Landas 23:1 (2009) 46-84

RENEWED FOCUS ON DOCTRINE IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION/ PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

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Introduction: A Road Less Traveled

This essay begins by alerting the reader to a rather uncommon point of view regarding the multiple challenges of today's catechesis/religious education in the Philippines. While focusing on the specific dimension of "doctrine" in Catholic Faith, this study wishes to touch the **deeper mind-set** which governs the specific responses to some of the major problems of contemporary catechesis. The "deeper mind-set" touched here has been gradually shaped by research into the Scriptural and theological sources of current catechesis. It provides the basic ground for positions taken in this study which focuses primarily on the nature and role of doctrine in faith education.

I. The Multi-Faceted Problematic of "Doctrine"

The general focus of this study is on the reality, means and purpose of "doctrine" in living out the Christian faith day-by-day. The more specific aim is to investigate how the more holistic approach to Scripture, used within a "practical theology" orientation that stresses "Christian

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practices," fosters a deeper understanding of doctrine and its function in the ordinary faith life of a committed Filipino Christian. The basis for this study is two previously published essays: the first, arguing from the very nature and purpose of sacred Scripture, presents the urgent need for a "spiritual exegesis" to get beyond the limitations of the historical critical method as used alone, while the second provides a theological basis in the re-oriented "practical theology" which focuses on the theoretical priority of the practice of the Faith.[1]

Hence our purpose here is more than simply to extol an accurate objective doctrinal knowledge of the Faith – which in itself is becoming ever more difficult to achieve these days.[2] Rather we are concerned with highlighting the practical impact of Catholic doctrines taken as "saving truths" in the personal daily living of the Faith. Such an endeavor immediately confronts from the start two problems inherent in doctrinal catechesis/religious education. Many do not seem to be sufficiently alert to the inner source of these two obstacles as arising from the very nature of Christian Faith itself.

The **first** is the great temptation, given the nature of faith as saving truth, toward stressing memory of objective formulas of these truths. Too often they remain precisely that --memorized "head knowledge" that rarely seeps down into the personal affectivity, imagination and "the heart" of the learners.[3] This perennial problem of rote memory

[1]See Markus Locker, Lucia Natividad and Joseph Roche, "The Use of Scripture in Theology & Religious Education: A Holistic Approach," *Loyola Schools Review* 3 (2002): 3-32, and "Grounding A Holistic Approach to Scripture in 'Practical Theology'," *Loyola Schools Review* 5 (2006): 57-72. See a similar effort by Paul-Andre Giguere, *Catechese et Maturite de la Foi* (Novalis: Lumen Vitae, 2002).

[2]Diverse opinions are being taught, particularly by the new "experts" regarding some of the most essential doctrines of the Catholic Faith: Jesus' divinity, the saving quality of the Cross, the reality of Jesus' resurrection, etc.

[3]This lack of understanding and interiorizing faith truths is one of the most common complaints of both religion teachers and students, from Grade School to college levels.

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without adequate understanding has given rise unfortunately to many separate, diverse misguided attempts at correction. Some fall back on simply insisting on the "question-answer" approach of the Baltimore Catechism.[4] Others take the opposite extreme, concentrating on the subjective personal experience of the individual student as the core of authentic Christian Faith.[5] Still others enlarge the focus from the individual to the total context of the concrete believer, and develop this into a "contextual theology."[6] Finally, others eliminate the problem by simply concentrating solely on sacred Scripture, or on prayer and the liturgy. All these well-intentioned attempts involve some authentic catechetical elements, but lack other equally basic factors and the balanced integration needed for an adequate response to the problem.

The **second** common obstacle to authentic doctrinal catechesis is exemplified perfectly by St. Paul's warning to Timothy: "for the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths."(2 Tim. 4:3-4). More widespread and more deeply engrained than ever is this perennial urge to follow the latest new "exciting" discover or theory, which is usually radical enough to stir up initial interest, but rarely capable of accomplishing any significant "conversion." This has become more obvious than ever in the widening gap between the conscientious religious educator and many professional exegetes, systematic, moral

[4]The basic memorized question-answer approach has taken on the new form of "minimal learning competencies" required for each grade level.

[5]John Cavadini gives a balanced critique and takes his share of responsibility for this "feeling" approach in his "Ignorant Catholics," *Commonweal* (April 9, 2004): 12-14.

[6]This basically social science approach has been proposed for years under the "content, context, communication" pattern., grounded in part on the popular thrust for contextual theology. See, for example, the survey of Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992).

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and liturgical theologians. For some professionals, the new discovery's probable effect, positive or negative, on the faith-life of the typical Filipino Christian, is simply not considered significant – it's not part of the professional methodology of today's experts.[7]

The post-Vatican II Church, both universal and local [Philippine], has made major efforts in addressing these problems. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the creation of the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church*** [CCC] and our national ***Catechism for Filipino Catholics*** [CFC].[8] Both are designed according to two basic norms: 1) to present the common teaching of the Church, 2) with its direct impact on the daily living of the Faith. The CFC goes beyond the CCC in **integrating** the sources, the "4 pillars of the Faith," in a diamond pattern that climaxes in the Epilogue on the Lord's Prayer, summarizing the whole catechism -- Faith's Foundational, Doctrinal, Moral and Worship dimensions.[9]

The CFC moreover stresses "integration" throughout, bringing in the believers' living faith-experience in everyday life, and the mutual transforming action of Faith and culture in every chapter. But this in no way weakens the primary challenge to "see more" in daily experience, because the "more" is precisely the new reality that Christian Faith reveals and makes present. For believing Christians, it is the "Good News" that is the ultimate interpreter of their daily human experience, not the other way around. "Common sense" and daily experience do not limit or exhaust the living Word of God, a "two-edged sword" (Ps. 149:6), "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17). Nor do they ever

[7]For example, some local Scripture experts declined to defend the truth of Scripture on the grounds that they were into narrative hermeneutics, and stressing the historical critical method. Thus they said they were not concerned with defending the truth of Scripture.

[8]See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Manila: Word & Life, 1994), and the *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: ECCCE, 1997).

[9]See Joseph Roche, "The Theological Concept of the CFC," *Docete* 25/112 (2003): 19-25.

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have the "strength to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:18-19).

Current Background for Doctrine's Multi-Faceted Problematic

From a doctrinal point of view, faith is a particular type of knowledge. The effort to communicate the doctrines of the Faith, therefore, is an educational process, We used to identify the 'classic' educational skills as "**reading**, **writing**, **and arithmetic."** But in today's globalized world they are no longer sufficient. They must be expanded into "**reading**, **writing**, **mathematics**, **reasoning and synthesizing.**"[10] Perhaps something similar can and should be said about education in Christian Faith. Comparable to the classic three "r's" [reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic] are the three essential dimensions of the Faith: **doctrine**, **morals and worship** (or Creed, Code and Cult). Perhaps comparable to reasoning and synthesizing might be **integrating** all three essential Faith dimensions and **inculturating** them in daily living in the Christian community, the Church.[11]

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[10]Quoted from the joint statement of the Pontifical Science and Social Science Academies, "Globalization and Education," released in February 2006. It reports that worldwide nearly 200 million children and youth are not receiving basic education. Cf. *Origins* 35 (March 30, 2006): 673-76.

