praxis way of doing things comes from the demands that develop as the practice unfolds. It functions from a needs based criterion. It takes place when it is needed so that the learner can then move on and continue to learn with new insights that enable further discovery and layers of understanding. In summary then, the starting point
of this educational process is the student, not an isolated individual (passive subject) but rather as a creative subject working in relationship with others. Through group (community) participation and dialogue the priorities are set for action. Education, therefore, needs to be done as critical reflection on praxis. The goal of this educational process is “to create [constructively] critical participants to [or for] the ongoing life of the community” (Lovat, 2002, p. 25). Applying this specific understanding of praxis to theological education training today in the PNG cross-cultural setting implies that the praxis way of knowing and learning adopts local symbols and forms.

Education is not ‘a head in the sand’ way of doing things. What it should be is a quality process that seeks integration, community concern, academic-value, and personal growth for the person. One should always be open to learning. This education should be participative and not remote from everyday life as it is lived. Education is not force feeding, neither is it indoctrination. Education of values should provide a sense of emancipation for the participants. They should feel benefited by the process. This way of doing theological education should then be conceived as a social process resting on a “basic movement of the praxis model” (Bevans, 2002, p. 76).

Writers such as Ennio Mantovani (1995), Darrell Whiteman (1984), Bernard Narokobi (1985), and Mary Macdonald (1984) are among those who uphold the prevalent view of life as an interrelated experience governed by a web of relationships where epistemology and ontology is intertwined. This alludes to ‘knowing’ as an outcome of one’s relationship with the social and natural environments - a reciprocal relationship based on mutual participation and responsibility. Relationship in this context is a pragmatic experience in the quest for meaning and purpose of nature, life, and existence. Therefore, knowing is existence and existence means survival-sustaining, maintaining and celebration of life in all its capacities. In this sense, knowing is participation – a day to day pragmatic experience in which theory is subsumed by practice as a total learning process. The knowledge base for participation is made of the experiences one has of the natural world and social structures. This, however, requires the setting up of appropriate institutions in which participants are given the chance to actively participate in that education.

This paper makes a serious attempt to re-awaken discussion for needed change and to encourage the implementation of more appropriate ways of PNG learning styles in the ELCPNG seminars. Education should not just meet the formal needs of the educational purists. It should also engage the students in ways of being and learning that are freedom producing and emancipatory. In this way, education becomes concerned with issues of personal meaning and understanding that grow out of authenticity and autonomy – not just authenticity and autonomy of the educational institution and/or the institution’s academic staff, but also within the lived-life experiences of the students.

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Thomist Pedagogy for Catholic Religious Education

In the first decades of the modern age, a number of Catholic thinkers from a variety of disciplines focused their attention on how Catholics ought to engage this new, rapidly secularizing world. They were forced to think through a problem that was presenting itself in the West for the first time since the reign of Constantine, namely, how and whether Christian moral formation could be undertaken in a culture drastically at odds with Christian teaching and practice. (Beer, 2004)

Setting the scene: theological disputation
Few would dispute Beer’s premise that this is a ‘rapidly secularizing world’; rather it is the differing responses from within the Catholic Church as to ‘how and whether Christian moral formation can be undertaken’ that serve as the focus of this article. The above quote comes from an article in *The New Pantagruel* in which the author reviews a book by Rowland (2003) *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II*. This work by Rowland epitomises the response of the ‘Augustinian Thomists’ to the problem of Christian moral formation within a liberal, modern culture that is perceived to be ‘at odds with Christian teaching and practice.’ In this book she also identifies those whom she regards as her main opponents, namely the ‘Whig Thomists;’ whose seminal work is *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* by Novak (1991). Broadly speaking, the Whig Thomists embrace the culture of the secularizing world and, while recognizing its faults, they seek to work with this liberal, modern culture and imbue it with Christian values. On the other hand, the Augustinian Thomists decry this culture and believe that the Church must work to overthrow and to transform this culture into one in which Christian moral formation can readily take place.

The roots of this debate between Augustinian and Whig Thomists can be traced back to Vatican II which, of course, was a watershed in the Church’s response to the modern world. Beer (2004) suggests that “two fundamental stances toward that culture have emerged in Thomistic thought in the years since Vatican II:

1. the culture of modernity is at worst neutral with respect to the flourishing of Christian practices and at best a positive development with respect to the Christian life—indeed, it may well be a ‘new praeparitio evangelii,’ to quote Pope John XXIII, analogous in this respect to the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome; and
2. the culture of modernity is hostile to Christian flourishing and is aptly described as a ‘culture of death,’ the term popularized by John Paul II.

These two stances represent the positions adopted by the Whig Thomists and the Augustinian Thomists; the former embracing modern culture and the latter rejecting it. From the perspective of a classroom practitioner of Catholic religious education (RE) I wish to examine how these contrasting views impinge upon my understanding and practice.

Theological dialogue: secular background
It has to be acknowledged that most forms of Christian moral formation now take place against a secular background: even within a Catholic school the backdrop is usually that of a secular society. As Daly (1989, p91) comments:

Christianity in the West is not under serious active attack; it is ignored and bypassed. The apologetical task is consequently far harder today... Christianity today is faced with the tougher challenges of, first, providing foundations for the faith of its own members, and then commending itself to an apathetic public for whom faith is an irrelevance in a world which seems often to despair of finding any meaning in life.

Closer to the author’s home, this bleak picture of apathy and irrelevance is affirmed by the National Conference of Priests and Permanent Deacons of Scotland with their proclamation that ‘...contemporary society and culture are broadly indifferent to religion and to the need for faith; that we live in a de-christianised, secular society, which is de-personalising and indifferent to respect for the human person...’ (Press release, 2 October 2000). Set against such a background how can the teaching of Catholic RE enable Christian moral formation to take place? Well, as Glendon (2001) points out, the Church does have a rich history of mission from which to draw upon as “…she has time and again confronted challenges posed by transformations of culture as well as by cultural differences.”

Theological dialogue: lessons from history
Historically, the Catholic Church has adopted three broad strategies namely:

- catechesis;
- evangelisation; and
- mission.

For example, in the post-Reformation era the Catholic Church employed all three of these strategies. Firstly, the Church endeavoured to better catechise those people
whom the Church held to be her own (Bireley, 1999). Secondly, the Church evangelised those people ‘…in areas of Europe that were nominally Catholic but were in many ways cut off from orthodox Tridentine Catholicism’ (Gentilcore, 1994, p 269). Thirdly, the Church sent missions to those people who had another faith (Po-Chia Hsia, 1998). Each of these three strategies enjoyed varying degrees of success (Comerford, 2001) but, faced with a liberal, modern culture which, if any, of these strategies should the Church adopt?

For some commentators the challenge of secular culture is so great that for the Church ‘what may be required… is nothing less than a large-scale reappraisal and renewal of the educational apostolate of the Church’ (Glendon, 2001). As indicated above both the Augustinian Thomists and the Whig Thomists have adopted different positions as to what such a renewal of the Church’s educational apostolate may entail. Let us further examine these positions.

Theological dialogue: Augustinian Thomism

The underlying principle of what has come to be known as Augustinian Thomism was denoted by MacIntyre (1988, p362) as follows: ‘The moral presuppositions of liberal modernity, whether in its theory or in its social institutions, are inescapably hostile to Christianity and all attempts to adapt Christianity to liberal modernity are bound to fail.’ At first reading, this condemnation of liberal modernity would indicate that the response of the Church should be that of mission; but further reflection reveals that this may be inappropriate. In the post-Reformation era, missions were sent to countries where people had some faith in the supernatural and an openness and acceptance of a world ‘above and beyond’ themselves. The challenge for the missionaries was to re-orient this belief in the supernatural to that of Christianity: but today? Belief in the supernatural is seen as a form of childishness (Dawkins, 2006) and, as illustrated above, it is met with apathy and indifference. As the ‘…Universal Sacrament of Salvation (and) the primary source, guardian and perfector of culture within persons, institutions and entire societies…’ (Rowland, 2003, p168), what role does the Church have when confronted with liberal modernity and secularisation?

The prime exponent of Augustinian Thomism would suggest that the first role of the Church is to recognise with what she is confronted. According to Rowland (2003, p163) the Church has so far failed to “…appreciate that modernity is a cultural formation and to clearly distinguish between pastoral strategies for the evangelisation of pre-Christian cultures… and pastoral strategies to be adopted in the dioceses of metropolitan modernity where the prevailing culture was not so much pre-Christian as post and anti-Christian.” In such a culture the Church is not confronted with people of undeveloped faith who require catechesis. Neither is she faced with people of a diminished faith who require evangelisation; nor people of another faith who require mission. Rather the Church encounters people who have been formed through a process of cultural formation that is inimical to Christianity. That is to say, what has happened is that ‘…the culture of modernity has been treated as a new “universal culture” replacing Greco-Latin culture, and that this culture… is actually a hostile medium for the flourishing of Christian practices and beliefs: and indeed, according to some scholars, it represents an “heretical reconstruction” or “secular parody” of the principles of an authentically Christian culture’ (Rowland, 2003, p159).

This liberal, modern and secular culture has made the Church’s educational apostolate extremely difficult. In particular, this ‘heretical reconstruction’ or ‘secular parody’ through the ‘…secularisation of many originally Christian values’ (Rowland, 2003, p 159) has complicated this task. For example, the Christian duty to ‘love your neighbour’ has been transmuted into ‘tolerance.’ Thus, the divine directive to seek the good of the others seems incomprehensible to people who have been acculturated to allow others to do as they wish. Newman wrote in 1873 that ‘Christianity has never yet had experience of a world simply irreligious’ (Reynolds, 2004, p13). According to the Augustinian Thomists this irreligious world is what the Church now inhabits and the evidence for this is to be found within a widespread loss of faith within the developed nations.

In the concluding section of her book, Rowland (2003, p165) summarises the view of the Augustinian Thomists:

In the post-Conciliar era, the Greco-Latin cultural patrimony of the Church was gamble on the belief that the post-war Pax Americana signalled the arrival of a new era analogous to that of the Pax Romana, in which Liberalism is the common philosophy… and a homogeneous international ‘mass culture’ its embodied social form. With little or no theological justification for taking such a gamble, some naïvely supposed that God had provided a new world order in which Christianity would flourish as an equal alongside any number of other creeds, including Enlightenment secularism, and would be usefully informed by those creeds while in turn influencing them.

As with others Rowland believes that this ‘gamble’ by the Church has failed. Not only has it failed but it has placed the Church itself in jeopardy. Chillingly, she asserts that ‘the Augustinian Thomist position… is very much in accord with the judgement of Origen that it is better to die in the desert than to end up in the service of the Egyptians, or, one might add, end up in a position where the ‘Chosen People’ start to believe that they are Egyptians because all cultural traces of their specific differences have been suppressed’ (Rowland, 2003, p165). So, not only is the educational apostolate of the Church failing to convert ‘the Egyptians’ of today’s liberal, modern and secular culture but also the ‘secular parody’ of this culture is confusing and endangering members of the Church itself.
What, then, does this entail for the classroom teaching of Catholic RE?

**Catholic RE: lessons from Augustinian Thomism**

From an Augustinian Thomist perspective there must be faithfulness to Catholic doctrine with regard to the teaching of Catholic RE. Lesson content must be unsullied by contact with liberal, modern culture and should heed the warning of the Scottish experience whereby the teaching of non-denominational RE has been diluted during the post-Vatican II generation. In the 1960s, it was termed religious instruction (RI) and was almost exclusively Christian-based. In the 1970s the teaching of RE included other world religions and in the 1980s RE was re-labelled RME (religious and moral education). The late 1990s witnessed the advent of RMPS (religious moral and philosophical studies) and in the 2000s departments of RME and RMPS are being subsumed within Faculties of Social Studies. So, in the 1960s the aim of RI was to inculcate Christian belief and practice; but now in the 2000s we find a prominent Scottish RE teacher proclaiming that, with regard to the teaching of RE, ‘any desire to convert the heathen must be firmly smacked down…’ (Adams 2000). A comparable dilution of Catholic RE may not be our fate but, nevertheless, from an Augustinian Thomist perspective we should be wary of our ‘chosen people,’ our pupils, going native and becoming ‘Egyptians.’ That said, other writers hold a different and more positive view of modern culture and it is to them that we now turn.

**Theological dialogue: Whig Thomism**

Novak, the founder of Whig Thomism, draws upon a tradition of liberalism that includes such as Acton, Maritain and Courtney Murray. Unlike Rowland, he sees Pax Americana as offering the current best practical model for achieving this re-casting of Christianity. In his seminal work, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, Novak identifies seven features of ‘democratic capitalism’ which, he claims, re-orient liberal, modern culture toward Christian values. Two of these features are particularly noteworthy:

1. **Virtue** - There is a strong consonance between the virtues required for successful commercial and industrial practice and the natural moral virtues. Without Aristotelian temperance and prudence, fortitude and justice, economic rationality lacks root in human character. Economic rationality is not easy to acquire; it must be learned. The act of acquiring it enforces its own disciplines. Managers and workers must show up on time, with regularity and attentiveness… to learn and to practice such rules is to discipline one’s habits and one’s acts in specific ways; that is, to learn and to practice classical virtues (Novak, 1991, p181).

2. **Spirit** – For Novak the chief mistake of his opponents is that they are guilty of overlooking… the spirit of capitalism, its dynamic principle, its central commitment to practical intellect: to invention, discovery, reasoned cooperation, and the intellectual and moral virtue of enterprise (Novak, 1991, p437).

