

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS
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Problem or Paradox

Teaching the Catholic Religion in Catholic Schools

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Introduction

Teaching religion in Catholic schools has undergone significant developments in the last fifty years. Catholic schools do a better job of teaching religion today. They are better at placing the Catholic Church in relation to alternative religious traditions. Curriculum materials and resources have expanded and been transformed. Pedagogical strategies and processes are more creative. And the classroom subject is no longer on the outer fringes of the school curriculum. Yet, in spite of these advances, confusion reigns across the globe as to how this practice applies today to Roman Catholic schools. A variety of different and conflicting perspectives currently operate at every level of the Church's life – internationally, academically and pastorally. Different sets of assumptions, presuppositions and purposes give rise to pedagogical dilemmas – if not contradictions. This chapter seeks to untangle this web and shed light on the nature and role of teaching religion in Catholic schools.

The thesis of this essay may seem strange to some Catholics in some parts of the world. My claim is: teaching religion in Catholic schools is an enterprise that needs to be justified on educational – not evangelical or catechetical – grounds. In other words, its rationale must be justified in the context of educational theory. Initially, this claim may appear to be a

contradiction in light of the mission of Catholic schools. The task of the essay is to change the “contradiction” into an apparent contradiction, namely, a paradox. To build a case for my thesis, however, requires an examination of the global state of religious education and the complexity of Catholic schools and their role in teaching religion. In light of this task, the essay is divided into three parts: 1. Linguistic Clutter: Multiple Games – No Common Rules examines the global problem of the current lack of common discourse in the field of religious education; 2. Communicative Practices - Religious Education and Comprehensive Meaning proposes an integrative framework for our conversation, and 3. Living in the Paradox: Teaching Religion in Catholic Schools seeks to move this issue from problem to paradox in Roman Catholic schooling.

Linguistic Clutter: Multiple Games – No Common Rules

No universal language of religious education currently exists. This reality struck me forcefully some fifteen years ago when I participated in an international and interreligious conference in San Francisco, CA. Scholars came from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Religious education was a programmatic component throughout the four day event. What struck me throughout our conversation was that we were not dialoguing about a common topic. On the US side of the Atlantic, the assumption was that religious education is a faith-based sponsored enterprise located in the parish/congregation/synagogue/ mosque. Whereas on the UK side of the ocean, it was clear religious education is nearly the opposite, namely, a subject in a classroom in a school sponsored by the government. People were using the same terms but there was no common reference for what we were talking about. We were “divided” by a common language and repeatedly talking past each other. The lesson learned was: to attend to the meaning of our words (e.g. religious education) requires us to notice that other people are using the same words but with different meanings.

Failure to attend to this leads to linguistic clutter and confusion. This is a major problem in our current religious education discourse across the globe and it has major practical consequences.

The linguistic turn in modern thought has enormous consequences for religious education and its future. Heidegger and Wittgenstein are central figures here. "Language", as Heidegger notes, "is the house of Being" (Heidegger, 1971, p.63). We live, move and have our being within linguistic systems. Our thinking (and practice) is curtailed within the perimeters of our language. Language reveals and conceals. The limits of our world are linguistic limits.

Wittgenstein began his career by describing language as the logical representation or "picture" of the world (Wittgenstein, 1981). He understood words to be kinds of windows or instruments through which to view reality. Later, Wittgenstein came to think of language more as a set of related practices than as a picture. He examined language as a "game". To understand a language (word/term) we first need to understand the "game" in which it is situated, with its rules, boundaries, and back and forth flow. We understand the meaning of a word (or term) only when we understand its use in a particular context...or game. Included in that context are practices related to the communicative act. Language, then, is a practice (game) of life (Wittgenstein, 1953, pp.10-11, pp.22-23). Words are wells of meaning. We understand in and through language. Our languages are social and historical, carriers of memories, images and insights. Wittgenstein's sketching of the plurality of language games (and the plurality of life forms) freed language from a positivist and instrumental reading. It also opened up the social and historical character of all understanding through language. Wittgenstein's metaphor of language games is a fruitful prism through which to view current religious education discourse. With the above linguistic turn in mind, this essay claims that multiple linguistic games are currently being played, under the canopy of the term religious education, with no common rules and no common reference. In Roman Catholicism, the same situation prevails.

No consistent language of religious education currently operates in the Roman Catholic Church in its official ecclesial document or in its scholarly community. I turn now to briefly examine representative examples in each.