John DeGioia, president of Georgetown University, quoting the Jesuit 34th General Congregation, while acknowledging globalization's many benefits, stressed how it has resulted in injustices on a massive scale: in the economic area, in the homogeneous 'modernization' of cultures, in the growing inequality among nations and between rich and poor, the powerful and the marginalized. He stressed the challenge of addressing these injustices (*Origins* 34 [Oct. 7, 2004]: 277). See also Kenneth Himes, "Globalization's Next Phase," *Origins* 32 (May 23, 2004): 17ff., who stressed solidarity as the remedy for globalizations' inequalities.

[11]Cf. NCDP and the New NCDP 2007, and Joseph Roche, ed., *A Companion to CFC* (Manila: Word & Life, 1998), especially chapter 4, "Multiple 'Integrations' in the NCDP and CFC," 37-56.

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Actual present globalization brings with it at least three identifiable factors that contribute significantly to the basic general background for Philippine catechesis today. They are: 1) **post-modernity** culture with its specific traits, 2) **religious pluralism** and 'secular' spiritualities, and 3) the marked emphasis on **methodology and interpretation**. A brief comment on each will suffice to lay the groundwork for our study of the role of "doctrine" in Catholic Faith.

First, "**Post-modernity**" is the term often used to summarize the new "mind-set" that has blossomed after "modernity." It relates to religious education mainly in terms of some negative characteristics such as its rejection of all universal truths, dogmas, meta-narratives, authority, and the like. Thus there is little openness toward doctrine in general, and none for defined doctrines (dogmas).[12] Second, **religious pluralism** in both theory and practice, on the other hand, is a reality evident to all in our globalized world. It is interpreted for better or for worse by various religious educators: some reject it vigorously as directly contradictory to Catholic Faith; others are open to possible collaboration, while some interpret it as a real step forward, essential for authentic inter-religious dialogue. Much depends on how precisely "pluralism" is understood – whether or not it rejects all claim for truth about God, Christ, the Church, etc.[13]

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[12]Harold Hornell, "Fostering Hope: Christian Religious Education in a Postmodern Age," *Religious Education* 99 (2004): 5-22. Cf. David Nantais, "'Whatever!' Is Not Ignatian Indifference: Jesuit and the Ministry to Young Adults," *Studies in Ignatian Spirituality* 36/3: 1-24.

Positive aspects of inter-religious dialogue were brought out in the CBCP sponsored seminar held in Tagaytay, Jan. 25-26, 1999. Cf. "The Spirituality of Inter-religious Dialogue" by Bishop Michael Fitzgerald, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (*Origins* 28 [Feb. 25, 1999]: 630-34), and Henri Derroitte, "Quelle catechese pour une identite chretienne ouverte au dialogue," *Revue Theologique de Louvain* 37 (2006): 44-59.

[13]Fayette Breaux Veverka, "Practicing Faith: Negotiating Identity and Difference in a Religiously Pluralistic World," *Religious Education* 99 (2004): 38-55; Peter Phan, "Doing Theology in the Context of Cultural and Religious Pluralism: An Asian

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Finally, a third factor, strongly influenced by the natural and social sciences, is the extent to which religious education has become more and more **focused on method**, and the newer **"scientific" interpretations** of Scripture, Tradition, and our present context.[14] Social science seems to have taken the place traditionally held by philosophy (*ancilla theologiae*). Any metaphysically grounded epistemological claim for the truth of correspondence seems to have been largely abandoned.[15] A further example of the ever growing influence of the social sciences on current religious education is the insistence that all proposed objectives must be "measurable," explicitly rejecting the traditional norm of "understanding" which the Church has been practicing in local and ecumenical Councils since Nicea, 325. One wonders how measurable is a reasonable assent to the saving truths of the Incarnation, or the Blessed Trinity?

Nevertheless, the positive contributions of today's social sciences to catechesis/religious education are beyond measure. Regarding the whole process of coming to faith, the different levels of *sensus fidei*, and the more general "learning" and developmental growth patterns, the social sciences have created an entirely new area of study with specific methodologies providing new detailed insights into the realities involved.[16] In inter-disciplinary studies such as the inter-action and

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Perspective," *Louvain Studies* 27 (2002): 39-68; and Terrence Tilley, "Christian Orthodoxy and Religious Pluralism," *Modern Theology* 22 (Jan. 2006): 51-63.

[14]See Barbara Fleischer, "A Theological Method for Adult Education Rooted in the Works of Tracy & Lonergan," *Religious Education* 95 (Winter 2000): 23-37; Michael T. Buchanan, "Pedagogical Drift: Of New Approaches and Paradigms in Religious Education," *Religious Education* 100 (Winter 2005): 20-37; and the deeper epistemological study, Mark McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Crossroad, 2004).

[15]See, for example, Walter Kasper, "The Challenge of Truth in a New Cultural Context," *Origins* 31 (Jan. 3, 2002): 489-92.

[16]James Fowler, "Faith Development at 30: Naming the Challenges of Faith in a New Millennium," *Religious Education* 99 (Fall 2004): 405-21; Alison Le Cornu,

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mutual mediations between theology and sociology, and the sociology of knowledge itself, the social sciences have created a radically new field of research.[17] The concrete major contributions of psychology, sociology, education, cultural anthropology, etc. are too numerous even to be listed -- so pervasive, as a matter of fact, that the distinction between religious faith and the social sciences can be obscured, even in practice ignored. That's the problem!

It is a real problem – really real! Long before the era of social sciences ever arrived, the same basic problem existed, namely, [in common sense terms] **how to understand ordinary daily human actions as coming from ourselves and from God at the same time?** How to understand God's grace operative in our most personal thinking, doing and praying? The history of Christian theology and pastoral ministry is one long account of this single, many-faced polemic between those who so stress God's role [sola gratia, sola fide, etc] that they equivalently deny any real responsible agency to the human person, and those who so emphasize the human contribution that the divine is reduced to "making things easier" [Pelagianism]. In Philippine religious education, despite almost thirty years of intensely stressing the many forms of integrating human experience and faith, this basic problem is actualized more widely than ever. It appears in three basic comparisons: 1) our natural **reasoning**, compared to **faith** as accepting God's revelation; 2) critical rational thinking (**philosophy**), as distinct from **thinking faith** (**theology**); 3) and ourselves **as created** (creatures), and as God's adopted sons/daughters (**graced**).

"People's Ways of Believing: Learning Processes and Faith Outcomes," *Religious Education* 100 (Fall 2005): 424-45.

[17]Michael Lawler, *What Is and What Ought to Be: The Dialectic of Experience*, *Theology and Church* (New York: Continuum, 2005); Jack Seymour, "The Clue to Christian Religious Education: Uniting Theology and Education, 1950 to the Present," *Religious Education* 99 (2004): 272-85; V. Klimoski, K.O'Neil, and K. Schuth, *Educating Leaders for Ministry: Issues and Responses* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005).