Novak makes a substantive case for the Whig Thomist understanding of how democratic capitalism can re-cast a liberal, modern culture toward Christian values. Citing the Asian ‘economic miracle’ of raising half a billion people out of poverty within twenty years, Novak (2004) claims that ‘enterprise’ is at the heart of capitalism and this he describes as the ‘intellectual habit of noticing, discovering, inventing – of seeing new practical possibilities before others do.’ According to Novak (1991, p437) if one has this habit and practices it by making right decisions and good choices then one has perfected this habit into “…the intellectual and moral virtue of enterprise.” By ascribing the status of both a moral and an intellectual virtue to ‘enterprise’, Novak seems to be raising it to the level of prudence – also both a moral and intellectual virtue – and so, in his terms, within the world of business, the capitalistic virtue of enterprise equates with the virtue of prudence.

But what does this mean for the classroom practice of Catholic RE?

**Catholic RE: lessons from Whig Thomism**

The needs of businesses for pupils to leave school with entrepreneurial skills are well documented (e.g. Scottish Executive 2002) and there are several educational initiatives at the heart of which is to be found pupils ‘learning and practising classical virtues’ e.g. collaborative learning (O’Donnell et al 2006), cooperative learning (Johnson et al 1993), critical skills (Weatherley 2003), enterprise learning (Luby 1995), flexible learning (Waterhouse 1990) and negotiating the curriculum (Boomer et al 1992). Thus, by focusing on the skills, habits and dispositions that pupils acquire it is possible to have Catholic RE that is not at odds with liberal, modern culture but, rather, from a ‘Dominican Thomist’ perspective it ‘has borrowed from the spirit of the age to supply the wants of the age’ (Drane, 1988, p71). This ‘borrowing from the spirit of the age to supply the wants of the age’ is an important strategy. The spirit of this age of liberal, modern culture is that of capitalism, and so the Whig Thomists would have teachers of Catholic RE borrow from capitalism ‘to supply the wants of this age.’ But within the classroom it is capitalism expressed in the terms of Novak – the learning and practising of classical virtues. Achieving this in the classroom may re-orient liberal, modern culture towards classical and Christian values; and so, now, we must consider pedagogy.

**Catholic RE pedagogy: Thomist perspectives**

In a sense, pedagogies are the mainsprings of schooling. They can serve, variously, as agents of social reproduction or as levers of social production. They can be in the vanguard of social change; or they can merely serve to protect the status quo. (Hamilton, 1990, p. 55).
From the discussion of Thomist perspectives it is clear that Catholic RE pedagogy should not be an agent of social reproduction; rather it should be a lever of social production. A feature of pedagogy geared towards social production is that it should be ‘…marked by imagination, originality, initiative and an ability to go beyond the teacher’ (Hamilton, 1990, p63). Such imagination, originality and initiative cannot apply to the content of the Catholic RE curriculum for it must be fully in accord with Catholic doctrine. If Catholic RE pedagogy is to be in the vanguard of social change then it is the learning and teaching activities that should promote capitalistic yet virtuous behaviour marked by imagination, originality and initiative.

To exemplify; a class of pupils aged 12-13 years were completing a unit of work entitled ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ in which the prime source of information had been extracts from the film of the same name by Franco Zeffirelli. In the first stage the pupils were confronted with five problems that had been set by the teacher e.g. ‘Why did the Jewish authorities have Jesus executed?’ What reason did the Romans give for his crucifixion? What is the significance of the crucifixion for Christians?” etc.

So, in line with the Augustinian Thomist perspective, the teacher ensures that the content of the unit is in accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church. Working collaboratively, the pupils then produce their responses which are checked by the teacher and any inconsistencies or errors are clarified and corrected. This prepares the pupils for the next stage in which their five responses are used as the content of the teaching points for their group presentation to the rest of the class.

In the second stage the pupils are free to use their initiative when choosing their method of group presentation e.g. rap, dance, play, quiz show, PowerPoint, etc. Furthermore, they are encouraged to be imaginative and original with their work (thus fulfilling the Thomist desire to meet the criteria for social production). For instance, one group of four boys had recently watched the film ‘Life of Brian’ and they performed a 7-minute playlet which, in Monty Python style, concisely covered and superbly presented the five teaching points. In preparing for their group presentation the pupils had not only exhibited the attentiveness, discipline and regularity sought by Novak (1991) above; but also they had cooperated and clearly displayed their inventive capabilities.

So, within the classroom the pupils are developing habits and dispositions that enable them to acquire the business virtue of enterprise – also known as the cardinal virtue of prudence. As Pieper (1966, pp6-7) informs us: ‘Virtue is a ‘perfected ability’… founded upon prudence, that is to say upon the perfected ability to make right decisions.’ So, in the classroom, pupils must be offered opportunities to make right decisions and this can be achieved when the classroom environment comprises a balance between order and freedom i.e. ordered freedom. The order is provided by the curriculum content mediated by the teacher – and fully in accord with Catholic doctrine – and freedom is achieved through the ability of the pupils to make free choices with respect to some of the learning and teaching activities.

Ordered freedom: hallmark of prudence
This freedom to choose responsibly is at the heart of ordered freedom. In modern, liberal culture the state provides sufficient order such that the individual is enabled to exercise freedom and choose responsibly. This order is necessary for an individual citizen to display the virtue of prudence; however too many citizens are incapable of exercising this virtue. As Gronbacher (2001) illustrates:

> Our culture offers a multitude of choice; many more than were available even a few decades ago. Unfortunately, many of the choices made in our society are imprudent ones. We see the statistics of concerning drug abuse, illegitimate births, crime, and random acts of violence towards people and property…

Gronbacher sees these imprudent choices as a result of the ‘contemporary understanding of freedom as license.’ It is this contemporary understanding and practice of imprudent choices within modern, liberal culture that has so alienated the Augustinian Thomists. The vision being proposed here is that modern, liberal culture requires to be transformed from a society in which many imprudent choices are made, into the opposite, a society in which many prudent choices are made: and the means to realise this vision is that of social production within the classroom. That is to say, pupils begin to acquire the habit and disposition of making right choices, developing prudence, with an expectation that this will continue into their adult lives.

Encouragingly, there are several educational initiatives founded on ordered freedom that enable pupils to develop prudence e.g. collaborative learning, cooperative learning, critical skills, enterprise learning, flexible learning and negotiating the curriculum. However, there is a cautionary note. Previous initiatives such as guided discovery and democratic education similarly exhibit the hallmark of ordered freedom and although many of the pupils may have acquired the virtue of prudence; collectively they have not transformed modern, liberal culture (Luby 2006).

**Conclusion**
At first sight, the theological disputation between Augustinian and Whig Thomists about the response of the Catholic Church to secularization may seem remote from the everyday realities of classroom practice. Yet, closer examination reveals useful strategies for today’s Catholic RE.

Whereas Augustinian Thomists recoil from the imprudent behaviours within modern, liberal culture; Whig Thomists perceive opportunities for Christian
moral formation. Taken together, Thomism highlights a need for the widespread development of prudence within modern, liberal culture. In order that adults develop the habit and disposition of making right decisions then pedagogy should be viewed as a form of social production; whereby students learn such habit and disposition within the classroom.

For those who teach Catholic RE a useful starting point would be educational initiatives bearing the hallmark of order freedom such as collaborative learning, critical skills and enterprise learning. On the one hand, these initiatives encourage the teacher to establish order in the learning environment and remain faithful to Catholic doctrine. On the other hand they permit students the freedom to make decisions and choices concerning the learning and teaching activities to be undertaken. In such a fashion, these students should acquire the virtue of prudence and, hopefully, become agents of social change who will transform modern, liberal culture. The lesson of history suggests, though, that the need for the widespread development of prudence cannot rest solely with teachers of Catholic RE; the net must be cast wider within the world of education.

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Implementing systemic reform in a challenging context: developing effective RE curriculum for 21st century learners

Introduction
In a context of geographic, cultural and theological diversity, religious education curriculum in the Northern Territory is undergoing a metamorphosis. This change has been driven by questions about effective pedagogy and professional development in a diocese with a large turnover of teachers each year, and a high percentage of teachers with limited qualifications in religious education or theology. This paper seeks to explore some of the decisions and factors that have influenced this systemic reform, and the challenges in trying to develop an effective curriculum for students that is enjoyable and meaningful. In capturing some critical learnings through the journey so far, it is important to acknowledge that new questions and challenges are emerging. An effective religious education program relies upon many other factors apart from an appropriate curriculum, and these issues will need to be explored if religious education is really going to be the priority learning area in the curriculum of any Catholic school.

The context
The diocese of Darwin covers all of the Northern Territory with the exception of Uluru. Schools are located from Bathurst Island (eighty kilometres north of Darwin) to Alice Springs. The Catholic school student population is approximately five thousand, including urban primary and secondary schools as well as five Indigenous schools located in the communities of Santa Teresa, Daly River, Port Keats and Bathurst Island which cater for approximately one fifth of the student population. One of the great challenges faced by Indigenous schools is the shifting sands of enrolments (numbers are usually well over one thousand in February and down to approximately eight hundred by August). Community life has a direct effect on daily attendance levels, and schools are constantly searching for ways to entice students into regular attendance. Every urban school also has some Indigenous students enrolled, and this number has increased from five hundred and thirty five Indigenous students in 2002, to five hundred and ninety five students in 2006. Indigenous students in urban schools come from a multiplicity of backgrounds and socio economic levels. There is also great variation in the level of Indigenous enculturation that occurs in the family life of Indigenous students in urban schools. Like any other homogenous group in a school, the level of importance placed on education varies considerably amongst Indigenous families, and is directly related to the level of educational support students receive from their families.

At the beginning of each school year it is the norm to have new teachers from every state and territory in Australia, and most schools would need to employ new staff at various stages throughout the year. Factors that contribute to a highly transient population include the high percentage of the Northern Territory population working in Government or Defence Force employment, and many of these people are regularly transferred to other parts of the country. Often teachers will arrive in the territory to have an experience quite different from their previous environment, but they only ever plan staying on a short term basis and then they need to return to their families interstate. Some years there can be more than seventy new teachers in the diocese at the start of a school year, out of a total population of approximately three hundred teachers working in the diocese. However, history reveals that the turnover of teachers is no where near as high as it was twenty years ago when it was not unusual to have to replace the majority of staff by the end of the school year.

Schools in the diocese of Darwin were using The Guidelines for Religious Education for students in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, and over time this resource ceased to be published and was no longer used as the key resource for religious education in any diocese in Australia, so clearly the time had come to find a new way forward. In reviewing and analysing the situation the critical question was, ‘What resource can we use to meet the needs of our teachers and students to provide a quality, engaging religious education program?’ It became apparent that the context of this diocese was quite unique and anything from any other diocese would need to be adapted and modified to be appropriate for students’ local life experiences. Therefore, the radical decision was made that despite the geographic distances between schools and the limited number of personnel available, the diocese would produce a religious education curriculum to suit the specific needs of students and teachers in the Northern Territory.
Table 1: Numbers of new teachers to the diocese of Darwin at the start of each year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Urban schools</th>
<th>Indigenous Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of teachers in the diocese</td>
<td>230/240</td>
<td>60/70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Decisions

The first key decision was to write an actual religious education program where entire units of work were fully planned for teachers, and that reflected the context of students’ lives. A highly transient population (among students and staff), the limited religious literacy of many teachers (and students) and the geographical diversity of the diocese meant that it was impossible to provide new teachers with sufficient professional development to competently and confidently write their own units of work. Even teachers new to the diocese with a strong background in religious education stated that there were so many new elements to take on board when teaching in a totally new context that they lacked the time and energy required to plan and teach quality units of work in religious education.

Another key decision made early in the process was to use the theological framework written by another diocese who had a wider level of expertise to draw on, and which melded most comprehensively with the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework. This led to using the South Australian Religious Education Framework, and several aspects of curriculum aligned closely as the Northern Territory was already drawing on other programs or frameworks from South Australia.

With an established theological framework in place, energy and resources could be utilised by developing a program that would clearly outline what to teach and how to teach religious education activities. There was widespread belief among religious education coordinators that simply providing teachers with information about what to teach would not empower people to engage students in interesting, stimulating and active learning. A key word was pedagogy, and this brings forward another key decision taken which was to draw on nationally recognised expertise for particular areas of need to recognise that other people had knowledge, skills and wisdom that was not readily available locally. Calling on national expertise also gave the project another level of credibility (those looking in from the outside can often see elements that those on the inside can easily miss) and would assist in enabling the project to result in high quality teaching and learning materials.

As a result of these decisions, the project was launched by Religious Education Coordinators and a few other people with specific expertise in religious education working with Dr Dan White to unpack the ‘DEEP’ pedagogical framework.

The philosophical stance advocated by the ‘DEEP’ framework is grounded in constructivist learning theory. This approach views students as active learners; who learn at different rates; need diverse and multiple challenges; require support in making connections; and who need to take responsibility for their learning. ‘DEEP’ learning strategies allow students to construct religious meaning by communally participating in a variety of intellectually challenging experiences relevant to their religious tradition. ‘DEEP’ thinking activities must have connections to prior learning, cater for individual differences and have relevance in a real world context (White, 2003, p. 12).

Another key decision made as the project unfolded, was to publish the units of work electronically through the use of MyInternet to which every teacher in the diocese has password access. This decision was based on the fact that the minute religious education units of work (or even Guidelines) are published in hard copy they begin to date and become obsolete within a period of time. By publishing electronically, the materials could always be updated as needed, and this was also a significant financial saving compared to the costs involved in
publishing hard copies. Whenever a new resource becomes available, or religious education teachers are involved in professional development that outlines contemporary thinking which needs to be included in specific units, changes can be made accordingly. Therefore, the program will never be officially ‘completed’ but will always remain in a state of change, consistent with curriculum, theological and educational trends or initiatives. To accurately reflect the world we live in, curriculum must be dynamic and hence in a constant state of change.