Catechetical language has acquired an ascendancy over the past thirty years in the Catholic church on the pastoral level and in its official documents. It has become a linguistic form to describe the educational work of church ministers. It is its internal language behind the wall (Brueggemann, 1989, pp. 3-34). Religious education, if the term is used at all, tends to be used inter-changeably with catechesis, or relegated to the classroom of the school. A blurring and inconsistency prevails.

However, some recent ecclesial documents seek to distinguish catechesis and religious education and recognize their two distinct purposes. In the context of Catholic schools, for example, the Congregation for Catholic Education in, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, affirms, "There is a close connection, and at the same time, a clear distinction between religious instruction and catechesis." The document notes, "the aim of catechesis" is "the handing on of the Gospel message....the aim of the school, however, is knowledge" (1988, para. 32). It is the latter, it asserts, that makes it possible for a school to remain a school. Similar sentiments are expressed by the Congregation for Catholic Education in its *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools* (2009). Catechesis, it states, aims to foster Christian living, whereas religious education aims to give pupils knowledge of the Christian life (2009, para. 17). Echoing the same viewpoint, the *General Directory for Catechesis* emphasizes that "the relationship between religious instruction in schools and catechesis is one of distinction and complementarity" (1997, para.64). In these documents, it should be noted how religious education is exclusively identified with the instructional act directed towards knowledge.

However, in spite of these official attempts at clarification, confusion persists especially at the episcopal level in the United States. In the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' National Directory for Catechesis, no distinction is made between religious instruction in schools and catechesis. It asserts, "Religion teachers in Catholic schools have the same responsibilities and perform many of the same functions as parish catechists" (2005, para.232). This blurring of distinction is carried over into the USCCB's Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Developmental Materials for Young People of High School Age (2008). Academy purposes and pastoral formation purposes get mixed to the detriments of both. In Wittgenstein's terms, different language games are played here and there are no common ground rules. And no one is quite sure, on a consistent basis, what to make of religious education.

In the mainstream Roman Catholic scholarly community efforts to honour a distinction also seem to waiver, if not collapse. It may be helpful to enter this vibrant community of discourse and dialectically engage its conversational partners. This selective engagement may be a constructive way to untangle our current linguistic clutter and point the way toward common ground rules in teaching religion in Catholic schools. It may also be a way to open up a much needed world-wide conversation on religious education. I offer three examples from scholars in different geographical regions: the United States, via Thomas Groome; Canada, via Richard Rymarz; and Scotland, via Leonard Franchi. While the work of these three scholars are in no way restricted to these particular geographical areas (or fully represent what is operating there), they do represent some of the current state of the discourse. Within the limited space available, I will zero-in directly where they specifically address the issue at hand.

Since the publication of his book *Christian Religious Education* (1980), Thomas Groome's Shared Christian Praxis approach has received international attention and application. On a number of occasions, Groome has directly addressed the linguistic problem in the field of religious education. Initially, he relegated the "language debate" to a

footnote in his book (1980, p. 17). However, in response to Graham Rossiter's call for a "Creative Divorce between Catechesis and Religious Education in Catholic Schools" (1982), Groome has directly engaged the debate. He firmly rejects Rossiter's proposal of a "divorce" between catechesis and religious education. "They can and should be held together", he states, "even as 'an exam' subject" (2002, p.588). In terms of what each represents, he writes, "Authors identify religious education as the more academic study of religion(s), whereas Christian education or catechesis is the intentional process of socializing people into Christian identity. The first is more academic, the second more ecclesial; the first more intent on information, the second on formation" (2006, p.766). Groome sees a dichotomy here. He proposes a merger. "Within my Catholic community of discourse", he notes "I often write and speak of 'catechetical education' to signal my conviction that we need both religious education and catechesis" (p.766). He offers his "shared praxis approach" as the effective way to the merger. The net effect, in my view, compounds the current linguistic situation.

Groome's proposal plays into and accepts the standard international linguistic dualism, namely, religious education exclusively identified with the academic study of religion and the acquisition of knowledge. Catechesis, on the other hand, is formation in Christian identity. His attempt to merge the two into "catechetical education" collapses the distinction and confuses the two processes and purposes (See also Groome 2002,p.588). In effect, Groome's work and project becomes a form of critical catechesis put to a five step process. Its assumptions, processes and purposes do not match the goals and academic aims of the Catholic school classroom with its diversity of religious adherents. Religious education, in all but name, gets absorbed into a catechetical framework.