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Thus in keeping with the long tradition of this problematic, there is a rather wide diversity of catechetical/religious educational approaches in the Philippines today. In theory, this is a good thing, for the living word of the Gospel cannot be comprehensively understood nor communicated by any one approach. Nevertheless, as Church history proves, some diversities are finally judged "heretical," meaning they do not fit in harmony with the total Christian revelation as proposed by the Church.

Hence it comes as no surprise that some religious educators propose a more explicit "Christian faith" educational approach, involving a sharp critique of the more commonly accepted approaches. Such experts often focus on worship as the heart of Christian education, grounded on the principle that Christian education should **not** be approached as a sub-category of religious education in general, taken as a universally recognized reality of human experience. Rather Christian education makes distinct truth claims relative to its doctrine of God, the human person, the nature of Christian communities, the Church's witness to the Gospel, etc. Christian faith exercises specific Christian practices which cannot rightfully be evaluated by the universal norms common to all "religious education," but only within its own unique perspectives.[18]

In a similar manner, other critically-reflected positions propose a Christian educational methodology flowing directly from a specific Christian spirituality – for example, those created by Ignatius (Jesuit) or La Salle.[19] These approaches, consciously working from the students'

[18]See the decisive position proposed by Debra Dean Murphy in *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), which begins with an insightful critique of the work of Gabriel Moran, Thomas Groome and Mary Boys. See also her previous article, "Worship as Catechesis: Knowledge, Desire, and Christian Formation," *Theology Today* 58 (Oct. 2001): 321-32. The theological basis for this position is deepened by Dwight Vogel, "The Depth Dimension of Christian Worship: A Trinitarian Perspective," *Worship* 76 (July 2002): 313-24.

[19]Exemplifying a common Jesuit tradition, we have the current "**Ignatian**

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"felt needs" but tackling the basic [universal] questions of human life, help students interiorize the Christian truths by going to the heart more than the head, while calling for "conversion." Like Bartimaeus focusing on the one essential: for him -- "Lord I want to see"(Mk.10:51) -- the religion teacher helps the students not to define, nor memorize, nor simply to "pass the course," but to see, understand, grow less confused, less afraid, about what life is **for**!

A balanced judgment on such approaches is not possible at this early stage, nor in the limited space of this study's introduction. But even given the probability that most religion departments and teachers will not be able to adopt all the elements of these approaches, nonetheless they offer numerous insights and emphases that could be adapted in many on-going catechetical programs, with great profit to the students. Not the least of such insights is the clear recognition of the qualitative difference between the social science level ("recent surveys show…") and the authentic Catholic Faith level ("IHS" – Jesus, Savior of All).[20]

Pedagogical Paradigm," which grew out of Part 10 of *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (1986) and was developed by a team drawn from the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education. Walter Burghardt related the educational ministry to Ignatian spirituality in his "The Spiritual Exercises as a Foundation for Educational Ministry," *Review for Religious* 51 (March-April 1992): 166-81.

Centuries before, Mary Ward, born thirty years after Ignatius' death, had founded an Institute (1609) in which she developed an Ignatian way for religious educators. In recent years, this has been developed by Therese Daly and published in *Faith and Freedom: Religious Education Through Ignatian Spirituality* (Spectrum Publications Pty Ltd, 2004), which presents "an admirable method of infusing the goals and methods of Ignatius into the religious education curriculum." See William O'Malley's review of her book in *The Way* 44 (April 2005): 36-38.

[20]It must be noted that the catechetical/religious educational approaches that start from common human experience, and the "universal recognition" of religion as a human cultural value, have undeniable basic truths – one of which is particularly important in this new millennium, namely, inter-religious dialogue.

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"Felt Inadequacies" of Doctrine in Faith/Religious Education.

Moving from the more speculative and theoretical, this section focuses more on some of the immediate, practical "inadequacies" of doctrinal teaching in today's catechesis. The most obvious is the common complaint of the sheer "ignorance" of the Faith among so many Catholics, including the dwindling proportion of Filipino youth who have been educated in Catholic primary and secondary schools.[21] Despite clear progress in some specific areas of catechesis – for example, the growing liturgical awareness among many youth groups – most catechetical experts admit this widespread doctrinal ignorance, together with the dominating role played by the swift, world-wide cultural changes that have radically modified every aspect of human life. Christian faith for today's generation simply cannot play the role it had for their grandparents. But regarding the specific problems of Christian doctrines, there are some clear, definite "inadequacies" that can be addressed and in part corrected. We shall briefly take up three inadequacies: 1) the inadequate understanding of what doctrines of faith actually mean; 2) the lack of grasping doctrine's constitutive relations with Scripture and living Faith; and 3) some external factors that impede clear, easy access to the truth of the doctrine.

First, "doctrine" and "dogma" in Christian Faith seem to have become "bad words" for many in today's culture, students and people in general. Dogmas are pictured as abstract principles or alleged universal truths, devoid of any "affective" dimensions or critical basis, yet whose acceptance is imposed by authority.[22] Hence they run counter

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The Christian Faith cannot be so unique as to sever all relationships with other religions; this would equivalently reject the universal salvific value of Christian revelation, and Jesus Christ, the Savior of all.

[21]Cavadini, "Ignorant Catholics," 14; see also Roberto Pazmino, *God Our Teacher: The Theological Basis in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

[22]Among many of our catechists and religious educators, a certain anti-

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not only to some post-modernity norms, but more basically to the adolescent thrust for the "full freedom" for all opinions, with a sharp prejudice against all authoritative teaching. Often these charges have little impact on ordinary life and therefore, outside of the problem of stopping any chance for a balanced, reasonable critical discussion of doctrines, they remain relatively irrelevant and harmless. Yet even a minimum of objective study into the history, nature and purpose of Christian doctrines – e.g. the Apostles Creed – could correct some of these prejudices.[23]

But unfortunately, in our present scientific, technological age, such objectivity is hard to come by, or to communicate. Moreover, this anti-dogmatic prejudice as the rejection of all free, critical inquiry, goes much beyond the attack against religious dogmas to the very reality of truth itself.[24]

Positively speaking, proper understanding of doctrines/dogmas simply rests on the objective need for truth in our interpersonal and

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intellectualism lurks beneath the surface. It appears suddenly in various shapes, e.g. in decrying the fact that some students consider religion as an academic course (it is that, of course, but not only that), or superficially contrasting "doctrine" with loving service and prayer. Cf. the brief critique of W. Michael Westbrook, a librarian and adult convert to the Catholic Church, in "Doctrine Versus Compassion," *America* (Nov. 5, 1994): 26. For a more adequate grasp of Faith's full reality, see Michael Paul Gallagher, *Dive Deeper: The Human Poetry of Faith* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2001).

[23]Note the change of emphasis from Charles Journet, *What Is Dogma?* (Hawthorn, 1964) to Walter Kasper, *The Methods of Dogmatic Theology* (Paulist, 1969) Wm. Reiser, *What Are They Saying about Dogma?* (Paulist, 1978), to the International Theological Commission, "On the Interpretation of Dogmas," *Origins* 20 (May 17, 1990): 1, 3-14.