A moment in time may be the impetus for a change in a curriculum. Recent events, such as the attack on the World Trade Center (sic), demand new approaches to current problems. They create new fields of study and add new emphasis to existing ones. Imagine the array of courses that will be developed around the ideas of home front security, biological and chemical warfare, and the Middle East to name a few (Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2002).

Possibly the last key decision was made when the reality of the time required and scope of the project became apparent and teachers experienced frustration as they simply ran out of new materials to teach. A Religious Education Coordinator from a campus in Alice Springs rang to say teachers were asking for new materials. Unfortunately the response was that there were no new materials available just yet, and it was suggested that teachers return to what they were doing for religious education prior to this project. The reply was clear and direct. “No-one here wants to go back to the way it was”. However, despite the tension of keeping up to the demand, the decision was made not to sacrifice quantity for quality. The project has taken longer than originally anticipated, but the quality is arguably higher than anyone ever imagined back in the beginning.

Without going through any formal decision making processes, it was clear to all involved that Indigenous schools would need to have their own version of this program, if the program was going to meet the aim of providing teaching and learning strategies that were appropriate for the needs and context of students and teachers. The challenge of constructing a credible, authentic and appropriate religious education program for Indigenous students in their own schools is even more daunting than the challenges facing urban schools. Each Indigenous community has their own cultural stories, expressions, language, dances and totems, so each community needs to draw from and teach their own cultural and spirituality links. Even the seasons of the year are expressed differently in various communities, with the Tiwi people on Bathurst Island talking about three seasons (wet, dry and build-up), the people of Wadeye (Port Keats) talking about two seasons (wet and dry), and the Indigenous people of Kakadu talking about six different seasons. Throughout 2007 and 2008 there is much work being done with the elders, teachers and leaders of each Indigenous community to draw together a religious education program that integrates key stories, spirituality and cultural links into a modified version of the twelve Key Ideas from the South Australian Religious Education Framework.

**Journey in Faith**

The Religious Education program for the diocese of Darwin has now been called *Journey in Faith*. The notion of ‘journey’ is quite central to life in the territory, as very few staff were actually born in the territory and most people have been on a significant journey to arrive here. The geographic distances mean that staff constantly journey to Darwin for professional development, and some people travel over fifteen hundred kilometres to reach Darwin. The notion of ‘journey’ is also significant for Indigenous people, and all Christians are on a faith journey where no one ever ‘arrives’. For students who already have faith, it is hoped that this program will help develop and enrich their faith. For students who do not have any faith or membership into a faith community, it is hoped that this program will take them on a journey of understanding faith at a cognitive level. One cannot believe, or choose not to believe, unless one knows what it is they are accepting or rejecting.

In grappling with the question of what to include in *Journey in Faith*, the key criteria was always to try to make the document as accessible as possible for classroom teachers.

For many teachers, the language and thought-world of theology has little meaning and teachers struggle with ways to understand and express key aspects of the Catholic faith in a relevant and accessible manner. (Liddy, 2006)

Essentially the document had to empower those who had little background or confidence in teaching religious education. Each of the twelve Key Ideas from the South Australian Religious Education Framework were divided into a series of Learning Focus questions, and teaching and learning strategies were then written for each Learning Focus (essentially a unit of work)

Each Key Idea and subsequent Learning Focus questions include a section on:
- Catholic Church teaching (a summary of what the Church teaches about a particular topic)
- Indigenous perspectives, written by Indigenous Religious Education Coordinators in the diocese in response to the question, “What do you want students in urban schools to understand about your culture and your spirituality when they learn about this topic?”
- Background information for teachers, both at the start of each Key Idea and throughout the teaching and learning strategies, to place the information where teachers will need it most
- Explicit Teaching Points, where information written in a box will outline, ‘Teach students...’
that...’. Throughout Journey in Faith the writers have consistently tried to avoid making assumptions that teachers will know certain information and therefore they have included critically important points to provide teachers with confidence that what they are teaching is appropriate and accurate.

- A rubric template for assessment so that all teachers can use the same criteria to assess and report on students’ work.

**Key Learnings**

It is impossible to undertake such a major project without identifying significant learnings along the way. Some of these key learnings include the following:

- Systemic reform requires authentic leadership. This means listening to the signs of the times and shaping and driving a new vehicle to take people where they need to go in the future. Authentic leadership also means dealing effectively with the voices of resistance and crafting changes in such a way that the enthusiasm of the majority overrides the reluctance of the minority (who will always exist).

  Authentic leaders take action to bring change, to move us closer to the ideal of appropriateness. They raise themselves and others to higher levels of motivation and morality. They infuse their leadership practices with a higher purpose and meaning. They are able to identify and articulate this higher ideal in order to help elevate the human spirit of those with whom they engage.

  (Duignan, 2002, p. 183.)

- Systemic reform requires a high level of support from key players. This has vital consequences for issues like finance (and such a project would be impossible without a high level of financial commitment), and releasing teachers from their normal workload to contribute to the writing process.

- There is no substitute for knowing your own context and owning your challenges, so that specific needs can shape curriculum to be appropriate and relevant for the users, otherwise there is little to be gained.

- If professional development for teachers in the diocese is geared to the question of ‘How do I teach this?’ rather than the question of ‘Why do I teach this?’ so that it is directly related to the intrinsic work of teaching, there is a significantly higher positive response from participants. Writers involved in this project have consistently stated that it has been the best form of professional development they have ever experienced.

- From little things, big things really can grow. Systemic reform in a diocese that covers a large geographical area but is small personnel wise requires people to rise above the perception that ‘we are not good enough’ or ‘we do not have what it takes’. Self doubt is the first step to failure. Self belief is the first step to success, because it is morally deplorable to pour significant resources into a project that people believe is doomed from the beginning.

- Religious Education can not only be enjoyable and interesting for students and teachers – it can lead the way and help shape other curriculum areas. Using the DEEP pedagogical approach has brought about consistent comments from teachers about how they can apply particular teaching and learning strategies used in religious education to other curriculum areas.

**Key Challenges Emerging**

Despite having a religious education program that does appear to be empowering teachers to teach religious education, there are some key challenges emerging that can be summarised by the following questions:

- How do we maintain the integrity of content in the delivery of the units of work? (How do we know what people are really teaching and how the content is really being delivered?)

- How can Scripture be taught in such a way to allow students to view the text through multiple lenses and not misinterpret the text through the narrow confines of a historical literal framework, when the overwhelming majority of teachers find Biblical interpretation extremely challenging?

  Catholic exegesis freely makes use of the scientific methods and approaches which allow a better grasp of the meaning of texts in their linguistic, literary, sociocultural, religious and historical contexts, while explaining them as well through studying their sources and attending to the personality of each author. (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993)

- How do we retain the integrity of the faith given that an increasing number of teachers are not actively involved in a living and worshipping faith community?

- Is it detrimental to children’s faith development to be taught religious education by a person who does not believe or live what they are teaching?

- Can we have an authentic Catholic school if the majority of staff are not regularly engaged in a local worshipping community?

- Do our accreditation policies ensure that religious education is taught by qualified and committed staff (who would not be atheist, agnostic or Christians who do not subscribe to or live Catholic teaching)?
In talking to various colleagues around Australia, it would appear that these questions are not isolated to the diocese of Darwin. The landscape of religious education in Australia has already undergone a dramatic transformation since Vatican II, but the current Australian context is also being impacted by many changes, and credible Catholic schools for the future will depend upon open dialogue, honest reflection and creative thinking to explore answers to the above questions.

In essence, systemic reform to create effective religious education curriculum for 21st century learners does not guarantee that religious education is being delivered appropriately, and it does not ensure that religious education will play a positive role in the emerging, growing faith life or potential faith life of any student. Effective religious education curriculum is only one part of the picture, and the other elements of delivery and witness can play a more powerful role in shaping the faith life of a student.

Teaching has an old English root, tæcan, which means "to share, to instruct," or more literally, to provide signs or outward expressions of something one knows. (Durka, 2002, pp. 6-7).

However, a well defined religious education program that equips teachers to engage 21st century learners in stimulating, enjoyable and relevant activities that cater for different learning styles and relates to the life experiences of the students, will ensure that the groundwork is in place for religious education to be a life changing experience that positively affects the way students choose to live for the rest of their lives.

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The New Teaching Paradigm Guidelines for Teaching – Part 1

A Paradigm Change: Introduction
Since the close of the Vatican Council in 1965, the Church has proclaimed that the covenant of God with the Jewish people has “never been revoked” (cf. John Paul II, 1980; Romans 11:29), and that the Jews “still remain most dear to God” (Nostra Aetate, #4). These statements and subsequent documents on the Church’s relationship to Jews and Judaism connote a change of heart towards the Jewish people. Such a shift in thinking is known as a paradigm change.

What do we mean by a paradigm change? A paradigm is simply the predominant worldview in the realm of human thought. A paradigm shift occurs when a current worldview, a thought system, is transformed into another. For instance, a major paradigm shift occurred when Copernicus (ca. 1600) discovered that astral bodies did not revolve around the earth, but the earth revolved around the sun. This discovery, which displaced humans as the center of the universe, created a pivotal change, a paradigm shift, in humanity’s conception of itself. The change was slow and painful. Paradigm shifts do not just happen but rather are driven by agents of change.

One of the major agents of change in the Church’s attitude towards the Jews was the Shoah, the destruction of six million Jews in Hitler’s reign and the Church’s growing recognition of its responsibility in the growth and spread of anti-Semitism. The Seelisberg Conference, which met in Switzerland in 1947, gathered a group of over a hundred persons of various Christian denominations representing nine different countries, and produced a document known as “The Ten Points of Seelisberg” (Fritz, 1986). This document had as its starting point formulations presented there by the Jewish historian Jules Isaac (1877-1963), who wrote the book, Jesus and Israel.

The Seelisburg Conference was a dramatic turning point in Christian thinking. Two years later, in 1949, Jules Isaac met with Pope Pius XII and drew his attention to the wording of the Good Friday prayer for the “perfidious Jews.” (The phrase was later removed by Pope John XXIII in 1959.) Again in June 1960, Jules Isaac met with Pope John XXIII, in a meeting that formed the basis of Vatican II’s “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” (Wahle, 1997).

With the publication of Nostra Aetate, several other ecclesial documents followed, such as, Guidelines to Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate (1975), Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis (1985), and The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible (2002).

In introducing the 2002 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) asked the question: ‘In its presentation of the Jews and the Jewish people, has not the New Testament itself contributed to creating a hostility towards the Jewish people that provided a support for the ideology of those who wished to destroy Israel?’ This document, and We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah (1998), candidly admit the historical link between the ancient and modern forms of anti-Semitism.

It is clear to us now that ‘supercessionism’ which declared the Jewish faith inferior and outmoded once the Christian era arrived, and which claims that the Jews are, thus, no longer within the covenant, is both theologically untenable and the cause of anti-Semitism. Knowing these facts however, does not teach us how to present the Scriptures in a manner consistent with the new paradigm of “the covenant never revoked.” How do we change nearly two thousand years of thinking? We do have some guidelines to help us.

Guidelines
(a) It is important to remember the manner in which the Gospels were written:

The Gospels are the outcome of long and complicated editorial work: The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, [and] explicating some things in view of the situation of their Churches...” (Notes, 85 #24).

Of particular note in this regard is the Gospel of John. As Raymond Brown states, this Gospel underwent more than one edition to meet the needs of the Christian community at the time, and the most plausible date for the final written form of the Gospel was between 100 and 110 CE (Brown, 1966, p. lxx).

The Gospel of John, like the other Gospels, expresses the evangelist’s theology of who Jesus is. For John, Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament prophecies, a fulfillment that became known as a
fulfillment of replacement. According to Brown, the theme of Jesus’ replacement of Jewish institutions such as ritual purification, the Temple, and worship in Jerusalem is reflected in chapters 2-4 in John, and of Jewish feasts like the Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, and Dedication in chapters 5-10 (Brown, 1966). John’s Gospel has been a main source of much anti-Judaism in the Church, and it is this Gospel that will be the most difficult to accommodate to the two major statements above: that the covenant with the Jewish people has not been revoked, and that the Jewish people are still the beloved people of God.

(b) The Gospels, like other parts of the Bible, reflect the Word of God, but the Word of God is mediated through the word of the human writer; hence the Word of God is subject to the limitations of the human writer. Two schools of thought flourished in Judaism near the time of Jesus—that of Rabbi Akiva and that of Rabbi Ishmael (Sifre Num. 15.41). The school of Rabbi Akiva taught that each word of the Torah is a concentrate of the divine Word; hence every word is considered capable of infinite expansion and an infinite number of explanations and interpretations (cf. Mt. 5:18). Rabbi Ishmael, on the other hand, emphasized that God’s word was contained in human language and therefore shared in all the weaknesses and limitations of that language.

If we accept both of these schools of thought we can accept the truth of our sacred scriptures without undermining our capacity to critique them and reinterpret them, a task now demanded of us in the light of the new paradigm shift. How, for example, will we deal with texts like, “You are from your father, the devil” (John 8:44), and “The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him” (Mark 3:6)?