Richard Rymarz and Leonard Franchi, in recent publications, address the linguistic debate specifically from within their own geographical contexts, namely, Canada and Scotland. While their positions diverge at times,

when it comes to the meaning of religious education, they share the same “family resemblance.” Both are heavily influenced by elements of the British meaning of religious education.

Richard Rymarz critiques current official documents on Canadian Catholic school education (2011). Many, he claims, closely associate catechesis with religious education and fail to sufficiently distinguish between them. Catechesis operates with a pre-existing faith, response and commitment on the part of the student. Religious education, on the other hand, is a scholastic discipline. Its origins and intentions are educational. Its focus is on knowledge. Rymarz has support for this position from universal church documents – some of which are noted above. Consequently, he asserts, in light of contemporary culture’s secularization impact on religion and the lack of firm religious commitment of many students, a strong catechetical focus in the classroom is incongruous with our postmodern social imagining. His solution is to separate “the cognitive and affective goals of religious education” (p.544). The affective goals are assigned to catechesis and the cognitive goals to religious education in the classroom. “This helps to ensure,” he writes, “that the focus of classroom learning remains on the cognitive but at the same time acknowledge that affective goals that often correlate with catechesis are not overlooked”(p.544). He sees them as complementing each other in Catholic schools.

Rymarz’s insistence on distinguishing catechesis and religious education is well founded historically and in contemporary practice. His extensive work in Australia also honours this communicative practice. However, once again, the language games get muddled here. Three brief points seem in order. Rymarz exclusively identifies religious education with a subject in a school classroom and with cognitive outcomes. This is the UK reductionist meaning of religious education now undergoing challenge in continental Europe (See Jackson, 2007). Second, to assign the affective alone to catechesis does it no favours. Catechesis is a form of education. It is education as nurture and formation, frequently coupled with catechetical (cognitive) instruction. Finally, Rymarz’s proposal hides a

neo-confessionalism. "If the cognitive goals are reached," he writes, "there is a possibility that the more affective dimensions of learning, which often have a catechetical intent, will also be addressed" (p.545). This, he notes, could be "a moment of evangelization...for those students who come from non-Catholic backgrounds or where the religious affiliation is essentially nominal" (p.546). Is the ultimate purpose, then, to evoke a faith response from the student—even the non-Catholic student? Is there a confessional hook, however freely offered, in our intentions here? This, I believe, would not be "synergy". Rather, such intent is at variance with the purpose and role of academic instruction in the classroom...even the Catholic school classroom.

Leonard Franchi laments the fact that the Magisterium of the Catholic Church has not yet produced "an authoritative document on the aims, purposes and challenges of religious education in the Catholic school" (2013, p. 468). On the other hand, this conceptual gap, he proposes, frees up local Catholic Churches and their educational agencies to create "religious education syllabi that are suitable for their own network of Catholic schools". "One such locally produced syllabus", he notes, "is the Scottish initiative *This Is Our Faith*" (p.468). The document is the fruit of collaboration between the Scottish government and the Scottish Catholic Educational Service. It is a landmark document, Franchi claims, offering "a new model of school-based religious education" (p.468). It does so by explicitly uniting catechesis and religious education. The model is (unabashedly) confessional, firmly grounded in catechetical principles to ensure doctrinal orthodoxy. In terms of content, the dominant partner is theology, or more specifically, Catholic theology. The curriculum is exclusively doctrinal centred. The religious educational process is inductive, drawing on Thomas Groome's "shared praxis", which seeks a personal response in faith and faith nurture. Cognitive and affective approaches to learning merge in the context of a distinct faith tradition. The model, Franchi asserts "has the potential to become a distinct and internationally significant model of religious education for the 21st

century" (p.468). He sees it as a significant contribution to the wider debate on the appropriate conceptual framework for religious education.

Franchi's claims, I believe, are overstated and his analysis and advocacy misguided. Many of the reservations noted above with regard to official Church documents and Catholic scholars apply here also. In addition, let me mention three. First, Franchi collapses the distinction and tension between catechesis and religious education (see also Franchi, 2011). In effect, *This Is Our Faith* becomes a catechetical project with an academic cognitive dimension. Second, the classroom teacher is seen as a catechist promoting faith-formation. In my view, this is a misconception of the role of the school teacher of religion. Finally, with its catechetical underpinnings and purpose, it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine how this model could be compatible in the pluralist context of contemporary Catholic school. Franchi, appropriately, wants to honour the (exclusive) confessional distinctiveness of the Roman Catholic tradition. However, this tradition has much to learn from the history of liberal religious education and contemporary secular culture. The exclusive and the inclusive needs to be held in a relational paradoxical tension. Franchi's proposal, I believe, fails that test.