[24]A strong positive Thomistic exposition of truth is given by Catherine Pickstock, "Imitating God: The Truth of Things According to Thomas Aquinas," *New Blackfriars* 81 (July-Aug. 2000): 308-26, and her co-authored book with John Milbank, *Truth in Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Cf. also R.W. L. Moberly, "How Can We Know the Truth? A Study of Jn 7:14-18," in Ellen Davis and R.B. Hays, eds., *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Eerdmans, 2003), 239-57.

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communitarian relationships. We not only have to know the basic truth of the realities involved in our daily lives. We also have to be able to express these truths accurately enough so they can function as the basis for practical moral attitudes and decisions that make up our daily human lives. No sound interpersonal life, nor responsible stance before others in one's community, are possible unless built on truth. This becomes gradually more evident as the adolescent grows into maturity, through the process of experiencing successes and failures, truths and falsehoods. It is not by chance or accidental that Jesus Christ's claim to be the truth condemned him before both the religious and political authorities (Jn.14:6; 18:37f)

But from the specific perspective of the religious educator, what could be proposed as possible causes for this "poor reputation" of doctrines/dogmas? If the problem is the proper understanding of what "doctrine" is and how it is supposed to function, then the cause must be due to ignoring doctrine's very nature seen in its key relationships. The true value of Catholic doctrine must necessarily be drawn from its own nature, viewed in terms of how it is related with two other inescapable Faith realities – sacred Scripture, and the daily living out the faith. A major student complaint has consistently focused on the lack of clear, persistent development of doctrine's two constitutive relationships: with Scripture, its source, and with the daily living of the faith, its desired goal. Moreover, the more perceptive Religion teachers themselves freely admit great difficulty in "applying" the doctrinal lessons taught in the classroom to the daily life of their students.[25]

This is the **second** major and widespread "inadequacy" in the actual doctrinal teaching, on all scholastic levels (GS, HS, College). If

[25]From a religious educator's point of view, to bring out clearly doctrine's two relations to Scripture and to the daily living out of the Faith is frequently made more difficult by particular academic approaches to Scripture and to Christian living. Many current Scripture studies so employ the historical critical method that Scripture's faith dimension is equivalently lost, while influenced by the behavioral sciences, Christian living is becoming more and more identified with common culturally accepted norms.

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the doctrine is not clearly explained as flowing directly from the living Word of God, it loses all its authentic inspirational saving Christian power. If the doctrine finds no "practice" in living out the faith day-by-day, it loses all significant existential meaning – it's reduced to a mere academic word-game, no reality. Both these relationships – with Scripture and daily living the Faith --come into serious play not only in "maturing in the Faith," but in all inter-religious dialogue as well.

But a **third**, more troubling inadequacy of doctrine is its undeniable role through the long history of the Christian Faith through the ages—from the Acts of Apostles to the present day -- in the polemical disputes, divisions, and consequent break downs of ecclesial consensus and unity. From such arose the over-simplified common taunt: loving service unites, doctrine divides. This is felt more sharply and deeply than ever in today's context of striving toward not just ecumenical unity, but also inter-religious dialogue. No easy solution has come to light, but the substantial beginnings of preparing for, and entering into, initial inter-religious dialogue, have already become a major stimulus for critical studies into the role of doctrine in faith, particularly in regard to the "*sensus fidei*."[26]

Conclusion

These "felt inadequacies" flow from the very nature of doctrines of the faith, and will be undoubtedly be with us in one form or another until the end of time. Nevertheless, they do not in any way cancel out

[26]See Ormond Rush, "Sensus Fidei: Faith 'Making Sense' of Revelation," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 231-61; and the informative critical study of John Burkhard, "Sensus Fidei: Recent Theological Reflection (1990-2001)," *Heythrop Journal* 46 (2005): 450-75; 47 (2006): 38-54, which updates his previous study, "Sensus Fidei: Theological Reflection Since Vatican II (1965-1989)," *Heythrop Journal* 34 (1993): 41-59, 123-36. The author emphasizes the increasing importance of "pastoral praxis," the reciprocal relations of knowing and doing, of experiential knowledge and theoretical knowledge, and the "turn to the practical" in postconciliar theology.

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the inherent necessity for doctrines of Faith – truths that accurately describe the intelligible realities of the "Good News." Having sketched the many faceted problematic background of doctrines of the faith, we now begin the major section of this study, focusing on the positive, irreplaceable role of doctrines in Christian Faith. The section consists of a three step approach which treats in order, 1) the reality or **nature of Christian Faith itself**; 2) a sketch of current theological concerns about the nature and **role of doctrines** in Christian Faith; and 3) a direct focus on the language and **functions of the Creeds**, and their relation with Scripture, Christian morals and worship, and thus with daily Christian living.

A significant aspect of this approach is that each step begins with a concerted effort to **focus on a specific weakness or problem** that highlights the reality in question. Hence, the **first step** is not just one more general description of Faith, but immediately faces the problem of the **faith-reason relationship**, and hence faith's public importance in human society compared to other realities studied in daily life. Discussing the common confusion relating to how faith and reason are related raises the questions of faith as free and personal. The **second step** does not attempt to summarize all that has been written on the interpretation of dogma, but directly confronts the **common fault of piecemeal presentation of single doctrines**, which thus become completely separated from Christian moral and liturgical life. The **third step** likewise begins with the problem of the usual **gap between** explaining **the Creeds** and their relevance to both the **"Gospel**" and daily life. This effectively impairs the study and exposition of all three. The rather unique effort to close this gap was inspired by the two foundational studies which focused on a holistic approach to Scripture, within a "Practical Theology" framework.

Finally, this third step concludes by briefly drawing together some conclusions regarding the irreplaceable yet limited role for Christian doctrine in the study and the daily living out of the Faith, and hence in religious education.

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II. A Three-Step-Approach to Renewed Focus on Faith Doctrines

A. The Reality/Nature of Christian Faith

From a **religious educator's perspective**, there is a rather surprising lack of clarity regarding the nature (reality) and action (function) of Faith among students who have taken religion courses in elementary, high school and even college. This confusion about what Christian faith is, and how it works, is manifested in at least three specific areas of confusion and irrelevance about faith. The **first** is the widespread ambiguity regarding the relationship between faith and reason, often leading to a **second** obscurity regarding faith as essentially free, never forced, which in turn has frequently generated a **third** misunderstanding of faith as personal.

First, the confusion regarding **faith and reason** is primarily a problem of recognizing the **proper**, **indispensable role of reason** in living the Christian faith.[27] While not denying the Scripturally grounded warnings against "an empty, seductive philosophy according to human tradition" over "the firmness of your faith in Christ" (Col.2: 5, 8), from a religious educator's point of view, this problem of playing down the legitimate role of reason is fostered by a number of specific factors. For one, there is, of course, the **sheer multiplicity** of religions, and various churches or sects within the same religion, each claiming absolute truth for itself against all others. Moreover the revealed religions often proclaim their message as divine **mysteries** which "**cannot be understood,"** but must simply be "taken on faith." Then there is the impact of our present scientific-technological culture which presumes secular scientific, experimental knowledge is the only worthwhile knowledge for humans of the 21st century.