Action steps
It is a difficult task to change 2000 years of teaching that resulted in the demonization of Jews to a recognition that the Jews are “the still beloved people of God” and that the covenant of God with them has not been broken. Following are some practical steps to be taken:

1. Become acquainted with Church documents, especially, the 1975 Guidelines and the 1985 Notes, listed above. Since these documents are springboards not destinations, we will want to keep abreast of subsequent documents as well as the work of other Christian denominations that are engaged in the same task.

2. Study the religion of Judaism, ancient and modern: “It is a practical impossibility to present Christianity while abstracting from the Jews and Judaism, unless one were to suppress the Old Testament, forget about the Jewishness of Jesus and the Apostles, and dismiss the vital cultural and religious context of the primitive Church” (Introduction to Notes). Hence the “urgency and importance of precise, objective, and rigorously accurate teaching on Judaism” (Notes #8, 1985) and the need “to strive to learn by what essential traits Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience” (Guidelines, Preamble, 1975).

An example of the fruit of these studies can be seen in the Sabbath text quoted above, “The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him” (Mark 3:6). Even a minimal knowledge of Jewish teaching on the Sabbath would let the reader know that Jesus did nothing worthy of death and that the text is a reflection of the tensions within the community when the text was written.

3. Recognize a difficult text and admit the difficulty. For example, the story of the tenants (Mark 12:1-12) is particularly problematic in this regard. The Holy Scriptures of most religions have difficult texts that tend to debase other religions in order to exalt the superiority of one’s own religion. Scholars have found ways to deal with difficult texts: ignore them; demythologize them; reinterpret them. Reinterpretation in light of the new paradigm shift is high on our priority list.

4. Check for Jewish themes. Since the Gospels are rooted in Judaism, it is likely that many Jewish concepts are close at hand. For example, John 7:37, “On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me.’” The clue here is “the last day of the festival,” which is the Jewish festival of Succoth. A study of this festival and the water ceremony will open the door to a new understanding of the Holy Spirit, Ruah HaKodesh, and the Presence of God in the Temple.

In summary
By now, you may ask yourself, “How can I, a busy professional person, do all that is required for the writing of a teaching unit?” But it is much simpler than it may appear. Suppose you accepted to prepare a teaching unit on Jesus and the Samaritan woman, you might do the following (“A Midrash on the Samaritan Woman, which follows, incorporates many of these suggestions)”

1. Read the text, John 42. Look for themes related to Judaism—there are many: the Holy Spirit, living water, the tension between the Samaritans and Jews and their attitude towards the Torah, an earlier story of Jacob at the well, and meeting at wells generally. The material is easily accessible. It may be as near as your next-door rabbi.

3. Acquaint yourself with the documents cited in this article. A handy source is the website of the Vatican, www.vatican.va.
4. Bring all of your study to your own encounter with the text, and write out your interpretation, which belongs to the joy you will experience in this exercise. The result may be a well-prepared lesson and a rich midrashic teaching.

5. When you have finished writing the unit, ask yourself if you have presented the Jews and Judaism in a favorable light. A good test is to let a rabbi read it, something that is not too difficult in this day and age of electronic mail.

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**A Midrash on Jesus and the Samaritan Woman –Part 2**

An I-Thou Encounter in John 4:1-42

Drip! Drip! Drip! The dripping of the water had a calming relaxing effect on Jesus, who was tired after his long journey from Jerusalem to this town of Sychar in Samaria. He had been reluctant to take this route because of the animosity that existed between the Samaritans and his own people, the Jews, but he knew the real name of this town was Shechem and this was Jacob’s well, 250 feet from Shechem.

As Jesus sat on the huge stone slab that covered the mouth of the well, he allowed his mind to wander back over the corridors of time. This is where Abraham encamped when he first arrived in the land (Gen. 12.6); where Jacob sojourned when he returned from Paddan-Aram (Gen. 33.18); where Joseph found his brothers pasturing their sheep and jealous of him, threw him into a pit (Gen. 37.12) and this was the land that Jacob gave to Joseph and his sons (Gen 48.22).¹

As Jesus listened to the rhythmic sound of dripping water, he wondered if Jacob built this well and drank from it himself, along with his family and his animals. Wells were the grand meeting places of his ancestors; many a marriage bond had its beginning here. Moses met Zipporah at a well (Ex. 2:15-21); Eliezer met Rebekah, the future wife of Isaac, at a well (Gen. 24:15); and Jacob met Rachel at a well (Gen. 29:9).

Of all the stories that Jesus heard about meetings at wells, his favorite was that of Jacob meeting Rachel. When Jesus was a little boy, before he went to sleep at night, his mother Mary told him the same story over and over:

Once, long ago, when Jacob fled from his brother, he came to a well near his mother’s birth place. When he arrived, he found shepherds and three flocks of sheep lying beside the well, waiting to be watered. The stone on the well’s mouth was large. When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep. Then they would put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well. A shephress came to water her sheep. But the shepherds would not remove the huge stone until all the sheep were gathered. When Jacob saw Rachel, he saw that she was beautiful. He loved her so intensely that he felt such a surge of strength that he got up and, all by himself, removed the heavy stone from the well’s mouth and watered her sheep. After the sheep were watered, he turned to her and kissed her, with tears streaming down his face.

Joseph, my earthly father, must have loved that story too, thought Jesus, for each year, on the way up to Jerusalem, Joseph reminded him that the well and the three flocks of sheep represented the three pilgrimage festivals when the Jews went up to Jerusalem to “imbibe the divine spirit” (Ex. 23.14-17).² Of the three festivals, Jesus had a particular love for the seven days of Succoth, each element of which affected him in different ways: the chanting of the Hallel psalms (111-118) lifted his heart to God, whom he called, Father; the flute playing accompanied by dancing sent thrills of ecstasy through his being; but most especially, the processions from the Temple down to the pool of Siloam affected him profoundly (M. Sukkah 5).

Jesus could see again what was for him the most memorable feature of Succoth, the last and great day of the Festival. As the High Priest and the flute players made their way down to the pool of Siloam, accompanied by the holders of the huge lit candlesticks, “There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light.” And often when Jesus’ family marched in the procession, his father Joseph would ask him, “Why were these processions called the processions for drawing water?” He knew the answer expected of him: “Because from out of the Temple in Jerusalem, the children of Israel drew and imbibed the Holy Spirit” (Pesikta Rabbati on Sukkoth).

Plop! Plop! Plop! The dripping water brought him back to the moment. The sun was beating down upon his head, for it was noon, the hottest part of the day. His throat was dry and parched.

**A woman comes to draw water**

Unbeknown to Jesus, a woman with a water jug on her shoulder was approaching the well. She hated going out in the hottest part of the day, but it was the only way she could fill her pail. And as she came to the well, she watched Jesus as he sat on the huge stone slab. She could see that he was tired. She knew him as a Jew, as a Samaritan, and also as a Jewish teacher, for her father taught the Jews. She stepped to the moment. The sun was beating down upon her head, her throat was dry and parched.

Joseph, my earthly father, must have loved that story too, thought Jesus, for each year, on the way up to Jerusalem, Joseph reminded him that the well and the three flocks of sheep represented the three pilgrimage festivals when the Jews went up to Jerusalem to “imbibe the divine spirit” (Ex. 23.14-17).² Of the three festivals, Jesus had a particular love for the seven days of Succoth, each element of which affected him in different ways: the chanting of the Hallel psalms (111-118) lifted his heart to God, whom he called, Father; the flute playing accompanied by dancing sent thrills of ecstasy through his being; but most especially, the processions from the Temple down to the pool of Siloam affected him profoundly (M. Sukkah 5).

Joshua 5)
knew how to avoid the sneers of other women who came to the well in the evenings to draw water.

Before leaving the house she examined her cheek that was red and swollen from the blow given to her by Yusuf, the man she had lived with off and on for the last three years. It was not the first time he had struck her. Each time he left she promised herself she would never take him back. But each time she did. She could not resist his pleas.

As she walked towards the well, she looked furtively left and right. Would those neighborhood rowdies be around and taunt her again? No sooner had she asked the question when she heard a voice taunting her, “Five husbands you have had, and a sixth has just left you!”

The woman quickened her steps. When she arrived at the well, she saw a man sitting there. She panicked and pulled her veil tighter around her face.

Jesus speaks to the woman
Jesus watched the woman coming. He heard the accusations against her. Her pain and sadness floated towards him like the whimper of a wounded dog. When she reached the well, Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.”

She stopped suddenly, peered at him through her veil and said in a tart voice. “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” She knew that Jews generally had a very poor opinion of the Samaritans as did the Samaritans of the Jews. They were related through their ancestor Jacob, but through the ages animosity had built up between them.

Jesus was not about to get caught in a religious or political debate. Since he did not answer immediately, she grabbed her bucket to lower it into the well. As she did so a waft of wind blew the veil from her face. Jesus quickly noticed that she was a woman about the same age as him. She had sharp features, with rather high cheekbones and soft brown eyes. As she began to lower her bucket, Jesus said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

She stopped suddenly. Astonished, she dropped her pail on the top of the well cover and looked at him quizzically. Had he found the well of the prophetess Miriam, the source that had sustained the Israelite people during their forty years of wandering in the desert? With multiple thoughts racing through her head she asked, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?”

Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

Yes, he is talking about Miriam’s well, she thought. I wonder if he is Miriam’s well? Am I Miriam’s well? She heard that as long as Miriam was alive, people had living water to drink because Miriam’s well had followed them.

The woman did not know what was happening to her. The hardness in her heart was melting. Warm mists of peace spread throughout her being and floated through her pores towards him. “Sir, give me this water,” she said, “so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

“Go, call your husband, and come back,” he said.

“I have no husband.” She was surprised she felt no shame when she said this. She felt accepted just as she was.

“You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” He said this in a way that let her know that Jesus knew something about her life and accepted her for who she was.

She dropped her veil from her face and took a step towards him. “Sir, I see that you are a prophet.” She paused, seemingly searching for words, and then said, “Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Like the other Samaritans she expected that a prophet like Moses (Dt. 18:15-18) would come to settle legal questions such as the correct mountain upon which to worship—Mt. Gerazim or the mount of the Temple in Jerusalem.

“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father not only on this mountain and in Jerusalem but on all mountains. True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Jesus did not intend to undermine Jerusalem, the holy city, but he wanted to stress that worship of God is more


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3 Rashi on Numbers 20:1-2: “From this we learn that all forty years, they had a well because of the merit of Miriam.”
about relationship than place. “God is Spirit. God is met through encounter.” Then he added, “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.” She was perplexed by this statement though she suspected he was referring to the fact that the Samaritans accepted only the first five books of the Bible and not the books of the prophets and the Psalms.

Undaunted, she added, “Yes, I know the Messiah is coming and when he comes he will tell us all things.”

Jesus never gave unqualified acceptance of this title when his own people gave it to him, but he accepted it from her. “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.” He knew that she too would soon be a messiah to her own people.

The return of the disciples
At that moment the disciples returned from the city with food. They were astonished that Jesus was speaking in public to a woman.

The woman turned and left, forgetting to take her water jar. When she was out of their hearing she threw her arms into the air and shouted, “I feel tremendous! I am strong! It is OK to be me!” To everyone she met as she entered the city, she shouted, “Come. Come quick. Come see a man who told me everything about myself, everything I have ever done. Is he not the Messiah? Come. See. Come see for yourselves.”

The Samaritans saw the change in the woman. They began to gather. Some were already on their way to the well. Others followed, then others. Now there was a crowd of Samaritan men approaching the well.

Meanwhile, the disciples were trying to convince Jesus, “Rabbi, eat something,” they said. Jesus answered, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.’”

The disciples looked up. Drawing near to the well were hundreds of Samaritans with their white headpieces blowing and swaying in the wind, like wheat in the field.

Jesus stood up and held out his arms to them. One after another they began asking him questions. He answered them one by one.

Then they said to him, “Come and stay with us.” They turned to the woman who had returned and was now standing near Jesus. “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe;” they said to her, “for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

Jesus announced, “I will stay with you for two days.” Then he looked at the Samaritan woman and asked, “May I go to your house?”

“Yes, yes,” the woman exclaimed. The disciples were flabbergasted, but they went off to the home of a friend who lived in the city. As the Samaritans left, several of them looked back to see the woman. Who was she? They had not talked to her in ages and here she was with this prophet.

The Samaritan woman welcomes Jesus into her home
When Jesus crossed the threshold of the Samaritan woman’s house, she looked at Jesus and said, “I have never felt so good in my life. I want to sing and dance. Please sit, and I will make us a cup of hot tea.”

She brought the tea and sat across from him on one of the other large cushions used for reclining. She looked at him and said, “Please tell me your name.” “Call me Yeshua,” he replied, “and how should I address you?”

“Photini,” 5 she replied. Then she began talking, almost non-stop, with an occasional remark from Yeshua. The words flowed from her mouth, tumbled over each other, scattered, came back, and repeated themselves. So absorbed was she in saying what she was saying that she did not notice the vicious yelps of a dog tied to a post below the window. But Yeshua did and he asked her, “What is wrong with the dog?”

She stopped in mid sentence, “Oh, that is Yusuf’s dog. It hates me. I keep away from it.”

Yeshua stood up and went out the door. The woman followed him. When they approached the small dog, it tore at its chain with strength and savage growls.

Yeshua said, “Look at it. It is acting crazy.”

Photini looked at the dog and she saw in it something she had never seen before—its dark frightened eyes. Unconsciously she held out her hand in its direction, and in a gentle voice, she said, “You are hungry. I am sorry for not feeding you.”

