Ultimately, the hope of all catechists is to help persons to develop their relationship with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. As the GDC explains, quoting Pope John Paul II's *Catechesi tradendae* (*On Catechesis in Our Time*), no. 5, "the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ" (no. 80). Just as the baptismal catechumenate culminates in people's entering into the reality of the paschal mystery—experiencing and celebrating the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in a very special way at the Easter Vigil—so too all of our catechetical efforts must be permeated by the desire to lead people to a deepening friendship with Jesus. The GDC's call for the formation of catechists is clearly inspired by the catechumenate's emphasis on initiation.

Looking to the baptismal catechumenate for inspiration for catechesis does not answer all the questions or challenges facing catechetical ministers today, but it certainly offers enlivening and dynamic insights into how we can improve and enhance what we are already doing. Groome provides words of caution that must be heeded, but they must not stifle the conversation or keep us from pondering what catechesis, fueled by the inspiration of the baptismal catechumenate, might look like in the twenty-first century. ❧

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1. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), nos. 59, 90. Subsequent references are given in the text.
2. International Commission on English in the Liturgy and Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988), no. 4. Subsequent references are given in the text.
3. U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1999). See also *The Living Light* 37:1 (Fall 2000), which focused on this document.

SPECIAL FEATURE

A Middle Way

THE ROAD NOT TRAVELED

From an educational point of view, there needs to be another choice besides nurture or conversion. Catechesis is not a matter of either/or.

By KIERAN SCOTT

When old debates and controversies keep resurfacing, one can safely say that past attempts at resolution have been inadequate. When new attempts to address the problem repeat the standard formulation of the issue, one can safely say history has not taught its lesson. This seems to be the case in the "nurture versus conversion" debate in current Roman Catholic catechetical circles.

I have friends on both sides of this conversation. Good friends, I presume, can agree and disagree, and keep conversing—especially when the issues at stake are so fundamental to our work. I find much to agree with, especially the general intention and direction, on both sides. However, what is keeping the two sides apart, from my frame of reference, seems a distinction without much of a difference. This is not an Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the advice I offer would be much the same: strategically step back from this regional conflict and look at the broader picture.

As I attempt to navigate between both sides, I will not use my limited space to accentuate all the particulars on which we agree. Rather, I will offer the following three points to complement and to supplement Tom Groome's analysis (featured in this issue of *The Living Light*) of the emerging direction of catechesis in the United States: (1) the normativity of the catechumenate paradigm; (2) the relation of catechesis and religious education; and (3) the

two languages of religious education. The points address questions of process (how), identity (what), and language forms (context).

THE NORMATIVITY OF THE CATECHUMENATE PARADIGM

The modern history of religious education can be read as a struggle around the issue of nurture versus conversion. Much of Protestant education has been caught in this debate for a century or more. The initial formulation of the issue by Horace Bushnell still governs much of Protestant Church writing.[1] Bushnell framed the discussion in light of what he saw in the mid-nineteenth century and reacted against the evangelistic and revivalistic approach to religion. This conservative framework holds that the child begins a sinner and that education is a preparation for conversion. Everything is staked on this one moment of conversion. Adolescence, according to this approach, would be the optimal period for this deep turn, which would then make any future education unnecessary.

Bushnell, on the other hand, had a more liberal and optimistic view of human nature: the child who is born into a Christian family is already Christian. He looked upon conversion with skepticism. He viewed education as a "nurturing" of what is already there. The child is to be brought up *in* conversion. Bushnell's argument is epitomized in his famous dictum: "that the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself [or herself] as being otherwise."[2] Bushnell's perspective showed the early traces of a developmental approach to religion. He believed in a calm, continual growth of the child into full Christian maturity.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, George Albert Coe combined Bushnell's religious view with the emerging views of educational psychology. For Coe, religious education should make conversion unnecessary. One should never give over an adolescent to an "uneducational evangelism." Education is not to press the child into a prearranged mold. The task is to get out of the way of the child's natural unfolding powers.[3] In declaring "conversion unnecessary," however, Coe was relinquishing a central Christian term. The process of redemption, for him, was at root one with the process of educational growth. Conversion and natural unfolding were conflicting dynamics.