[27]For a recent critical overview, see Thomas Rausch, *Reconciling Faith and Reason: Apologists*, *Evangelists and Theologians in a Divided Church* (Liturgical Press, 2000). Also Neil Ormerod, "Faith and Reason: Perspectives from MacIntyre and Lonergan," *Heythrop Journal* 46 (2005): 11-22.

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Politically, Christian faith is commonly relegated to either **private opinions**, superstitions etc, or cultural forces from out of the past. Unfortunately, some traditional Christian teaching, at face-value, seems to express a like position. Such, for example, is the often repeated definition of the "obedience of faith" as "**full submission of intellect and will,"** or the common traditional warning that "to question the faith is a sin."[28] These traditional religious adages, while perfectly defensible if adequately explained, in our present youth culture certainly do not foster a positive Catholic understanding of the role of reason in faith.

In response, two of the CFC's "Paradoxical Characteristics of Faith" focus precisely on this role of reason in faith. Faith is explained as "**reasonable yet beyond natural reason**." To believe is to exercise one's reason -- only rational creatures can believe. Moreover, Christian faith is never in conflict with human reason, but rather enlightens it by the grace-filled gift of believing in Christ who is "the light of the world." (Jn 8:12). "Beyond natural reason" because the Christian "mysteries" are positive, saving truths that arise not from our sense experience, but from God's revelation in sacred history. This grounds faith's **further paradox**: faith as at once **certain yet obscure**. Faith truths are **certain** on faith's level of God's Self-revelation, yet **obscure** on our rational level drawn from sense experience.[29] God as infinite pure Spirit is always "more" than the objects of our natural scientific knowledge – similar to how the ultimate meanings of our life and of our personal relationships are "more" than such scientific knowledge.

A s**econd** apparent area for misinterpreting the nature of faith is the **objective reality** of faith itself and its specific characteristic, **freedom**. Explaining the reality of faith as referring to both a personal

[28]See Vatican II, "Dei Verbum" 5, quoting Vatican I, "Dei Filius" (DS 3008, ND 118); also CCC 144. Cf. Luis Monden who distinguishes "questioning" from "doubting" in "On 'Questioning Within' Faith," in C. Mooney, ed., *Toward a Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: J.P. Kennedy, 1968).

[29]CFC 142-45, 147.

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act of assent (*fides qua*), and the realities to which we assent – e.g. the 12 articles of the Creed (*fides quae*) – inevitably causes much uneasiness and requests for clarification. Why this is so remains a mystery! One can only surmise that most ordinary Catholics have never inquired into what "faith" can legitimately refer to.[30] Even just focusing on faith as a personal decision and commitment, the difference between a **single "act of faith**" and the **life-long process** of maturing in the faith, has to be made clear.

Faith is correctly defined as **essentially a free act** which can never be imposed on us, even by God, since it consists of freely assenting to God and his divine will. Nevertheless, given the widespread error of defining freedom as "doing whatever I want," to stress faith's freedom has the unavoidable effect of radically weakening the authentic understanding of faith's reality, and reducing it to some personal, private preference which lacks any solid intellectual basis or moral responsibility.

In response, the **paradoxes of faith** as at once both "an **individual act yet also a life-long process**," and "**truly free yet morally obliging**" must be clearly explained. "God calls men to serve Him in Spirit and truth. Consequently they are bound to Him in conscience but not coerced."[31] Such is what constitutes our daily life of interpersonal relationships – our whole moral lives depend on our freedom -- but freedom exercised authentically is doing good, not self-centered rejection of loving service of others.

A **third** source of misunderstanding the authentic reality of Christian faith is its quality of being eminently "**personal**." The

[30]In order to clarify how faith refers to both a personal act and what is believed, one had to ask students: does the book, entitled **The Christian Faith**, actually believe? If not, how can it legitimately be entitled *The Christian Faith*? Faith, then, must also refer to what is believed.

[31]CFC 146, quoting Vatican II, "Declaration on Religious Liberty (DH)," 11, and 14.

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practice of infant baptism should not mislead us here: children baptized in infancy on the faith of their parents, gradually grow up through various stages to integrate and mature in their faith. Christian Faith is truly a personal reality for each of us. No one can believe "for us," in our place, as it were. Yet two further paradoxical characteristics of Christian Faith clarify two rather common exaggerated ways of understanding this personal quality of faith. The first error is to think that my Christian faith is my own creation, completely mine. This is rejected by **faith's paradox as both a "gift yet our doing."** God has to reveal himself and move and assist us by "the interior helps of the Holy Spirit" to enable us to exercise our Christian faith. But God's gift calls for our free cooperation – we are morally responsible for our faith response.[32] Both God's gift of faith and our personal, free response take place within the Christian community, the Church. Our Christian faith, therefore, is not something "I did it my way," but essentially **both personal and ecclesial.[33]**

In concluding this exposition of the confusions regarding the nature and reality of Christian Faith, a point of interest for the religious educator is the apparently very limited effectiveness of CFC's analysis of faith's paradoxical characteristics, for the typical religion teacher.[34] To trace back to their sources the common one-sided exaggerated claim that "my faith" as totally my creation, my doing, or the frequent charge that faith is merely a private emotional stance, without any critical rational support – this going back to sources seems beyond the capacity of the average religion teacher. This significant lack may

[32]CFC 149-50, on Vatican II's "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (DV)," 5.

[33]CFC 151-54; cf. Vatican II, "Decree in Church's Missionary Activity (AG)," 1-5.

[34]The exposition of faith's "paradoxical characteristics" was inspired by the almost universal procedure of explaining how faith is a gift, and then how it is our human act, but never putting the two together, thereby fostering an inadequate understanding of both faith as God's gift and faith as our human (free) act. Cf. e.g. CCC 153-54.

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offer one reason for the widespread inability of religion teachers to make the "Good News" relevant to the daily life of their students. This inability in turn suggests what is urgently needed in catechist-formation programs, and the "inculturation" essential for both teacher and student.

Positive Approaches to the Reality of Christian Faith.

It is relatively easy to go from the felt inadequacies and confusions regarding faith to the positive emphases called for, in pursuing the first pastoral priority of "Integral Faith Formation" proposed by the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal.[35] Top priority must be given to Christian faith as integral to personal development in society, drawn directly from, and exemplified in detail in, the Scriptural sources. This stresses the actual "daily living out" of the faithful's personal commitment to Jesus Christ in their community, the Church.[36] While drawing on Church Councils, especially Vatican II, and John Paul II's ***Fides et Ratio***, greater efforts are needed to emphasize the practical inculturation of doctrine by creative use of Filipino authors and CBCP pastorals.[37]

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[35]Ten years after PCP II the Catholic Church in the Philippine held a week-long consultation of 369 country-wide delegates, producing its "Message of the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal," *Boletin Ecclesiastico* 77 (March-April 2001): 164-71.