This section of the paper sought to draw attention to the absence of a consistent language of religious education globally and, in particular, in the Roman Catholic Church. We have been and are in a state of, what the Australian scholar Michael Buchanan calls, "pedagogical drift" (2005, pp.20-37). Buchanan employs the metaphor relating it to how international trends have influenced the delivery of curriculum in Australian Catholic schools. However, this "pedagogical drift" has given rise to multiple language games with no common reference. No international integrated framework of religious education has emerged outside or inside the Roman Catholic Church. This can have damaging practical consequences in schools and parishes. In the second part of this essay, we explore an integrative conceptual framework of religious education. Within this conceptual frame, we become aware of different

linguistic games, with different forms and processes of religious education. The interplay between these respective forms and processes offers a common reference for our discussion. The consequences could revolutionize our practice.

Communicative Practices – Religious Education and Comprehensive Meaning

Simply offering a definition of religious education, abstractly from on high is not what is offered here. Good theory looks at what people are already doing, reflects on it and proposes that there is a better way to describe their activities. If it is good theory, the language set forth will be comprehensive, consistent and precise. In a steadfast, thoughtful and creative manner, this has been the life-long work of Gabriel Moran. In an extensive corpus of writings, he has sought to create a language of religious education, within which are some key distinctions that could lead it to become the name of a comprehensive and consistent field of activity. His aim has been to find a language that is: 1. consistent with the texture of past meanings of religious education, and, 2. makes theoretical and practical sense today across the globe. He takes seriously Wittgenstein's insight: The meaning of words is found in their use. They emerge in the lived lives of people. Moran points out how the term religious education operates with two different and contrasting meanings on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. He writes, "Religious education in the UK usually means a subject in the curriculum of the state school; in the US, religious education never means that" (1989, p.88). The latter is a faith sponsored activity located in parish, congregation, synagogue. Both meanings operate in their respective areas with little or no relation to each other. In Moran's assessment, both suffer from a problem of narrowness. The richest and deepest meaning of religious education is found on neither side. Yet, each side can contribute to a comprehensive meaning of the term. On the

basis of logic, history and present need, Moran proposes what religious education could and should mean.

Religious education is dual in nature. It has two very distinct parts or “faces”. The two faces are related, but one must first distinguish them within the meaning of religious education (Moran,1997a). A premature synthesis weakens religious education, both theoretically and practically. On the other hand, keeping them in separate compartments leads to dualism and operating worlds apart. “Religious education”, Moran writes, “has to do with the religious life of the human race and with bringing people within the influence of that life” (1989, p.218). The word “education”, he notes, indicates the way it seeks to do so. It is an educational approach to religion. To pull back the veil on Moran’s proposal means honouring the rich ambiguity in the words education, teaching and religion. The ambiguity built into each of these important words opens up a plurality of forms and processes in each. In recent years Moran has succinctly stated his thesis: religious education is composed of two sharply contrasting processes: 1. to teach people to practice a religious way of life, and 2. to teach people to understand religion. The first aims at careful assimilation into a concrete and particular set of religious practices (that a Roman Catholic, a Jew or a Muslim performs). The second aim or focus is the single act of understanding. Understanding begins with careful and critical comprehension of one’s own religion. But to understand one’s own religion involves comparing it to some other religion. So the second aim has a plural object (Moran, 1989, pp.216-223 Harris and Moran, 1998, pp.30-43). These two very different aims seem almost contradictory. This has led some scholars (e.g. Groome) to see an epistemological dichotomy between the two. But the two processes have an inner connection. But they must first be distinguished – not blended – if they are to be brought together in a careful and intelligent way.

The first aspect or face of religious education is ancient, familiar and functions on the US side. It is a faith-sponsored project of religious groups trying to form new members into the practices and mission of the group.