James W. Fowler, in his writings, tried to avoid this conflict.[4] He affirms *both* development and conversion. His attempt, however, to transcend this split between liberal and conservative approaches to Christian education restates the question without solving the problem. The processes of becoming adult and becoming Christian need a wider context than the psychological framework offered by Fowler. Bushnell, Coe, and Fowler have each offered a theory of religious nurture or development, but none of them have done so adequately. Bushnell, however, comes closest when he advocates that the child should be educated *in* conversion rather than *to* conversion. How ironic it is to see Roman Catholics cover much the same ground over a century later.

From an educational point of view, the choice between nurture and conversion is clearly inadequate today.

From an educational point of view, the choice between nurture and conversion is clearly inadequate today. In their educational endeavors, Protestant churches lumped all the positive activity under the word "nurture." Teaching religion in church schools is described as "nurturing children in the faith." The activity of nurture clearly belongs in the family, where Bushnell intended it. When it is allowed to roam into other educational settings, like the school, nurture obscures the role of the schoolteacher. This is particularly problematic when the schoolteacher is also a teacher of religion. Current catechetical endeavors, working with the metaphor of socialization, are in danger of falling into the same trap.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) has the dynamics of conversion at its center. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) points to the RCIA as "the inspiration for catechesis in the Church" (no. 90). "The model for all catechesis," it notes elsewhere, citing the 1977 Synod, "is the baptismal catechumenate. . . . This catechumenal formation should inspire the other forms of catechesis in both their objectives and in their dynamism" (no. 59). Does this make the catechumenate model normative for all catechesis, or does it over-interpret, over-impose, and over-totalize this paradigm? In light of the historical context I have sketched above, the answer is no *and* yes. It depends on the meaning of "norm(ativity)."

If "norm" means the number of times something is done, the answer is no. Adult baptism does not mean that infant baptism will cease being the most common form of initiation. Children may still be the majority of those baptized. To interpret otherwise is to misunderstand the spirit of the RCIA.

If, on the other hand, we give "norm" its richest meaning as a standard of judgment or a regulative ideal, the answer is yes. Yes, church membership ought to be rethought from the point of view of psychological, social, and religious maturity. Conversion here keeps repeating and revising throughout

one's life, particularly at midlife. The intention and direction that are sought lead toward Christian adulthood. What does this mean? "It means," writes Jesuit William Harmless, "that once we come to experience the RCIA as our operative norm, we may again come to realize the weighty demands and spacious contours of Christian initiation: that is, initiation, in the richest sense, should happen in stages and with a panoply of rites; it demands faith and conversion; it involves community and apostolic commitment; it is accomplished slowly—over a period of years."[5] This developmental perspective, if carried throughout the life span, could be a profound inspiratiou to all catechesis. This perspective could be catechesis's organizing principle and provide a horizon against which all catechetical work is understood. This developmental perspective, however, needs linkage to a variety of educational processes. We need to speak another language in addition to the RCIA. This is where Groome seeks to make his contribution and yet—in my view—falls short. For this discussion, I will turn to my second major point: the relation of catechesis and religious education.

THE RELATION OF CATECHESIS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The RCIA has been the most successful educational model to emerge since Vatican II. The role of the catechist is closely tied to sacramental life. This relational linkage of instruction and sacramental ritual could be carried over into other parish formats. The strengths of RCIA, however, also became its weakness and limitation. Its priority is formation in the Catholic Christian way. It is to be "an apprenticeship in the entire Christian life" (GDC, no. 30). The root metaphors guiding the process are induction, initiation, and the passing-on of a way of life. Catechesis and the RCIA are engaged in this process of "traditioning." This traditioning can no longer be taken for granted in the twenty-first century. Preserving and transmitting what is most religiously valuable from one generation to the next requires particular attention today. Criticism of tradition is indispensable. However, one canuot criticize it until one recognizes that it is within us and all around us.

Still, Groome has legitimate concerns that the catechumenate model (and catechesis in general) is "no more than an agency of socialization."[6] This, he fears, will be counterproductive to the model's true purpose and not be sufficient by itself to promote Christian maturity. This socialization process alone tends simply to maintain the status quo. We have a choice, Groome asserts, between being conscious participants in tradition or unconscious victims. The key to the former is the incorporation of a critical educational process. The name he gives to this process is "permanent catechetical education."