The dog calmed down. It lay down on its stomach, it lowered its head, and out of its throat a new voice emerged, thin like the cry of a puppy. Photini drew near to it and scratched its head lightly. She continued talking quietly to it, “What is wrong? Why are you screaming? Are you hungry?” She paused between her sentences, leaving room for the dog to answer, because she suddenly remembered that there is a difference between talking at a dog and talking with a dog. As she

5The original name of the Samaritan woman is not known, but the church knows her as Photini (Svetlana in Russian) and considers her “Equal to the Apostles.” She is commemorated in the Church on September 24.
talked, the dog whined, pulled itself forward on its front paws and licked her sandal. She reached down and untied the chain. The dog followed her weekly through the door.

As Photini fed the dog she knew for sure that something—her life—had started to change, irreversibly, forever. She knew it had something to do with living water, with what happened to her earlier at the well. “Tell me, Yeshua, what you meant when you talked about living water.” She felt comfortable talking with him—no screens, no blocks between them, as though she had known him for years.

“The Torah is living water,” he replied. “The text is frozen until someone encounters it, and in the encounter, the text unfreezes and flows as water.”

**Loud knocking at the door**

Loud knocking at the door interrupted them. Photini opened the door and was confronted by six suspicious-looking men. One of them, rough looking, with cruel eyes, demanded, “Give us that Jew. He is a spy. We have heard about him.”

Yeshua came to the door. The man took a couple of steps backwards. Someone else from the back called out, “What are you doing in our town? You, a Jew, hate us Samaritans.”

Jesus looked at them and said, “I do not hate you. I am not a spy. I wanted to pass through your town because my ancestors came this way before.”

“Hey! Hey! You do not hate us?” laughed another. “Did you not say to your twelve disciples, ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans’? (Mt. 10:5). You Jews despise everyone who is not a Jew. You hate the Canaanites too. You called one of their women a dog when she begged you for help” (Mt. 15:26).

Photini came forth. She raised her arms high towards them and cried out, “Wait! Wait! Please. Let him talk. Listen to him.” They were about to boo her but stopped when they saw her. She looked different, like the rainbow in the sky. (She had grabbed a colored scarf and draped it around her shoulders when she heard the knocking.)

Jesus stepped forward. “Please, brothers,” he said, “you are right. I said those words that you accuse me of. But I have learned how close you Samaritans are with us Jews. We have the same God, the same ancestors. We both have the festivals of Sabbath, the Day of Atonement, and Succoth. True, we have differences in how we understand the teachings of Moses, but we are brothers. I too have been growing in wisdom and years before God and men” (Lk. 2:52).

Just then a man raised his hand and pointed. The Samaritan High Priest, with Jesus’ disciples were drawing close to the woman’s house. The men stood in awe. They drew back.

**The visit of the High Priest**

The High Priest came forward. Looking closely at Jesus he said, “Your disciples have told me about you. Please come to my house and spend the night there with your disciples. I want to talk to you.” Turning to the woman he said, “Thank you for your hospitality to our guest.” Jesus turned to the woman. “I will see you again before we leave town.”

The crowd had no sooner dispersed than the woman removed the screens from all the windows. She took the rugs out and shook the dust from them. She cut some jasmine and put them in small vases on all the ledges. Then she took off to the market to buy food. Yeshua would be back. She hummed as she went.

When she got back from the market, the sun was drawing towards evening. Remembering that she had only a small vessel of water in the house and that she had left her water jug at the well, she hesitated a moment and then flung her veil over her head and took off towards the well.

**The women at the well**

When Photini arrived she found a group of women huddled in a circle chattering wildly. “Shalom,” she said. Surprised by her voice, they turned towards her.

“Here she is. Let us ask her,” said one of the women. “Tell us about the Jew you met yesterday. Is he a prophet? What did he say to you?”

“Yes, yes,” she replied, “and more than a prophet. He has changed my life. You must meet him.”

“What do you mean, ‘He has changed my life’? How are you different?”

“As you know, I came here every day round noon to draw water so that I would not have to face the whispers and judgments about me and my lifestyle. Yesterday when I came here, a man was sitting on the well. He asked me for a drink of water. I asked how he, a Jew, could talk to me, a woman and a Samaritan.

“I do not remember everything he said, but I felt so good talking to him, so easy, so relaxed. I was just myself. He talked to me as though I was important, as though...as though I was really important. He talked about giving me living water. I did not understand what he meant, but I asked for it. As we were lost in conversation, his disciples arrived. Suddenly I became self-conscious and I left. But I felt this compulsion to go and tell everyone to come to the well. Many came.

“Afterwards, he came home with me. You are surprised. Yes, he came home with me, but it was not what you
think. I cannot begin to tell you what it was like to sit and talk with him. I told him my whole life story. And he listened, fascinated. His approval and nods were all that I needed to tell him all my secrets. I felt he was with me. I felt he cared. Then the High Priest came and invited him to his home but he told me he would come back to my house again.”

All the women were listening attentively. This was a different woman from the one they knew. One of them asked, “Do you think I could meet him?”

“Yes, of course. Come to my house the day after tomorrow around noon. That is the time he said he would come.” They all began chattering and made room for Photini to fill her jug first.

**Jesus returns with his disciples**

As he said he would, on the second day Jesus arrived with his three disciples. At almost the same time, the women Photini had met at the well were drawing near, their arms filled with food.

Photini held out her arms. “Welcome, welcome. Come in!” The women came in and sat in a circle on cushions that were neatly arranged for them. You could see that Jesus felt at home with them and they with him. They ate and drank and laughed until most of the food had disappeared.

When Yeshua and his disciples got up to leave, Photini pressed food upon them for the journey. They said good-bye, but when they were down the road a few hundred meters, Jesus and his disciples stopped and turned around. In the distance was Photini’s house, its stone walls bathed in golden light from the afternoon sun. And there with Photini were the women still waving them good-bye.

Jesus looked at his disciples and said, “Today, salvation has come to this house” (Lk. 19:9).

**There is No Impression without Expression**

As you will note this Midrash is all about relationships. Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher of dialogue, best known for his book, *I and Thou* (1970), describes our relationship to reality, not only with people, but with animals and plants and even rocks, by the use of two paired words, I-Thou and I-It. He describes an I-Thou relationship as a relationship of dialogue where the other is received unconditionally without judgment and without expectations. An I-It relationship is a relationship of an I to an Object, where the object can be studied, described and used. Both kinds of relationships are valid and necessary but a world of only I-It relationships is numbing, while relationships of I-Thou are life giving. At any moment an I-It relationship can pass into an I-Thou encounter and vice versa, an I-Thou encounter can suddenly become an I-It relationship.

The following exercises have as purpose the development of I-Thou encounters:

1. Within the next few days put yourself in the position of Jesus. Find a way to sit and talk with a stranger. Try to have no agenda except to meet the person, to truly hear and understand the person. Submit a page describing the encounter and how you feel about it.

2. Act out the story of the Samaritan woman.
   a) Reread John 4:1-42.
   b) Bracket what you think you know about Jesus. To bracket what you know about Jesus is a major step in allowing Jesus to speak. It is difficult to encounter a person if you know too much about the person. The person’s reputation or one’s own preconceived notions get in the way. A stranger can often meet a person in a way that one’s friends and acquaintances cannot as we learn from Mark:

   > A prophet is without honor in his own country; But they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem (Mk 6:4).

   c) Act out the encounter of Jesus and the woman alone or with a Torah partner. If you are alone you might choose to be a ventriloquist with an invisible character or a puppet that you create. Ventriloquism is an act of stagecraft in which a person (a ventriloquist) manipulates his or her voice so that it appears that the voice is coming from elsewhere.
   d) Make use of Midrash to fill in the spaces in the text (See The New Teaching Paradigm: Guidelines for Teaching). For example, “So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days” (Jn. 4:40). What do you think Jesus did for the two days he stayed with the Samaritans?

3. Loneliness is a myth that needs to be dispelled. We are not alone but estranged like a wayward child who runs away from home, like the main character in The Runaway Bunny (M. Brown, 1942). Next time you feel lonely, contact someone, perhaps someone you think may be lonely or someone in a hospital. You will be changed by the encounter. To encounter another person is to encounter God. The Spirit is present in all authentic encounters.

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Preparing for ‘Top Down’ Curriculum Change

Abstract
This paper reports on the theory generated from a study of the management of a major ‘top down’ curriculum change in the highly specialised area of religious education from the perspective of the religious education coordinator (REC). It identifies how RECs prepared for the management of the change and provides information about the key issues they addressed in order to manage the change. Emanating from a grounded theory approach some of the key issues pertaining to the theory generated were: the RECs’ initiatives to become informed about the change; strategies undertaken to inform teachers of religious education, providing opportunities for teachers to dialogue about the change, exploring the textbooks underpinning the change in the light of existing curriculum and; decision making processes employed to bring about the change.

Introduction
Religious education coordinators (RECs) in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, Australia, have been involved in the management of a major curriculum change in religious education. A grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1998) to the study of the management of this curriculum change from the perspective of RECs in Catholic secondary schools generated theory about the initiatives they took to prepare for it. A brief outline of the curriculum change will precede a report on the theory generated about how RECs prepared for the change.

Outline of the Curriculum Change Initiative
The change initiative which was the focus of this study was instigated by the Catholic authorities in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. By 2001 all schools in the Archdiocese had been directed to implement a “text-based curriculum” (Pell, 2001, p. 5) and it was founded on a new series of religious education textbooks written for the Archdiocese and entitled To Know Worship and Love. Although this initiative had been referred to as a “text-based curriculum”, no official interpretation or explanation of the term was provided or documented by the Archdiocesan authorities. It is arguable that the term “text-based curriculum” referred to each school developing its own religion education curriculum based on the contents and topics outlined in the To Know Worship and Love textbook series. Traditionally each school in the Archdiocese had been responsible for writing its own curriculum in religious education based on curriculum guidelines produced by the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne.1 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese continued to write school based curricula, however now these were to be underpinned by the contents contained in the student textbook series instead of the curriculum guidelines that had been previously developed by the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne (1995).

An Episcopal Vicariate for Religious Education was established by the Archdiocese and it was responsible for leading this major “top down” (Morris, 1995; see also, Marsh & Bowman, 1987). In particular it was responsible for the production and distribution of the textbooks series underpinning the text-based curriculum change. A textbook was written for each year level from preparatory level to Year 10 and subsequently two additional books were written for Years 11 and 12.

Approximately eighty secondary schools were involved in this major curriculum change which was the focus of this change. Embedded within a constructivist paradigm a grounded theory approach was adopted to generate theory about the RECs perceptions on their management of this top down text-based curriculum change. While it was possible to interview all RECs involved in managing the change the researcher in keeping with grounded theory approaches was not preoccupied with the number of participant (Glaser, 1998) but in staying in the field until each category pertaining to the theory generated had reached saturation point. For the grounded theorist category saturation is reached when no new data emerges from the field (Goulding, 2002). The research generated theory about how the RECs prepared for the text-based curriculum change and this is the focus of the next section of this paper.

How the RECs Prepared for the Curriculum Change
The theory generated from this study revealed that RECs had engaged in a number of initiatives in order to prepare for the curriculum change. The table below identifies the broad areas where RECs undertook preparatory initiatives. This paper reports on the

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1 Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne had produced a series of curriculum statements entitled, Guidelines for religious education of students in the Archdiocese of Melbourne (1973; 1975; 1977; 1984; 1995). The curriculum statements were to be considered by each Catholic school in the process of developing the formal classroom curriculum in religious education.
discoveries emanating from this study in relation to each of these areas. Some of the perspectives shared by the RECs involved in this study are reported in their own words.

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**Table 1:** Areas in which RECs undertook initiatives to prepare for the change.

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*RECs Informed About the Change*

The RECs explored several ways of becoming informed about the change. Opportunities to attend information sessions organised by the Archdiocese and facilitated by the authors of the textbooks were given priority. Some RECs contacted the authors of the textbooks and agreed to read and trial draft chapters and test them out with their students. This process provided the RECs with an opportunity to become familiar with the content of the textbooks as well as provide feedback to the authors. Some RECs developed informal networks such as maintaining regular contact with other RECs and sharing any information they had discovered about the textbooks and the intended change. Some RECs who were employed in Catholic schools owned by religious congregations held meetings and wrote letters to the Archdiocese with the intention of gaining information about the intended change to a text-based curriculum.

The religious education coordinators from schools belonging to the same religious congregation as my school, met to discuss the suggested changes. We put in a submission responding to the changes and made recommendations concerning those changes. We did not get a direct response to the recommendations contained within the submission, but were asked to trial the draft chapters of the textbooks. (REC A)

Some RECs tried to gather information about the intended changes from congregational leaders of various religious orders involved in education and Catholic schooling. In the latter part of 1999 one REC was invited to attend a meeting of the Conference of Religious Congregational Leaders. The leaders of religious congregations who owned or sponsored schools in the Archdiocese were in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how the schools owned by religious congregations would prepare for the changes to the religious education curriculum. The REC realised during the course of the meeting that the congregational leaders were equally ill-informed about the intention, status and context in which the textbooks would be situated in Catholic education and it was agreed that a letter would be drafted and sent to the Archdiocese asking for information about the changes and its implications.

Several RECs sought information about the intended changes from their school principal. The overall responsibility for religious education in a Catholic
school rests with the principal who delegates responsibilities to the REC (Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, 2005, p. 1). The RECs involved in this study revealed that school principals were equally ill-informed about the intended changes and in most situations relied on their RECs to keep them informed.