In recent years, it has been expanded to life-long faith formation. The educative process here is formation and nurture. These are the two guiding metaphors for educational ministry on the Catholic and Protestant sides respectively. Religious neophytes learn the practices of a religious (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, etc.) community by immersion in the experience of the life of the community. They learn to perform (sacramental) rituals and (service) practices. They also learn by catechetical doctrinal exposition. The (religious) teacher here is parent, preacher, catechist, community. They intend to shape/form the neophyte into being religious in a particular way. They provide affection, support and (cognitive) identity to the individual. The primary locations for this side of religious education are the parish/ congregation, family, liturgical settings and outreach forums for works of justice. Some dimension may also function in church-affiliated schools – particularly outside the classroom of the school.

The second component or face of religious education is teaching religion. This aspect of religious education is modern, well established and functions on the UK side (Moran, 1989, pp.87-113; Harris and Moran, 1998, pp.37-41). Religion here is not a way of life or a set of practices but an object of scholarly and academic inquiry. It is an academic construct and the name of a subject in the school curriculum. This meaning of religion was adapted as a neutral term by scholars who sought to study particular (religious) communities. The meaning implies plurality. The aim and focus is to provide an understanding of religion. The understanding can begin with one's own. To understand, however, is to place in context. Today the context is a world of religious plurality (and secular life).

The modern concept of religion implies understanding one (or one's own) religious position in relation to other possibilities. Some degree of otherness, some degree of comparison, is necessary for understanding. This is the process of examining, observing, critiquing, and comparing. The effort involves stepping back from our immediate involvement,

bracketing out practice, and trying to understand the inner logic of the human experience grouped under the term religion. This is mostly a matter of the mind. It is academic, intellectual, abstract and (to a degree) distancing but not detaching. It presupposes a sympathetic readiness to listen attentively, reflect calmly and judge fairly. It is in opposition to the alternative: to attack, belittle, condemn, or dismiss. The teacher here is the (academic) teacher of religion. The language forms of dialectical discussion and academic discourse hold centre stage (Moran, 1997b, pp.124-145).

What is the appropriate setting for this form of inquiry? The modern classroom in the school is surely one place where it belongs (Scott, 2001, pp.145-173). "It is practically invented for the classroom", notes Moran, "there is no place where religion more comfortably fits than in the academic curriculum" (1989, p.124). But the capacity to understand religion takes many years. To concentrate on the elementary school years makes no logical sense in terms of educational readiness or need. The high school years are the age appropriate time to begin to seriously engage this vital intellectual venture (Moran, 1997a, p.155).

At this point, a legitimate question can be raised: why do these two distinct components or faces need to have the same name? Could not "religious education" serve for one or the other? The answer is: they already serve for both aspects in different parts of the world. What the world urgently needs in the twenty-first century are both faces of religious education within a comprehensive meaning of the term. This would open up a linguistic bridge and a fruitful dialogue between the two of them. Not everyone has to do both kinds, and one of the processes may take precedence at a particular moment in one's life. But while working at one kind, the educator should be aware of the other aspect at work.

Finally, it is important to note, these two aspects of religious education are not simply parallel processes to be engaged in by different populations. This is to dichotomize the components. The educational

task is to distinguish not to separate. We distinguish in order to bring back into an integrated whole. They are necessarily bound together with an inner connection. We cannot (intelligently) practice a religious way without some understanding of religion. Likewise, we cannot (adequately) understand religion without some internal feeling for its practice. We must crossover into the other area, holding a tension between them, as we integrate them into our personal lives and the lives of our religious communities. The next section explores the possibility of integrating the two components into Roman Catholic schools.

Living in the Paradox: Teaching Religion in Catholic Schools

Schools are complex and perplexing institutional forms of life. They house a bewildering set of activities – a plurality of teaching forms and languages, social and recreational events, artistic and athletic performances, etc. When we insert the prefix Roman Catholic before school, the complexity, and, at times, the perplexity multiplies. Things do not get any simpler when the teaching of religion is part of the curriculum of this rich mix. It can further enrich the mix or muddy the waters. It can pose a problem or give rise to a paradox. The latter should be the intended outcome.

Catholic schools have usually been established because of the Catholic community's wish to pass on its way of life to the next generation. In this regard, nationally and internationally, they have been a significant success story. In spite of significant changes since the Second Vatican Council, including a reduction in both the number of schools and enrolment, a crisis of identity, a diversification of its student-body, and a reshaped sense of mission, it constitutes the largest private school system in the world. Students have over time imbibed the ethos, values, ritual practices and commitment to service that permeates the ecology of the school. They, at their best, are "communities of faith" in action. In so far as the

school is a community that socializes young people, it has and does maintain the tradition.