[36]For example, see George Berthold, *Faith Seeking Understanding: Learning and the Catholic Tradition* (Manchester: St. Anselm College Press, 1991); Romanus Cessario, *Christian Faith and the Theological Life* (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. Press, 1996); Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994.); Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999); Herbert McCabe, "Faith," in *God, Christ and Us* (New York: Continuum, 2003); Jean Mouroux, *I Believe: The Personal Structure of Faith* (Sheed & Ward, 1959); David Stanley, *The Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Paulist, 1971).

[37]Cf. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Pasay City: Paulines, 1998), and commentaries by Avery Dulles, "Reason, Philosophy, and the Grounding of Faith," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 40 (Dec. 2000): 477-99, and idem, *Restoring Faith in Reason:*

https://publications.lst.edu/

In terms of the "integrations" proposed in the NCDP, these positive factors constitute the core of the first two integrations: **Life and Structural Integrations**.[38] Life integration focuses on the immediate goal to close the gap between Christian Faith as taught in the classroom, and the living out the faith in daily life. Structural integration provides NCDP's primary means for closing this gap by distinguishing within the structure of the faith: **doctrine**, **morals** and **worship**. These constitute the three essential dimensions of the faith. As distinct both objectively (Creed, Commandments, and Sacraments) and subjectively (believing, moral acting, trusting), they introduce the **experiential (**moral and worship activities) into typical classroom communicating the faith, thus breaking through the "head knowledge syndrome" of much school catechesis which commonly reduces all of faith to doctrine—talking about faith.

Finally, as the Church has constantly been urging, especially since Vatican II, these factors must be organized and presented in a more concrete, experiential and realistic **Scriptural approach**. Fortunately, we have today a sound start in a more effective, holistic study and use of Scripture in religious education.[39]

B. Theological Sketch of the Nature and Role of Doctrine in Faith

Besides the obstacles and "inadequacies" presented in an earlier section, the major difficulty with communicating the doctrinal Good News is its **piecemeal** presentation, which thereby separates it from living out the faith in daily life. An individual doctrine by its very nature

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Commentary & *Discussion on Fides et Ratio*, L.P. Hemming and S.F. Parsons, eds. (Notre Dame Univ. Press, 2003). For local materials, see for example the works of Bishop Teodoro Bacani, and the CBCPs four "Pastoral Exhortations" at the millennium.

[38]For a detailed exposition of these integrations, see Joseph Roche, ed., *A Companion to CFC* (Manila: ECCCE/Word & Life, 1998), 37-56, 115-28.

[39]Cf. the references to our two studies presented in footnote 1.

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is focused sharply on one specific dimension of the faith, highlighting it for the moment to the explicit exclusion of all else. In that sense, it suffers inescapably from a certain artificiality, since, as will be emphasized below, all doctrines are naturally inter-connected, and can be understood adequately only when so viewed. This basic problem was faced squarely by the original NCDP, which stressed three specific characteristics of Catholic doctrine that, if understood and properly communicated, would help to alleviate the problem. They are: 1) the inner organic unity and coherence of doctrines; 2) the hierarchy and development of doctrines; and 3) the relevance and importance of doctrines for living the daily life of faith.[40]

Organic Unity and Coherence of Doctrines

Throughout Church history we encounter the formulation of many key Church doctrines in times of great polemical disputes and crises, when the Magisterium, or teaching body of the Church, was forced to clearly articulate the Church's position on the disputed question. The core element in almost every case was safeguarding the unity and coherence of the doctrines. "Heresy" (choice or "faction") usually occurs when a truth is taken out of faith's organic whole, and precisely because it is viewed in isolation, is not grasped correctly. Outstanding in this regard was the Church's slow, laborious process of coming to an adequate understanding of Jesus' "I am" (Mt.16:15), and his relation to the Father and Holy Spirit. Faith's organic whole means the central doctrines of Trinity, Christology, Grace, Church and salvation inter-relate in an organic unity.[41]

[40]Cf. NCDP 172-77. Regarding "Historicity and the Interpretation of Dogma," this ground breaking article of Piet Schoonenberg is still valuable. Cf. *Theology Digest* 18 (1970): 132-43.

[41]Traditionally all positive affirmations about God were explained as analogous, that is, at once the same and different. The classic definition of this is from Lateran IV (1215): "Between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying a greater dissimilitude" (DS 806; ND 320).

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But this unity and coherence refers beyond the articulated doctrines to the communitarian nature of Christian Faith itself, and the Christian community. Heresy destroys the community's union of hearts and minds that results from Christ its Head, and the Holy Spirit of Truth, its "soul." Moreover these truths are about God's revelation, truths grounded in the biblical, historical revelatory narrative, truths which are never complete in themselves. Rather they are "dialectical" – meaning they can never perfectly, exhaustively express the realities of the "mysteries revealed," but are always open to further refinement and development.[42] Thus to be able to judge whether some new religious "doctrine" is coherent with the organic unity of God's revelation in Christ demands the special grace of the Holy Spirit. This means that **both** those who reject out-of-hand any variety or development of doctrinal expression and insist on the status quo, **as well as** those presenting new theories that are objectively incompatible with the Faith, shatter the unity for which Christ himself prayed. (Jn 17: 21-23).[43]

Concretely, this inner unity and coherence of Catholic doctrines are the basis for the direct critique of the individual, 'piecemeal presentation' of doctrines common in much catechesis and religious education. To understand anything means to come to see its connections with other things – how it fits in with everything else. This is especially true of understanding Catholic doctrines. NCDP's

[42]In today's theological context, doctrinal and liturgical pluralisms are taken for granted by the "experts," many of whom seem to assign the cause of all heresy to those insisting on the status quo. Cf. for example, Nancy Ring, "Heresy," in J. Komonchak (ed.), et al., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Glazier, 1987), 461. This contrasts sharply with the Vatican's insistence on fidelity to the tradition. In milder ways, this discrepancy is imaged in the differences between conscientious religious educators and the professional experts in Scripture, systematic, moral and liturgical theology.

[43]It is important for the religious educator to recognize the intrinsic need to both continue seeking deeper understanding of the faith by new expressions and insights, while at the same time giving due respect and importance to the living Catholic tradition.

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third "**dimension integration"** presents the necessity of inter-relating the doctrines simply to understand adequately any one of them.[44] Unfortunately, this basic step in relating doctrines to one another and thus to living the faith is often neglected in formation programs for catechists/religion teachers.

Hierarchy and Development of Doctrines

The second characteristic of Catholic doctrines that addresses this problem of piecemeal presentation of individual Catholic doctrines is their hierarchical and developmental character. That doctrines develop through the ages is easily shown not only by the new Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Assumption (1950), but also by simply comparing the Council of Chalcedon's description of Jesus Christ with Vatican II's "Gaudium et Spes."[45] "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb.13:8), but the Church's understanding of Jesus is constantly growing with new insights and responses to new questions. Vatican II went on to assert: "in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or **'**hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith."[46]

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[44]Cf., for example, NCDP 173.