Catechetical education is "education in faith" across the life span. It applies a hermeneutics of retrieval and a hermeneutics of suspicion to the religious tradition and correlates it with people's lives. Pedagogically, the process is facilitated by a "shared Christian praxis approach." The attempt here is to move away from a passive mode of incorporation to active participation, from passive recipients to self-conscious subjects, from repressive silence to dialogue. In short, the educational strategy should evoke a personal response within the traditioning process. If this handing-on is done effectively, the religion (or way of life) will be critiqued, recreated, reshaped, and redesigned. It will become the living voice of the dead. The religion—in this case Roman Catholicism—will be transformative for people in their lives.

There is little doubt that this incorporation of a critically reflective pedagogy into catechesis in general and the RCIA in particular would be advantageous. However, Groome's adding of the word "education" to catechesis seems redundant. On the other hand, the RCIA's rejection, from the beginning, of identifying with education seems unwarranted. Some clear educational distinctions and the naming of diverse educational forms and processes are needed here. The catechumenal model (and catechesis is general) *is* a form of education. It is education as formation. The educational agent, content, context, and process are the lived life of the congregation. This is education as religious nurture. The RCIA's resistance to the language of education springs from its reductionist identification of education with schooling. In its attempt to get beyond "a cerebral way of entering the Church" (Harmless, 17) (which it identifies with a school mentality), the catechumenal paradigm explicitly takes itself outside an educational framework. This is unfortunate. It lends itself to anti-schooling rhetoric and obscures the role of the teacher of religion in the classroom of the school. Roman Catholics need to speak another language in addition to the RCIA. Education, with its multiple forms and diverse processes, may be a friendly complement.

A final note under this heading: Groome, in adding the word "education" to catechesis, identifies the term "catechetical education" with religious education. This is consistent with his writings over the last two decades. Religious education here becomes a form of revisionist catechesis, an integration of Christian nurture and critical openness.[7] This interchange of catechetical education and religious education falls into reductionism. Religious education

is reduced and domesticated to church matters, and Catholic religious education becomes a small and segregated part of the Church's work.

Groome and the RCIA represent one face of religious education.[8] They share a common ground and a common aim. They seek to form members (old and new) who will carry on the practices and mission of the Catholic Church. The pedagogical purpose is to teach people to be religious in a Catholic way. The goal is a better practice of one's own (or newly acquired) religious life.

Catechetical education is "education in faith" across the life span.

There is a second face of religious education, however, that Groome and the catechumenate model do not attend to. This face (or form) of religious education is to provide an understanding of religion. Religion here is an academic category. Its object is multiple: the phenomena of religion. Its subject matter can be the content of one's own religion and the religious life of the Other. This activity is mostly a matter of the mind. The focus is on understanding. But how does one understand religion? An indispensable starting point is one's own religion. But to understand is to compare; to understand one's own religion involves comparing it to some other religion. This is the study of religion. The teacher of religion in a classroom facilitates this conversation. He or she designs an environment to enable students (young and old) to step back from their immediate practice of religion and try to understand. The teacher of religion is a provocateur of the mind, one who searches for truth that may go beyond all institutions. This form of teaching is an alternative to imposition, inculcation, and absolute proclamations. The sole aim, however, is understanding. The student has to discover the link between the (new) understanding and external practice for him- or herself.

These two forms of religious education do not function on parallel tracks or separate compartments. A gentle but continuous interplay ought to operate between them. The interplay is between practice and understanding (theory). If held in creative tension, this interaction can be fruitful for both. This is the form of education in religion that is needed for an intelligent religious life in our postmodern world.

THE TWO LANGUAGES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Lutheran theologian George A. Lindbeck describes religion as a language.[9] As a cultural linguistic system, it functions like a language or a culture. That is, it is a preexistent system. We do not so much invent our language and our culture as much as it invents us: we learn to speak the language and dwell in the culture we have inherited. This miracle of language and culture, according to Lindbeck, makes us the kind of people we are. Language is our house of being, giving us our particular view of the world—our outlook on life, expectations, and values. The language of catechesis and the catechumenate is such a language.

Groome and the RCIA share this common catechetical language: the Catholic Church's internal language of religious education. This warm, intimate, caressing language nurtures Catholic becoming and belonging. It fosters religious identity and cultivates convictional knowing and practice. Church ministers (catechists, homilists, liturgists, etc.) have a right and duty to preserve this internal language.