The principal was always asking me about the textbooks and the staff also questioned me. I did not know what to say, I had no answers to give them and I did not know where to find the answers. I would talk to other RECs and they did not know much either. It was as if we were all kept in the dark. I did not find the CEO particularly helpful or informative. (REC B)

Approaches Undertaken by RECs to Become Informed About the Change

The Archdiocese had directed the change but according to the RECs, they did not provide adequate information to those responsible in schools for the management and implementation of this curriculum change. They could not identify who was directly responsible for informing them about the curriculum change and the implications of that change. Subsequently the RECs explored several avenues in order to become informed about the text-based curriculum change. The approaches taken by the RECs included: a) direct contact with personnel from the CEO, Melbourne; b) attendance at information forums facilitated by Catholic Education Office staff; c) reading and trailing draft chapters of the textbooks and providing feedback to the authors of the books; d) contact with authors of the textbooks; e) informal networks with RECs from other schools; f) discussions with leaders of religious congregations; and g) discussions with school principals.

Marsh (1997) and Brickell (1972) have argued that the adoption of a “top down” (Morris, 1995) curriculum initiative requires a clear understanding of the intended curriculum innovation. The RECs perceived that those authorities responsible for communicating the rationale and details of the intended curriculum change did little to communicate or provide adequate documentation or information about the change to RECs, principals or congregational leaders of religious schools in the Archdiocese. Rymarz (1998) argued that curriculum management required informed understandings of educational theory and knowledge. As curriculum leaders, most RECs perceived it to be their responsibility to know and understand the intended change and the implications of the change for the delivery of religious education curriculum in their particular school. In the absence of adequate information about the intended changes, the RECs explored various avenues in order to become informed about the intended changes.

I had to find out all I could about the change because if I did not nobody else in the school would take responsibility for it and we would end up not knowing what we were required to do. (REC G)

This “top down” (Morris, 1995) curriculum initiative directed by the Archbishop of Melbourne, provided an example of the influence outside forces may have in affecting curriculum change in schools (Brady & Kennedy, 2003). According to Marsh and Bowman (1987) “top down” curriculum change can be effective when a textbook is used to support the initiative. This study revealed that textbooks are more likely to be effective if educators have a clear understanding of the pedagogical theory underpinning them and/or the curriculum to which they are assigned.

Staff Informed About the Change

Regardless of how difficult it was for RECs to access information about the purpose and intention of the change, they believed that for them to manage the change they needed to keep their own staff informed. The RECs initiated several strategies to ensure that their staff had access to the available information. These strategies included: a) reports to the faculty by the REC; b) information dissemination; c) reading and trialling draft chapters of the textbooks; and d) professional development seminars.

The RECs made presentations at faculty meetings updating and informing staff about any new information they had received related to the curriculum change. We had an RE staff meeting four times a term and I factored into the agenda a section concerning up-dates regarding the textbooks. Any information I had I would report to the RE faculty. (REC I)

The faculty meetings enabled members of their religious education faculty to ask any questions arising out of the curriculum up-dates.

Another strategy commonly used by the RECs involved the dissemination of relevant literature and correspondence to members of the religious education faculty. According to the RECs most of the literature came from the Archdiocese and authors of the textbooks. It consisted mainly of information concerning timelines about the publication of the textbooks and when they would be available for purchase, overviews of chapter topics relevant to each year level, and draft copies of the chapters produced by the authors. A willingness to read literature concerning the curriculum change by members of the religious education faculty was sometimes compromised by other demands facing many religious education teachers.

Many teachers of religious education in Catholic schools in Australia are not qualified or specialists in religious education (Thomas, 2000). For many teachers, religious education was a second or third teaching area and was given less priority in terms of lesson preparation and professional reading time.
(Fleming, 2002). The following comment by one REC expressed a view commonly held by most of the RECs who were interviewed.

Any correspondence that came my way I would photocopy and pass on to the teachers. It was a way of trying to keep them informed. Not many had time to read it but we would try to discuss the contents at RE meetings. (REC O)

Another strategy used by many RECs involved encouraging members of their religious education faculty to read and/or trial draft copies of the chapters intended for the textbooks with their religious education class. RECs had access to the draft chapters of the textbooks. The Episcopal Vicar’s Office invited some schools to trial the draft chapters. All RECs in the Archdiocese were welcome to contact the authors of the textbooks and receive draft copies of the chapters. Most RECs encouraged members of the religious education faculty to read the draft chapters and become familiar with the contents.

Encouraging members of the religious education faculty to attend professional development seminars was highly favoured amongst the RECs. The professional development seminars for religious education teachers focussed mainly on the contents of the textbooks and possible strategies for teaching the contents of the textbooks. All the RECs involved in this study negotiated as many opportunities as possible for members of their religious education faculty to attend the professional development seminars. Many of the teaching staff Catholic schools have only one religious education class as part of their teaching allotment (Thomas, 2000). This has accounted for very large religious education faculties in many Catholic schools throughout the Archdiocese. Schools with large religious education faculties found it was impossible to send all religious education teachers to the professional development seminars. The following comment was representative of most RECs involved in this study.

We sent staff off to the various professional development in-services. I could not send all staff to each in-service. I sent one representative to each of the Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 in-services. They brought back a wealth of information regarding ideas about how they could use the textbooks in RE. (REC G)

The RECs believed that ensuring that their staff members were informed was integral to the management of this particular curriculum change. As indicated earlier, the information available about the change was limited to issues concerning publication timelines, overviews of the topics covered in the textbooks and draft copies of the chapters contained in the textbooks.

Textbooks have a wide range of uses (Issitt, 2004) and a good textbook can provide insights into current pedagogical approaches (Engelbreton & Rymarz, 2002; 2004). However, the draft chapters did very little to inform staff about the nature and purpose of the change and the rationale and theoretical position underpinning the change. This is perhaps because textbooks are not stand alone instruments (Finlay, 2000) and they need to be understood along side other factors such as curriculum and pedagogy (Vespoor, 1989).

Dialogue about the Change

In order to prepare for the change most RECs provided opportunities for religious education teachers to discuss the intended changes. There were a variety of ways in which dialogue about the curriculum change occurred. They were: a) informal discussions about the intended change; b) forums to discuss concerns and feelings about the change; c) record keeping; and d) meetings to discuss strategies for implementing the change.

Most RECs commented on the importance of being available for members of the teaching staff who sought them out to discuss and to pose questions or concerns they had about the intended changes.

Teachers would seek me out from time to time. They would come to my office and ask me questions about the textbooks and the intended changes. I felt it was important to stop whatever I was doing and just listen to their concerns and in some way reassure them that as a faculty we would work it out. (REC O)

It was also common for RECs to provide forums where staff could meet and discuss their concerns and feelings regarding the proposed change. We gathered as a faculty and discussed more broadly how people felt about the changes. We spent a bit of time exploring the level of feeling amongst the staff. As issues were raised and feelings expressed, we tried to come to some consensus about how we would approach these changes and the time frame it would take. (REC J)

The opportunity to discuss feelings enabled individual staff members to be heard by their colleagues. It provided opportunities for them to explore their concerns. Some RECs suggested that this process enabled the faculty to move forward and consider strategies for implementing the curriculum.

When the textbooks became available for use in schools some RECs suggested that religious education teachers keep a journal to record their experiences. As they trialled different sections of the textbooks they were encouraged to record notes after each lesson as well as write down their evaluations. It was intended that these reflections would be shared later in religious education meetings.

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At the end of the term the teachers at each year level would meet with me and share their insights which they had recorded in their journals. We shared these experiences from those records keeping notes that the teachers had been asked to do. And then I would base further discussion and further implementation of the process on their input. So in this regard keeping records was a more formalised requirement in terms of feedback and accountability, but it helped to determine how we should proceed as a faculty. (REC A)

Some religious education coordinators spent a minimum of time discussing feelings and reactions to the proposed changes. They adopted a task-focused approach to managing and implementing the curriculum change. The following comment from one REC was similar to the view held by others who were primarily task focused.

Because of all the negative hype about the textbooks, I knew that some teachers would want to discuss whether we should or shouldn’t have the textbooks. I wasn’t going to go down that path. I knew that the textbooks were mandatory, and we had to use them. I wasn’t going to waste my time discussing whether we should have them or not. I was the REC and my task was to implement the textbooks and once I sorted that out in my head I was clear on what had to be done. I got people on board by discussing how we would go about implementing the books. We met regularly to discuss the chapters we should teach and at what stage in the semester or year. (REC B)

Dialogue about the changes provided a way for religious education faculties in schools to move towards implementing the text-based curriculum. Several RECs commented on the opportunity for members of the faculty to talk about the intended changes and discuss any concerns. It was an opportunity for staff members to come together under the leadership of the REC, and explore ways of implementing the text-based curriculum.

Dialogue about the changes enabled teachers to express their feelings about the intended change. The opportunity brought to the fore feelings about the Church, religion and the ministry of Christian formation.

My unease is that an emphasis on doctrine without an adequate attention to personal experience and critical analysis isn’t really authentic in terms of the process of Christian formation. We have members of staff that haven’t had the opportunities for engaging in ongoing Christian formation and we are concerned that their own formation will be stifled if they perceive the textbooks as taking religious education back to the pre-Vatican II era. (REC A)

**Approaches Taken to Dialogue About the Change**

Dialogue amongst members of the religious education faculty in each school about the change to a text-based curriculum was perceived as valuable in determining how the school-based curriculum would take form. This was particularly important since Catholic schools in the Archdiocese had a long tradition of developing school-based curriculum in religious education. Prior to the introduction of the *To Know Worship and Love* textbook series, *Guidelines* (1975; 1977; 1984; 1995) had established a tradition of school-based religious education curriculum. Under the direction of the REC each school was responsible for developing its own curriculum in religious education based on *Guidelines* (1995). This trend continued with the introduction of the textbooks into religious education in Catholic schools. It was assumed that each school would use the textbook as the main source for teaching and learning in religious education and would develop a school-based curriculum from the content contained within the textbooks (Pell, 2001).

Conflict is an integral part of change (Smith and Lovat, 2003). This study revealed that conflict issues were not limited to professional concerns but also personal concerns. Some teachers of religious education used the time to discuss issues of conflict related to their perception of the Church and their own Christian formation. Dialogue on these issues attested to the notion that change was perceived to be more about people than the curriculum initiative (Fullan, 1999; Stenhouse, 1975).

The RECs encouraged opportunities to engage in dialogue about the curriculum change in order to promote the change. Because this “top down” (Morris, 1995) change was mandatory, one REC set particular boundaries. This REC would not allow the time allocated for dialogue about the change to be consumed by concerns about the appropriateness of this curriculum change. As stated earlier, “I knew that the textbooks were mandatory, and we had to use them. I wasn’t going to waste my time discussing whether we should have them or not” (REC B).

Curriculum change can be assisted by establishing boundaries that help to deal with the process of change not just the change product. Smith and Lovat (2003) have indicated that “too many attempts towards change in education have not recognised these features nor provided ways to deal with them” (p. 195). Other boundaries set by RECs involved encouraging teachers to keep a journal of their experiences and thoughts about the change. Time was set aside during faculty meetings for staff members to reflect on and discuss their journal entries.

Change challenges teachers’ perceptions of themselves and their own competencies (Smith and Lovat, 2003). The opportunities provided by the RECs to dialogue about the change enabled staff members to
contemplate how the changes would affect and influence them. According to Fullan (1999), change occurs because individuals themselves change. The opportunity to dialogue provided an opportunity for staff members to contemplate their own changing personal and professional views.

The opportunity to listen to and discuss feelings about the change and express concerns (both educational and religious) was considered an appropriate means to determine how to approach the text-based curriculum change at school level. Some RECs encouraged dialogue about the change in a more formalised manner and required teachers of religion to maintain written records when using the textbooks. Others set clear parameters around what would be discussed during curriculum planning meetings. Some RECs encouraged teachers to talk about their experiences and concerns. From the perspective of the RECs, opportunities for staff to talk about the intended changes assisted in determining the way forward in terms of implementing a curriculum based on the textbooks.

**Exploration of the Textbooks in Light of Pre-existing Religious Education Curriculum**

In the process of preparing for the change to a text-based curriculum, most RECs explored the textbooks in the light of the pre-existing religious education curriculum, which had been developed from *Guidelines* (1995). This was done by a) auditing the existing curriculum; b) identifying key learning outcomes from the *To Know Worship and Love Teaching Companions*; and c) incorporating textbooks into classroom teaching.

Some RECs attempted to audit the existing curriculum in their school against the content of the text books. For some RECs the process involved matching the topics and units taught in the pre-existing curriculum with similar topics contained within the textbooks.

When I looked at Year 7 and 9 there were a lot of topics that we were already teaching. When the Year 8 text came along, there was a number of overlaps: Caring for creation, Sacraments, History and St Paul. The Year 10 text was also virtually written in a comprehensive way when we... (REC I)

This approach provided little impetus to explore content in the textbooks that was not relevant to the pre-existing curriculum.

One REC prepared for the change by identifying the key learning outcomes for each topic or chapter in the textbooks. The key learning outcomes were obtained from the *To Know Worship and Love Teacher Companions* (Elliott, 2001; 2002) supporting the textbooks.

I typed up all the outcomes for all of the topics in Years 7, 8, 9, 10. This helped me to understand the contents in the textbooks. After doing that I created a folder for each of the topics and identified the outcomes relevant to the topics. In each folder I would list strategies and other resources. We had used most of the resources included in each folder in the past. So gradually I built up and transferred from our old topics resources and strategies that still had relevance and could help achieve the outcomes that were set for a particular topic in the textbooks. (REC L)

In this situation the approach taken in order to prepare for, and implement the change provided more scope for identifying a sequence and range of topics emanating from the textbooks. The pre-existing courses were used to resource and provide further strategies for teaching the topics contained within the textbooks. Thus the content of the curriculum remained the nexus between the pre-existing course and the textbooks.