[45]Compare Chalcedon's metaphysical description of Jesus as one person, two natures (ND 615; DS 302), with Vatican II's "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," nos. 22, 45 (ND 668, 669) which stress Christ as fully human and as the goal of human history, "the joy of all hearts and the fulfillment of all aspirations." Cf. A. Dulles, "Doctrinal Renewal: A Situationist View," in *The Resilient Church* (Doubleday, 1978), 45-62; Christropher Kaczor, "Thomas Aquinas on the Development of Doctrine," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 283-302; and Daniel Thompson, "Schillebeeckx on the Development of Doctrine," ibid., 303-21.

[46]"Decree on Ecumenism," no. 11. Cf. Karl Rahner, "'Hierarchy' of Truths," *Theology Digest* 30 (1982): 227-29; and D. Carroll, "'Hierarchia veritatum': A Theological and Pastoral Insight into Vatican II," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 44 (1977): 125-33.

https://publications.lst.edu/

Much discussion ensued regarding how "hierarchy" was to be understood. Various spatial images were proposed: **linear** (the highpoint in a series); **circular** (the center of concentric circles); **organic** (the heart or core vitalizing the whole); and **structural** (the foundation on which all rests).[47] A comparison was made between the typical Biblical approach to a "hierarchy of truth" and the Vatican II focus. The New Testament, following the Old Testament, focused on truth as the single reality of God's fidelity rather than as a plurality of expressions of the truths as in Vatican II; while the Scriptures are concerned primarily with the one event of God's Self revelation, Vatican II rather concentrates on teachings; finally, Vatican II's approach addresses the question of defined dogmas, binding on all believers, whereas the Gospels focus on the proclamation of the central facts of Jesus' life and identity, not on the carefully-worded expressions of the faith.[48] Thus there are actually a number of different "hierarchies of truth," based on the various criteria of Scripture, or Church teaching, or as necessary for salvation, or simply its place in the belief system of either the Church or the individual believer.[49]

Special attention has been given to the place of Marian dogmas, and by enlarging these dogmas to include not just the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, but also Mary as ***Theotokos*** (God-

[47]Much of the following explanation of the "Hierarchy of Truths" is drawn from the comprehensive survey article of William Henn, "The Hierarchy of Truths Twenty Years Later," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 439-71; cf. p. 440 for "spatial images."

[48]From Henn's summary (pp. 452-53) of Edmund Schlink's comparison between Scripture and Vatican II's "Unitatis redintegratio" (Decree on Ecumenism) no. 11, in "Die Hierarchie der Wahrheiten und die Einigung der Kirchen," Ecumenical Inst. For Advanced Theological Studies, *Yearbook 1972-73* (Jerusalem: Tantur, 1973), 27-42.

[49]Cf. John Ford's "Hierarchy of Truths" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *1974 Supplement*. Cf. Henn,"Hierarchy of Truths," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 464-66.

https://publications.lst.edu/

bearer) and Mary's **virginity**, their Christological importance is highlighted. The "hierarchy" principle was summarized in seven points: 1) the "foundation of Christian faith" is the central mystery of the Triune God revealed by the Incarnate Word, our Redeemer; 2) these revealed truths are on the level of the **goal** of our salvation in Christ; 3) the peripheral truths are no less true or revealed, but 4) are on the level of **means** toward our eternal life; 5) and vary in this 'hierarchy' of importance through the closeness of their connection with the foundation; 6) thus their main value is in illuminating the central mystery of Christian faith and being transparent to its depth in daily life; and 7) these peripheral truths develop from Christian living.[50]

The "hierarchy of truths" principle offers some significant advantages, first as a means toward Church unity – as distinct from uniformity --open to a certain pluralism. The hierarchy functions as a hermeneutical principle for interpreting the body of Christian truths, and for re-appropriating the tradition so it can be handed on again in fresh, plausible ways to today's believers. In this way, the hierarchy principle has a profoundly "pastoral dimension." Yet it equally incites deeper reflection on the nature of Christian dogma, the concepts of revelation and faith indicative of Vatican II, and calls for further development on the basis of foundational notions such as revelation and faith, truth as means for unification rather than division, and the specific nature of theology itself.[51]

What is significant for the religious educator is not only the comparison among doctrines regarding their varying importance in terms of their centrality to the Faith. More significant is the distinction between this hierarchy among the **objective body of doctrines**, and

[50]Cf. Frederick Jelly, "Marian Dogmas Within Vatican II's Hierarchy of Truths," *Marian Studies* 27 (1976): 17-40, at 19 and 40.

[51]Cf. Henn's "Systematic Reflections," in "The Hierarchy of Truths Twenty Years Later," 470-71.

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the **existential hierarchy** of Christian truths for individual, or groups of, Christians. The two hierarchies are surely closely connected, but not identical. In the Philippines, one could certainly argue for the special existential importance of Marian doctrines, beyond their strictly objective hierarchy.[52] Unfortunately, many religion teachers do not know how to make use of such an **existential** hierarchy of truths -- those which actually inspire and motivate the students in following Christ. Instead, too often they give off the objective truths which they have learned in their own formation studies and updating, some of which may not be relevant to their students' faith life. But at least this hierarchy of truths confirms the necessity of getting beyond the individual, piecemeal communication of separate faith doctrines.

Interpretation and Relevance of Doctrines

The third and last characteristic of Catholic doctrines is their relevance to the life of faith, a relevance that calls for authentic interpretation. NCDP strongly asserts that Christian truths are not some indifferent bits of information; rather they are "**salvific**" -- truths that "**save**, **inspire**, **uplift**, **guide**, **offer help and consolation** . . . they make a real difference in people's lives."[53] The objective basis for this is clear: the Gospel message of the infinite, gratuitous, personal love of God -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit -- for each and everyone, revealed to all through Jesus Christ, in the Spirit. But the clear grasp of this central truth seems quite absent from many. This objectively grounded nature of Christian truths is not the normal way students and adults understand Catholic doctrines. In fact, one could question whether it is the common understanding even among the religion

[52]Cf. Carroll, "'Hierarchia veritatum': A Theological and Pastoral Insight of the Second Vatican Council," 125-33. There is surely a relation between this existential hierarchy of truths and popular religiosity, which should be of significant interest to religious educators.

[53]NCDP 179.

https://publications.lst.edu/

teachers themselves. As noted above, the best basis for improving the image of Catholic doctrines is to show their intrinsic relations with the inspired Scriptural account of God's revelation, on one hand, and with the daily life of faith on the other.

What is needed for this, of course, is **accurate interpretation**. A careful detailed study by the International Theological Commission accurately synthesized all the major factors in the whole on-going process of interpreting dogmas, involving biblical and theological foundations, Magisterial practice, and three sources of criteria for accurate interpretation: Scripture, Tradition, and the contemporary actuality of the truth.[54] This research and study – stressing the historicity and dialectical aspects of all interpretation -- is absolutely necessary. But the problem from the religious educators' point of view is more directly pastoral: what kind of "interpretation" is needed in order to effectively communicate Catholic doctrines as truly "salvific"— saving, inspiring, uplifting, guiding, offering help and consolation?