Catechetical language, however, is the first language of faith. As a language, catechetical speech has taken on an inner ecclesial scope and an external missionary focus that may be problematic. In terms of its internal scope, catechesis has spread itself out within all the ministries of the Church. This overreaches its original function as a ministry of the word and places an excessive burden of work on the person(s) designated catechist(s). In terms of its external focus, catechetical language has taken on an evangelizing missionary zeal. Setting the enterprise within evangelization may not come across very ecumenical to other religious bodies. The "new evangelization" still sounds suspicious beyond Catholic walls.

Catechesis and the RCIA need a complementary language in both gathering educational efforts within the Catholic Church and establishing a bridge with other religious and educational agencies beyond it. A more public language of religious education is needed, one that will provide a linguistic world where Catholic educational endeavors can encounter the educational endeavors of the Other in the public square. This linguistic framework could save catechesis/RCIA from being encapsulated in its own linguistic world. "Without public speech," writes Thomas F. Green, "there is no public . . . only pleadings, pronouncements, claims and counter-claims. Without public speech . . . we are left with nothing we can reasonably speak of as public education, public service, or public life."[10] In the same spirit, Groome's mentor

professor Dwayne Huebner advocates, "We need a public language, as we need public buildings, public gardens, public transportation, public ceremonies."[11] It will provide the grounds upon which we meet. It will create the basis for community. It will give direction as we do things together. It will provide the context for lifelong developmental conversion. ❧

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1. See Richard Robert Osmer, "A New Clue for Religious Education?: Cross-Disciplinary Thinking at the Turn of the Millennium," in *Forging a Better Religious Education in the Third Millennium*, ed. James M. Lee (Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 2000), 179-202.
2. Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967), 4.
3. George Albert Coe, "Religious Education as a Part of General Education," in *Who Are We? The Quest for a Religious Education*, ed. John H. Westerhoff III (Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1978), 15-16.
4. James W. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), 138-141.
5. William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 14. Subsequent references are given in the text.
6. Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 122.
7. See Berard Marthaler, "Toward a Revisionist Model of Catechesis: Reflections on David Tracy's *Blessed Rage for Order*," *The Living Light* 13:1 (Fall 1976): 458, 468-469.
8. For more on the two faces of religious education, see Gabriel Moran, "Religious Education After Vatican II," in *Open Catholicism: The Tradition at Its Best*, eds. David Efroymson and John Raines (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 151-166; Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran, *Reshaping Religious Education: Conversations on Contemporary Practice* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 30-43.
9. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).
10. Thomas F. Green, "Public Speech," *Teachers College Record* 95:3 (Spring 1994): 369.
11. Dwayne Huebner, "The Language of Religious Education," in *Tradition and Transformation in Religious Education*, ed. Padraic O'Hare (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist, 1979), 90.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Liturgy as Catechesis for Life

The Emmaus story, the basic paradigm for liturgical catechesis, is set in the context of a journey. In presenting the Scripture in a new way, the Stranger stirs the hearts of the disciples, and their eyes are opened with the breaking of the bread. It is a short step from mystagogy to mission.

By GILBERT OSTDIEK

CATECHESIS AND LITURGY

In the recent past, the ministries of catechesis and liturgy occupied separate pastoral niches, meeting occasionally and momentarily in times of preparation for and celebration of the sacraments. Vatican II planted the seeds for a new and fuller coordination of these ministries. *Sacrosanctum concilium* (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*) (SC) decreed the restoration of the catechumenate, which it described as a period of well-suited instruction "sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive stages" (no. 64). What the Council had in mind was not a superficial juxtaposition of classroom-style instruction and liturgical celebrations. Rather, *Ad gentes divinitus* (*Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*), no. 14, spoke of the catechumenate as "a period of formation in the entire Christian life, an apprenticeship of suitable duration, during which the disciples will be joined to Christ their teacher."[1]

This vision was implemented in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), particularly in the often-quoted no. 75, which calls for an integrated formation in Christian life during the catechumenate period, to be achieved through catechesis, community life, liturgy, and mission. Those same four elements are echoed in the less-noted description of the period of mystagogy: "This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of