Another approach taken to prepare for the change involved encouraging teachers to interact with the textbooks in the classroom. This approach provided opportunities for teachers and students to encounter the textbooks and become familiar with the content contained within the textbooks.

It was really a matter of introducing the texts and saying: here are the texts; use them to teach RE. And there wasn’t really any rewriting of the courses in accordance with what the textbooks were about. I think the courses are unsatisfactory because of this. You have teachers who are teaching different chapters from the texts. There isn’t any uniformity and the courses weren’t written in a comprehensive way when we introduced the texts. It has been a bit of a ‘mish mash’ but we are working on it now. (REC O)

This approach provided opportunities for teachers to incorporate the textbooks into a pre-existing curriculum it also provided more flexibility for each teacher to teach different content areas in the classroom learning and teaching process. This approach to preparing for the implementation of the text-based curriculum did not emphasise a uniform approach for each class at the same year level.

In many situations the content of the textbooks was used as an additional resource to be incorporated into an existing school-based curriculum. In some situations the use of the textbooks exposed deficits and overlaps in the existing curriculum thus allowing for further consideration of the relevance of content covered in the pre-existing curriculum.
They [the RE teachers] use the texts as a basis. There was no way you could do everything in the textbook anyway. There was too much content. So we took our curriculum, and we tweaked it, we moved it. We changed content from one particular year level to another. We made the content fit better and we are teaching stuff [content] that is in the textbooks that we hadn’t been teaching in our curriculum. I found that at Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 level the textbooks have helped to structure the course a bit more as well as iron out any overlaps. (REC G)

**Approaches to Textbooks in Light of Pre-existing Religious Education Curriculum**

The RECs believed that the management of the textbook-based curriculum primarily involved the integration of the content of the textbooks into a school’s pre-existing school-based curriculum that was underpinned by *Guidelines* (1995). This approach undertaken by most RECs suggested an inadequate understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of both approaches.

The previous and present approaches to religious education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne have emanated from two distinctive theoretical paradigms. The life-centred approach adopted in *Guidelines* (1995) was based on theological principles (Engebretson, 1997, pp. 25-29). The approach assumed in the *To Know Worship and Love* textbook series was based on a knowledge-centred outcomes based educational approach (Pell, 2001, p. 5; see also Buchanan, 2004). The integration of content between the pre-existing curriculum and the content contained within the textbooks suggested that the RECs did not account for the varying theories underpinning the current and pre-existing curriculum approaches.

According to Ryan (2000), textbooks can assist teachers in identifying the particular curriculum theory that underpins them. However this study revealed that in most situations the RECs were primarily focussed on integrating the content of the textbooks into similar content areas associated with a school’s pre-existing curriculum based on *Guidelines* (1995). They did not take into account the varying theories underpinning the current and pre-existing curriculum.

**Decisions Regarding Implementing the Curriculum Change**

As outlined earlier, discussion about the changes amongst faculty members was encouraged. Opportunities for dialogue provided occasions for religious education teachers to gain understanding about the change. However the management of this change required RECs to employ various decision making strategies. Three broad approaches to decision making were used by the RECs. They were: a) cooperative decision making; b) expert decision making; and c) informed decision making.

One REC, a leader of a religious education faculty of predominantly qualified and experienced teachers of religious education, adopted a cooperative approach to decision making and implementation. This involved religious education teachers making key decisions about what resources would be used and what strategies would be incorporated. In such situations the RECs encouraged all teachers of religious education to be involved in the planning and implementation of the curriculum change.

Most of our RE teachers are qualified, so what I did as the REC was set up at each year level a team leader who would divide up the topics to be taught at that particular year level and each teacher would develop a teaching unit incorporating the textbooks and other resources and strategies relevant to that particular topic. (REC I)

Most RECs were responsible for leading faculties where the teaching staff taught one class of religious education. In such schools the teachers taught mainly in other faculties for which they were qualified to teach. The limited involvement in religious education generally meant that preparation time for religious education curriculum was compromised.

Most of our RE staff are not qualified to teach religious education and they teach mainly in two or sometimes three other faculties. Their time and energy goes into teaching in the faculty areas for which they are qualified. They find RE really difficult to teach and it doesn’t help that each year they get an RE class at a different year level so they can’t even consolidate their practical skills at a year level over a period of time. (REC L)

In situations where RECs perceived religious education teachers as having limited preparation time and knowledge in religious education, it was primarily the expertise of the RECs that underpinned the curriculum decisions.

Limited time and the lack of expertise were factors that I think in the end meant that the staff pretty much left it up to me to complete the write up of the new curriculum. I looked at the content in the textbooks and what we had done in the previous years and I decided the way to go. The texts were enormous and impossible to cover in one year so I decided the topics and prepared the units of work. (REC J)

In some situations the process for preparing for the curriculum change ultimately involved a decision by the REC, but it was sometimes informed by the

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2 Despite the competencies of this particular religious education faculty, in terms of qualifications and experience, the REC made the decisions about which topics would be taught at each year level. This issue is addressed later in this chapter.
insights and issues raised by members of the religious education faculty. This measure of informed decision making was an approach that enabled RECs to gain insights and understandings about how members of the faculty perceived the changes. However, ultimately the final decision rested with the REC.

It takes a lot of energy. I think what you need is a core group of people who are committed to teaching the subject and to working in RE, rather than having teachers who have a class of RE tagged onto their teaching allotment just to fill up their timetable. You know, we are very lucky because we are moving away from that now. There are a lot of people who have three or four classes of RE and it makes a great deal of difference. People have time and are willing to work on curriculum issues. We now have twenty-six teachers in the faculty instead of forty-one. We discussed ways of implementing the curriculum but in the end I had to make the decisions. (REC B)

According to Johnson (1996) schools that shape and control a change initiative to suit their situation are suited to effect change. The decisions made by RECs demonstrated initiatives to shape and control the change initiative by taking into account the composition, competencies and expertise of their teachers of religious education. These factors influenced their decision about how to manage the change. The role of the REC is diverse, challenging and demanding (Liddy, 1998) and well suited to a proficient operator. Fleming (2001) has indicated that RECs are effective in a management role when they have the ability to carry out plans and achieve outcomes efficiently. The RECs demonstrated an ability to involve other members of the religious education faculty in managing the change. In some cases the relationship between the RECs and members of their faculty could be interpreted as contriving collaboration as an administrative mechanism (Hargeaves, 1994) where the REC simply directs the faculty to achieve certain outcomes in order to bring about the curriculum change. Viewed in another light the parameters set by the RECs were based on decisions based on their perspectives on the skills and competencies of the members of their religious education faculty members. Subsequently a collaborative culture emerged where RECs provided an opportunity for change to take place by creating boundaries and so determining how the change would be managed. This approach has the potential to reduce the level of anxiety and uncertainty associated with change (Brady and Kennedy, 2003).

Summary of the Theory Generated
The RECs explored several avenues in the process of preparing for the management of the change to a text-based curriculum. The RECs were aware of the Archdiocese’s mandate that all classroom religious education curricula in Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne be based on the To Know Worship and Love textbook series. However details about how this would take place were not clearly explained to those who were ultimately responsible for managing the curriculum change. This fact provided the impetus for RECs as curriculum leaders to explore various avenues in order to understand the change.

The RECs provided opportunities for teachers of religious education within the schools to become informed about the intended changes. It was necessary that classroom teachers of religious education understand the intended changes as well as the REC. This research has revealed that both RECs and religious education teachers saw the changes relating primarily to issues concerning curriculum content. This perspective on the change drew attention to the practical application of the curriculum content. Concerns and understandings about the theory, and rationale relating to the change were not at the fore of this implementation process. However the scope of this change suggested a major paradigm shift in terms of how religious education would be taught in the Archdiocese. For this reason communication about the change with the RECs who were ultimately responsible for managing the curriculum change needed further consideration and attention. The Archdiocese could have assisted the RECs by providing documentation and forums for RECs not only to understand the content contained within the textbooks but also to understand the pedagogy, rationale and theory behind the change.

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Deconstructing Dawkins’ views about God.

Several responses have been given to Richard Dawkins’ atheistic assault on (religious) communities, the most recent of which was his 2006 work, *The God Delusion* (Great Britain, Bantam Press). Over the course of the next three issues, John Fisher, University of Ballarat, presents reviews of books written by two authors which refute Dawkins’ propositions. In this issue we present the first of these reviews.

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Prior to publication of Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*, Alister McGrath authored a book *Dawkins’ GOD – genes, memes, and the meaning of life* in response to an invitation he had been given 25 years earlier. He had been invited to critique Dawkins’ earlier works, such as *The Selfish Gene* in which McGrath saw evidence of Dawkins’ ‘markedly anti-religious polemic.’ He felt it was now time to respond.

McGrath presented his *bona fides* having emerged from an atheistic background believing ‘sciences had displaced God.’ He had ‘drunk deeply at the wells of Marxism, and had come to see religion as a dangerous delusion.’ Having studied chemistry and completed a PhD in biophysics, McGrath came to see ‘the intellectual case for atheism was rather less substantial than had supposed’ whereas Christianity was ‘more robust intellectually’. He went on to study theology and history and philosophy of science.

McGrath was positive about Dawkins’ ability to make ‘complex things understandable, without talking down to his audience.’ They were the early days of Dawkins’ writing. McGrath describes the purpose of his book *Dawkins’ GOD* as a ‘critical engagement with Dawkins’ worldview.’ There are four interconnected grounds of hostility in Dawkins’ writing which McGrath deconstructs in a convincing manner.

1. Dawkins’ assertion that ‘a Darwinian worldview makes belief in God unnecessary or impossible’ (as expressed in *The Blind Watchmaker*) is shown to be a product of Dawkins’ worldview, not supported by other scientists. Evolution can be viewed from atheistic, agnostic or theistic viewpoints.
2. Dawkins’ take on religion as a ‘retreat from a rigorous, evidence-based concern for truth’ is quickly disposed of by McGrath.
3. Dawkins’ contention that ‘religion offers an impoverished…vision of the world’ whereas ‘science offers a bold and brilliant vision of the universe’ is countered skillfully.
4. When Dawkins posited that ‘religion leads to evil’ McGrath points out that he is blinding himself to similar atrocities performed by recent atheistic regimes.

McGrath finds Dawkins’ ‘tendency to misrepresent the views of his opponents is the least attractive aspect of his writings’. Dawkins appears hell-bent on ‘interpreting evidence in a manner that sustains his atheist beliefs.’

Dawkins sets up Christian faith as a straw man, which he disposes of easily, but McGrath makes it clear that no Christian he knows sees faith merely as “blind trust” in God. McGrath clearly demonstrates the deficiencies in Dawkins’ assertions about atheism, which are too weak to be called arguments. Dawkins criticizes Christians (mainly) for not sticking to scientific facts, yet his atheism does not rest on scientific evidence, rather on a ‘largely unexamined cluster of hidden non-scientific values and beliefs.’

McGrath shows that science does not deal in certainties, rather probabilities which point to the ‘best theoretical explanation’ currently available. From this stance, he posits, ‘Darwinism, like any other scientific theory, is best seen as a temporary resting place, not a final destination’ and science can neither prove nor disprove God.

McGrath was impressed by the scientific rigour in Dawkins’ doctoral work and some of his earlier writing. But, when Dawkins tried to move into social sciences by inventing the concept of a ‘meme’ it was quickly labeled ‘functionally redundant’ ‘grounded in a questionable analogical argument’ and lacking in evidence. It was relegated to the backburner along with theories such as phlogiston and aether.

McGrath reveals Dawkins’ pre-occupation with the material world and his ‘elimination of any transcendent dimension to nature.’ Dawkins appears spiritually bankrupt as he believes science gets rid of ‘such meaningless notions as “purpose,” [and] “God”.’

McGrath acknowledges that Dawkins raises some interesting questions but he does not provide ‘particularly reliable answers.’ Areas of tension remain but the question as to whether or not there is a God has not gone away. In fact, it is increasing in importance in
Children and Spirituality: Searching for Meaning and Connectedness.
Brendan Hyde, 2008
London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers
£17.99/US$34.95 AUD$44.95 192pp
ISBN 978 1 84310 589 3 (pbk)

Brendan Hyde’s book has three aims: to offer a description of spirituality; to present and discuss characteristics of children’s spirituality; and to propose some guidelines for teachers, parents and others who work with children, so that they can make space to nurture children’s spirituality. These aims are achieved in a book that is well constructed and engaging, successfully embedding an empirical study of children’s spirituality within a broad-based theoretical discussion. It would be a valuable resource for anyone who works with children, including those who teach religious education.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1, ‘Preparing the ground’, overviews and comments on a wide range of theory and research on spirituality and, ultimately, seeks to describe spirituality. These chapters would be particularly useful for those who are new to the subject, including university students. In describing spirituality, Hyde draws on a breadth of sources, including Christian mysticism and Eastern traditions, the psychology of William James, Abraham Maslow and Ken Wilbur, and the notion of ‘Ultimate Unity’ put forward by Hyde’s colleague, Marian de Souza. Hyde seeks an understanding of spirituality that is much broader than the religious, which encompasses diversity, and is inclusive.