But central to school and schooling is teaching-learning to read, think and understand. At a certain stage, this can become dangerous and a counterforce to the received tradition and its resources. Students may begin to raise challenging and critical questions – not foreseen by the elders or the guardians of orthodoxy. The natural place for this to emerge is in the classroom of the school. When the subject in the classroom is religion, or specifically the Catholic religion, this may disturb some parents, principles and church officials. At times, teachers of this subject may feel caught in a quagmire between competing loyalties to the school's overall mission of wanting to pass on the tradition, and, simultaneously, maintain the integrity of classroom teaching. However, that is the tension that needs to be held. When teachers of religion are facilitating these classroom discussions and living in the paradox, they are simply doing their job. The Catholic school's task, then, is to coordinate complementary forms of teaching-learning. Its task is to navigate the alternating currents of: 1. teaching students to be religious in a Catholic way, and 2. teaching (the Catholic) religion. Both forms of religious education can and should be housed in Roman Catholic schools. And neither should overwhelm the other.

The first task or form of religious education in Catholic schools is to teach students to be religious i.e. to show them how to live the Roman Catholic way of life. This form of teaching-learning is mostly by example. Religious traditions have honoured this form of pedagogy from ancient times. People are invited into a set of practices that initiate them into and deepen their affiliation to a particular way. Students in Catholic schools experience this form of education mostly through community rituals and community practices. The whole life of the school community teaches i.e. shows a way of life. The two key components of it are liturgical service(s) and service in the works of justice. Students learn the Catholic way by living in a Catholic community, participating in the liturgy and following

the moral guidance of the tradition. At their best, liturgical experiences teach, inspire and direct. They teach by being what they are – public enactments of the community’s story and vision of life. They are not a means to education, they are educational. Closely related to liturgy, but not synonymous with it, is catechesis. Catechesis belongs with liturgy, to shed light on its practice by sounding the message and explaining its meaning. The practice of liturgy, particularly its proclamation, followed by explanation, can be viewed as an aspect of catechizing i.e. liturgical catechesis. When the liturgy is alive, it will flow over into works of service. This is a movement outward to the dispossessed and suffering. Catholic social teaching and service learning projects have had a significant educational impact on student formation in the Christian life. They have cultivated both orthodoxy (right believing) and orthopraxis (right action). The education is in the doing.

The first form of religious education has a crucial role to play in Catholic schools. It correlates well with its mission. Here, education is a form of nurture, formation, deepening initiation into the Catholic way. The language game here is intimate, caressing and the first language of faith. Of course, students not affiliated with the Catholic tradition ought to have a personal choice to abstain from some of these practices. In addition, proselytizing, indoctrination or subtle coercion should have no place on this side of religious education. They are, of their nature, anti-educational.

Small elements of catechesis have a place in schools, but this is mostly the work outside schools of parents and parish. The scope of catechetical activity has been significantly expanded in contemporary church documents to embrace message, community, worship, service. Such an expansion, etymologically and historically, is not well supported. Catechesis is rooted in “echoing the word”, to be followed by explanation of Christian doctrine. When it becomes an all-embracing term, it undermines and swallows up the full range of education in the life of Catholic schools and parishes. Catholic schools have to avoid letting

teaching be (exclusively) absorbed by nurture and formation. They must fulfil the second function of education, namely, academic instruction. This compliments the first component of religious education and maintains a healthy tension with it. The proper place for this form of education is the classroom in the school. And teaching religion can be a litmus test as to whether the balance is maintained.

This second form/face of religious education, to teach (the Catholic) religion, is critical. It is critical in two senses. It is critical in importance as a unique schooling form of education. And it is critical in terms of the school's main role to be critical. Ironically, schools, and Catholic schools in particular, are almost self-contradictory. The community supports them to pass on the tradition. On the other hand, the modern classroom of the school is a free zone of inquiry that stands in tension with the Catholic tradition. It makes the tradition vulnerable to doubt by probing, searching, criticizing. It casts a sceptical eye on everything assumed to be true. It's where students come to think and question what is assumed to be true. It is a time to pass upon, that is, to critically examine, the tradition. This examination calls for a different language game of academic discourse (Moran, 1997b, pp. 124- 145). The content of the first component (Roman Catholic practices and doctrines) overlaps the second (academic study) but not the method or approach to it.