But Hyde is well aware of the sensitivities of his topic and particularly in relation to religious education which he discusses under the heading, ‘An Unresolved Tension’ (pp120-122). Here he points to the way in which, in these postmodern times, “children’s [spiritual] wondering leads them to draw from an eclectic range of frameworks in order that they can create meaning for themselves” (p120). This can present a challenge for those who want to encourage children along a particular spiritual path. Hyde is clear that religious education, even in the context of a faith school, must teach religion, “while at the same time honouring and taking seriously the worldview of the children themselves. … [If] this tension can be creatively addressed, religious education may contribute to children’s spiritual development and creation of meaning” (pp 120 & 121).

In Part 2, ‘The Characteristics of Children’s Spirituality’, Hyde describes and discusses empirical research he conducted with groups of 8 and 10 year old children. Much influenced by the work of David Hay and Rebecca Nye, Hyde’s research set out to discover the characteristics of children’s spirituality through conversations with 35 children from very different schools. Hyde identified four main characteristics of spirituality: ‘the felt sense’, ‘integrating awareness’, ‘weaving the threads of meaning’, and ‘spiritual questing’. These characteristics are explored in depth in four chapters, and include illustrations of children’s spiritual worlds through the use of descriptive passages taken from Hyde’s reflective diaries, written as part of his empirical research. For example:

There was a pause in the conversation, so I probed a little further. ‘I wonder where the person who had died might have gone.’

‘Their body would still be on earth, because it would have been buried,’ said Alicia thoughtfully, ‘but the soul would go to heaven.’ …

‘Well, heaven,’ began Cameron, ‘…it’s not like you can drive there. It’s a thought, it’s in your heart if you believe that it’s there.’

‘It’s like a secret place,’ explained Danny. ‘No one has been there except for those who have died. No one knows where it is.’ (p. 111)

In each of the chapters of Part 2, Hyde speculatively reflects on the empirical evidence he has gathered. These reflective discussions are a valuable and important part of the book, although I felt the speculation sometimes ran the risk of claiming too much, especially in the chapter, ‘Factors That Inhibit Spirituality’. I feel we should be cautious about reading too much of our adult concern into children’s words and behaviours; there is already evidence of sections of western society inhibiting children by being over-protective. Nonetheless, this chapter ends with helpful and sensitive advice for guarding children against the damaging effects of a consumerist culture. And each of these chapters offers similarly helpful advice to parents and those who work with children.

Recently, I gave a seminar about children’s spirituality to undergraduate students and was unpleasantly surprised to find them sceptical about children’s capacity to experience and express spiritual insight. Well researched, clearly argued, and cleverly illustrated with the children’s conversations, Brendan Hyde’s book is to be welcomed for demonstrating to adults the reality of children’s spiritual lives, and the value of listening to them.

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In the Foreword to this book, Rachel Kohn alludes to Birch’s rejection of a mechanistic and interventionist
God that is the concept of some believers. Instead she describes his vision of God as ‘born out of a relationship, in which God animates nature by persuasive love, elemental in all creation no matter how low it is on the evolutionary scale or how small its particles’ (p. ix). This relational concept is quite evident in this book, the purpose of which is for the author to present his philosophy of life and to introduce the reader to the people who influenced him in his thinking. As Birch says, ‘the people I have known contributed to my view of life. They are evolutionary biologists, ecologists, philosophers of religion and those concerned with science and religion (p. 1). As such, the first four chapters of the book present the reader with anecdotal material about a range of people; many of the names well known in their particular fields of study. While the stories are interesting and help to bring these mentors to life, what is more useful, is the succinct discussion of their ideas, concepts and theories which have influenced Birch and helped develop his own ideas and philosophies. The range of areas from which these mentors come points to the breadth of Birch’s own thinking and learning.

Having drawn these concepts together as foundational to his lifelong learning, Birch, in the final two chapters, introduces the reader to the philosophy that becomes the blueprint for his way of viewing the world and living his life. He describes his journey as a university student when his subject, science and his personal faith never quite came together. This created some tension until he experienced a moment of conversion: ‘Renewed were the experience of forgiveness, the courage to face the new, the sense of not being alone in the universe, and all that revealed the values of existence as revealed in the life of Jesus. The experience of God as a source of values was real. My interpretation was different. My new understanding came by degrees’ (p.117). As Birch continues, the reader is given some insights about the journey of discovery that led him to his new understandings based on a constructive postmodern worldview which derived from the philosophy of pansubjectivism; in simple terms this view does not accept that life is matter-like; rather it advocates the view that matter is life-like. Further, its contention is that ‘our individual experience as human subjects provides the clue to the nature of all individual entities’ (p.124). Thus, all entities are perceived to be the core or essence of experience rather than the object of experience for someone else. Birch’s extensive discussion on pansubjectivism, then, is the focus for Chapter 4, and his arguments for and against this philosophical stance are coherent and precise. He extends this, in Chapter 5, with an examination of process theism; an understanding of God as a mechanic who intervenes in the world is refuted in theistic process thought. Instead, God’s activity is perceived as one of persuasion and compassion as exemplified in the character and life of Jesus. With such an understanding, the individual is in the favourable position of exerting his/her own free will to choose to respond or not. Theism in process thought is known as panentheism, meaning ‘everything is in God’. Thus, God is everywhere and permeates the world but is not identified with it. (p.167). This is the vision of God that Birch subscribes to and, indeed, is a stance that would possibly raise questions from other believers both from within the Western Christian Tradition, which has contextualized Birch’s thinking, as well as from other faith and secular traditions.

Throughout the book we find ourselves drawn into the arguments and discussion that Birch leads us through. From his position as an evolutionary biologist he points to AN Whitehead’s organic philosophy of process thought as something that has been a major influence on his thinking – that we draw on our experiences to make generalizations – which Whitehead called ‘adventures of ideas’. Birch claims that for some, ‘these experiences help to frame a system of ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted’ (p. 9). However, he discusses the limitations of science to explain all conscious experience since it can only give us objective information and deal with knowledge that comes through the five senses. The subjective aspect of the experience reflected in the feelings that an individual has cannot be explained away by science. Process thought is the attempt to bring the two together; thus, the world is not made up of substances but of events or processes which become the experiences of the individual. These experiences are the results of sense-perception which is the individuals’ way of experiencing the world. However, there are also non-sensory perceptions such as those generated by values or perhaps, religious experiences. Process thought, then, is an attempt to provide a synthesis of the objective and subjective reality of an individual’s life.

Science and Soul is a useful contribution to the ongoing debate about the relationship between science and religion. Birch uses a narrative style which makes the discussion of complex topics quite accessible to the reader, whether they come from a scientific or non-scientific background. He has been privileged to have met and worked with some of the great thinkers of the twentieth century and his clarity of thinking and constant search for knowledge is apparent through the pages that describe his life’s journey. The structure of the book is also functional since the stories of each of the mentors are complete in themselves, thereby making it easy for the reader to choose a particular character and, in a short space, learn about their specific contribution to knowledge through the lens provided by Birch. Certainly, the book is a timely addition to other titles in the field which reflect the paradigm shift of the global world of the twenty-first century where the search for meaning is a distinct characteristic. As such, his offerings may, potentially, inform others on their life journeys or, at least, extend their horizons of their thinking.

Marian de Souza,
Australian Catholic University.
Talking about Mary

Guest address given at the May Procession 4th May 2008
Waverly College (Christian Brothers)

I am the mother of two teenage sons. As my youngest boy was playing nintendo the other day, I noticed the game was called Mario Kart. Mario, of course, is a name with its origins in Mary. I began thinking of how many others names are linked to Mary: Marion, Maria, Carmel, Fatima, Virginia, Lourdes, and so on. My mother in law’s name is Doleras, its association is with Our Lady of Sorrows. The image of Mary as the sorrowing mother is most well known in Michelangelo’ Pieta, a copy of which is in St Mary’s Cathedral. Mary is a person and a symbol for Catholics and beyond.

A recent example illustrates the enduring relevance of Mary to people of all faiths and none. In an article in the Good Weekend magazine, a woman writes of her attempt to resolve her grief after the death of her son. Australian, Jeremy Little was 27 when he was killed while working as a sound recordist for NBC in Baghdad. His mother, Anna, undertook a 400 kilometre walk around England, to places familiar to her son. She writes

Each day I passed through tiny villages built around an ancient church, which I’d make a point of visiting. Many of them were dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who’d also lost her son, and I felt close to her as I left prayers for Jeremy wherever I could. Remembering him in this way, I felt I was telling his story as I went, and sharing my sorrow with others. It was strangely comforting (SMH, 2004, p61).

There is a long tradition of invoking Mary as one who is a powerful and effective helper. The oldest known prayer to Mary is written in Greek on an Egyptian papyrus, and probably dates from some time during the 4th-5th centuries. The prayer says,

“Beneath your mercy we take refuge, O Mother of God. Do not reject our supplications in time of necessity, but deliver us from danger; you alone, pure, alone blessed.”

Lots of prayers in the Catholic Tradition call on Mary and ask her to “pray for us”. Perhaps the most well known “the Hail Mary” provides a timeline “now” it says “now” like some child who wants Milo NOW. Yet then as if also aware of a bigger picture, the gathering in of all our lives, it adds, “at the hour of our death”.

Luke (2:22 -38) provides a story about Mary when Jesus was a baby, at life’s beginning. The presence of Mary frames the life of Jesus, the beginning and at his death. You all know the story well. It is the meditation for the 4th Joyful Mystery of the Rosary. Mary goes to the Temple with her child as required by the Jewish tradition. It is there Luke tells us she meets an old man Simeon, who took the child in his arms and blessed him. I remember fondly when my eldest son Paul was 6weeks old, we went to hear a talk by a famous priest theologian. Afterwards over coffee, he came up and asked to hold the baby and he gave him a blessing. These things still happen even to ordinary people! Simeon was “prompted by the Spirit” Luke says, and recognises that Jesus has big things ahead. “My eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all nations to see” (Luke2:30). Then he turns to Mary and speaking directly to her, “and a sword will pierce your own soul too” (Luke 2:35). Recently I heard of a mother whose son is now in jail and I thought of Mary. I thought of all the mothers, indeed parents, whose tiny bundles of joy can also bring a sword through their souls. I imagined that for Mary, mother of an executed criminal, as for this woman and her family, there was a time of the inevitable shame and judgement when things don’t go as expected, whatever the circumstances. Honouring Mary in the Catholic tradition is also a call to reach out with understanding and compassion to those whose “souls a sword has pierced”. Mary’s story embodies the ambivalence of all parenting with its highs and lows writ large. There are moments of great hope and pride in one’s children but there can be times of misunderstanding and sorrow.

All of this speaks to us of Mary on her journey of faith as a model for us all as pilgrims, we too who are on our journey in faith, trusting in our dark times that there is a bigger picture. And as in the life of Christ, death and sorrow are not the end, but God will have the final word of hope.

In 2005 the Anglican and Roman Catholic International Commission issued their final Agreed Statement on Mary titled “Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ”. In paragraph 65 Mary is said to be the best example of the life of grace, “we are called to reflect on the lessons of her life as recorded in Scripture and to join with her as one indeed not dead, but truly alive in Christ. In doing so we walk together as pilgrims in communion with Mary, Christ’s foremost disciple, and all those whose participation in...
the new creation encourages us to be faithful to our calling.”

There is ecumenical consensus that reflecting on Mary’s life can encourage, that is give us courage to be faithful to our calling. Pope Benedict’s latest Encyclical letter, Spe Salvi On Christian Hope concludes with a reflection on Mary, under the title “Star of Hope”. I will conclude this May talk on Mary with Benedict’s own words:

“With a hymn composed in the eight or ninth century, thus for over a thousand years, the Church has greeted Mary, the Mother of God, as “Star of the Sea”: Ave Maris Stella. Human life is a journey. Towards what destination? How do we find the way? Life is like a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives. They are lights of hope. Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by- people who shine with his light and so guide us along our way. Who more than Mary could be a star of hope for us? With her “yes” opened the door of our world to God himself” (Benedict XVI, 2007, #49).

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An Introduction to Catholic Education: Current Perspectives
Michael T Buchanan and Richard Rymarz

Educators play a vital role in ensuring that the Catholic school achieves its aims. An Introduction to Catholic Education is designed to enable professional educators working in Catholic schools, as well as those who plan to work in Catholic schools, to reflect on and develop their understanding of the mission of Catholic education and their role within it. This book is oriented toward enabling reader-participants to consider the aims of Catholic education and the role of a teacher in the light of current perspectives and research pertaining to Catholic education.
Notes for Contributors

Journal of Religious Education is an academic refereed journal subject to peer review. It is published by the School of Religious Education, Faculty of Education of Australian Catholic University four times each year.

Articles on the following are welcomed:
- religious education in various contexts;
- the religious needs of young adults in the immediate post-school period;
- various models of faith communities in which evangelisation and catechesis may take place besides the Catholic school;
- religious education of children and adolescents;
- continuing religious education for adults;
- family ministry and youth ministry.

All articles submitted should be between 3000-5000 words in length and prefaced, on a separate page by an abstract of no more than 150 words. Please submit your article electronically as a Word attachment to EditorJRE@aquinas.acu.edu.au. A COVER sheet should contain the title of the paper, author’s name, brief biographical details, institutional affiliation, postal address, phone, fax, email address, where available. Authors will receive a copy of the issue of the journal in which their contribution appears.

Contributions on the following are welcomed:
- Ideas for Practitioners
- Internet Resources
- Research
- Conferences
- Notes on Resources
- Correspondence – relevant to topics discussed in the journal
- Current Issues

Referencing Style
The journal uses the American Psychological Association (5th ed.) system of referencing this acknowledges the author, date and page, if applicable, of the work cited in the text (http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html). Great care should be taken to ensure referencing is accurate.

The views of the contributors are not necessarily those of the editorial advisory committee of Journal of Religious Education.

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