In some parts of the world, religious education is (exclusively) equated with the teaching of religion in state and religiously affiliated schools. This creates an inseparable barrier to conversation with the first component. In the classroom of the Catholic school, the teacher does not teach religious education. This use of language confuses and lacks appropriate distinctions. He or she teaches religion, the Catholic religion. This is the academic subject in the curriculum. Its subject matter content (Catholic beliefs, sacred texts, ritual practices, polity, and history) stands beside other curricular subjects for exploration and interpretation. The process, akin to other subjects, is dialogical and dialectical. Its singular aim is to understand the elements of the Roman Catholic religion, to affirm what

makes sense and to critique what does not. Classroom texts (print or visual) mediate between the community of the past and the community of the present. The teacher's task is to see that he/she fulfils that role for the student. To facilitate understanding for the student, the teacher must be willing to approach the texts/documents with reverence and sympathy. The discipline of the teacher is crucial. It must be done with fairness and fullness, with disciplined inter-subjectivity. Catechetical formation is put on hold and an imagined distance created. Usually (but not always), the subject matter content is the teacher's own religion. In this case, the examination is from both inside and outside. This examination works best when the first component is operative and the student possesses firm beliefs and is rooted in the Catholic tradition.

The starting point in understanding religion is one's own religion. However, to understand is to compare. Some degree of otherness is necessary for understanding anything. To understand one's own Catholic religion, then, involves comparing it to some other religion. This does not have to involve a phenomenological course on world religions. A good place to begin is with a dual perspective: Roman Catholic and Jewish, or Roman Catholic and Islam. This recognition of religious plurality, when sensitively explored, relativizes one's religion, that is, places its way, truth and life in relation to the other's way, truth and life. Here the plural and the relative are understood positively. An appreciation of the other frequently rebounds to a better understanding of one's own. For example, when a Catholic student acquires some limited understanding of Judaism, they do not convert to Judaism. Generally, it leads to a better understanding of their Catholicism.

In this context, heresy and orthodoxy are irrelevant terms. The truth or falsity of the church's teaching is not a direct concern of the classroom teacher or student. These concerns are on a different wave-length. They operate in a different linguistic game. Of course, the teacher of religion must clearly present "what the church teaches". But this is a preliminary step in teaching the Catholic religion. The teacher's next step is to create

an intellectual clearing for teacher-student exploration of the teachings/texts. What do they mean? What is their origin? How did they develop? How are they changing? What are their limitations? This hermeneutical conversation can--literally--go on without end. No word is the final word. No meaning is permanently fixed. The best insights of today are subject to re-examination tomorrow. One does not teach orthodoxy. One does not teach dissent. One teaches the conversation to facilitate deeper understanding. The aim, then, is not to evoke a personal faith response from the student but to enable him or her to articulate their own convictions and, on educational grounds, evaluate the persuasiveness of the teachings in his or her life. The practice of the religion is the concern of the student alone, not the teacher. In this regard, Moran writes, "A good test of whether religion is being taught to Catholic students is whether the class is appropriate for non-Catholic students. If the school has to exempt the non-Catholic students from religion class, that would be an admission that what is going on in those classes is something other than instruction proper to a classroom" (1989, p.158).

The student, then, who walks into classroom in a Catholic school, ought to enter a world of academic discourse. The teacher is a teacher of religion – not a catechist (or a theologian). School teachers in a classroom work in the context of an academic curriculum. Catechists work in the context of sacramental life. School teachers teach (the Catholic) religion. Catechists teach the Gospel and Christian doctrine. When the two language systems/games get mixed up, confusion and conflict reign to the detriment of both. Teaching religion in Catholic schools, then, ought to be justified on educational grounds. And the teacher is judged by academic standards – not standards set by ecclesial orthodoxy. The work is part of the modern project of education. We can say it is one of "The Blessings of Secularity" (Hull, 2003, pp. 56-58). When it is held in creative paradoxical tension with the other face of religious education, the Catholic school can house a comprehensive theory and practice of religious education. This

theory and practice offers the possibility of directing students, in an integrated manner, to learn to live religiously in the modern world.

Religious education, then, is one of the most important rubrics under which Catholic schools and teachers of religion can engage in the urgent world-wide work that is education. Under its canopy, it gives Catholic schools and teachers of religion credibility and legitimacy as it encounters the non-church world and the world of religious plurality. Ironically, it may be the surest guarantee for the passing-on of the tradition.

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