Some help is offered by the "**new evangelization**" which gained much notoriety and inspired many new efforts in the catechetical field under John Paul II.[55] However, in regard to its actual practical implementation, there is a certain similarity with the lack of such actual implementation of Vatican insistence in recent years on adult catechesis as the prime focus. This weak implementation is not due to any lack of good will or theoretical disagreement, but rather because effective implementation of such directives depends very much on many concrete local conditions. And given the great dearth of an adequate number of catechists in the Philippines today, the actual implementation

[54]Cf. International Theological Commission, "On the Interpretation of Dogmas," cited in note 23. Cf. also Francis Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York: Paulist, 1996); and Paul Crowley, *In Ten Thousand Places: Dogma in a Pluralistic Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1997).

[55]Bishop Edward Clark, "What is New About the New Evangelization," *Origins* 36 (May 18, 2006): 1-7.

https://publications.lst.edu/

of these Vatican directives does not seem to have effected any major change in Filipino catechesis and religious education.

Perhaps more effective help will come from the recognition for the need of a "**new apologetics**." "Apologetics," of course, does not mean an "apology" or excuse, but rather has a long history dating from the origins of Christian Faith. "Always be ready to give an explanation [a defense (apologia)] to anyone who asks you for a reason [an accounting (logos)] for your hope" (1 Pt. 3:15) In recent times, this tradition has largely been lost, even while it is recognized as urgently needed. The disappearance of the "old apologetics" is attributed to many factors: its over-emphasis on strict rational arguments, whose effectivity was always critically nuanced by Christian thinkers from Augustine to Pascal to Newman; the rise of biblical studies, scientific theories (evolution) and historical emphasis; the secularization of society which equivalently marginalizes religious faith to private opinion, and the opposite fideist tradition which tends to reject any attempt to show faith as "reasonable" as being rationalistic.[56]

The need for a **new** apologetics, then, is clear.[57] John Paul II described it in terms four key qualities: clarity, humanity, confidence and prudence. "This new apologetics will need to breathe a spirit of humanity, that compassionate humility which understands people's anxieties and questions, and which is not quick to presume in them

[56]Cf. Archbishop William Levada, "Toward A New Apologetics," *Origins* 31 (March 21, 2002): 661, 663-67. The author has been appointed the new head of the Congregation for the Faith by Benedict XVI (the former head as Cardinal Ratzinger). Cf. also Francis Cardinal George, "A New Apologetics for a New Evangelization," *Theology Digest* 47 (2000): 341-50.

[57]Cf. also Richard Gaillardetz, "Apologetics, Evangelization and Ecumenism Today," *Origins* 35 (May 19, 2005): 9-15; idem, "Do We Need a New(er) Apologetics?" *America* (Feb. 2, 2004): 26-33; and Bishop Edward Braxton, "Catholic Education and the New Apologetics," *Origins* 35 (May 4, 2006): 763-70.

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ill will or bad faith."[58] Concretely, this would involve developing an apologetics focusing on: 1) the beauty of God's creation,[59] 2) the witness of faithful believers who "put their faith into practice," (especially in terms of justice and charity), 3) the assertion of the moral dimension of public policy and faith's presence in the public arena precisely for the common good, and 4) entering into ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. Such an apologetic puts a premium on the basic "relevance" of doctrinal faith for daily life -- personal, interpersonal and societal.

C. Focus on the Creeds: Their Types, Language, Functions and Relations

Despite post-modernity's common rejection of universal truths, there has been a rather remarkable resurgence in critical studies of the traditional Christian Creeds. In studying the Creeds, one has to first identify the **various types** of "creedal statements." Some are positions of individual theologians summarizing the faith, usually called "short formulas of the faith." Others are proclamations of certain groups, some with quasi-official authority in a particular Church or group of Churches. Even among the classical Creeds there are baptismal creeds, conciliar creeds, and 'confessions" of the faith. Nevertheless there are enough "communal aspects" shared among the different types to offer insight into the nature, functions and value of Creeds.[60]

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[58]John Paul II, in describing the "new apologetics" in an address to Canadian Bishops, Oct. 1999. Quoted by Levada, "Toward a New Apologetics," p. 665.

[59]Cf. Andrew Greeley's brief but insightful exposition, "The Apologetics of Beauty," *America* 183 (Sept. 16, 2000): 8-14; Gerald O'Collins, "The Beauty of Christ," *The Way* 44 (Oct. 2005): 21-35; and Robert Maloney, "Magnetic Beauty: A Gift to the Young and the Poor," *Spirituality Review* (Advent/Christmas, 2003).

[60]See for example J.N. Bezancon & Philip Ferlay, *How To Understand the Creed* (New York: Crossroad, 1988); Bruno Forte, *A Short Introduction to the Apostles Creed* (London: St. Paul, 1994); Nicolas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God: A Reading of the Apostles' Creed* (Notre Dame: University of N.D. Press, 1993); Hans Küng, *The Apostles Creed Explained for Today* (London: SCM Press, 1993);

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Language

Before entering into a summary of Creedal aims and functions, it is helpful to recognize the "**literary form**" of Creeds. A new emphasis in current creedal studies, in line with the contemporary common stress on semantics, is their focus on the specific language of the Creeds, more symbolic than factual information, more "poetic" than prosaic.[61] For the religious educator, this basic understanding of the kind and quality of the language expressing Catholic truths, and consequently of the type of knowledge and certitude involved in accepting these truths in faith, is of exceptional importance.[62] Teachers in the lower grades are strongly tempted to fall into the trap of focusing on the memorizing of the Creedal statements as so much factual data or information. Such over-simplification can cause much difficulty in

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Gerald O'Collins & Mary Venturini, *Believing: Understanding the Creed* (New York: Paulist, 1991); Pheme Perkins, *What We Believe: A Biblical Catechism of the Apostles' Creed* (New York: Paulist, 1986); Roger Van Harn, ed., *Exploring & Proclaiming the Apostles' Creed* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Credo: Meditations on the Apostles Creed* (T & T Clark, 1989); Frances Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (London: SCM Press, 1991).

[61]On Creedal language and learning ways, cf. Stephen Rowan, *The Nicene Creed: Poetic Words for a Prosaic World* (Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991); idem, *Studies in Formative Spirituality* 10 (May 1989): 197-206; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Divine Rhetoric* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000). Cf. also Mark McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), and Alison Le Cornu, "People's Ways of Believing: Learning Processes and Faith Outcomes," *Religious Education* 100 (Fall 2005): 425-45.

[62]For one example of focus on language in spiritual writing, see Joseph Lobo, "Dynamics of Metaphor and Imagination in the [Ignatian] Spiritual Exercises," *Ignis* 35/2: 29-41; also his "Metaphor and Theologizing in Asia," *Vidyajyoti* 69 (April 2005). For focus on the Creed, see Stephan Duffy's historical review article of Pelican's 2003 monumental four volume creedal study, "Creeds and Confessions of Faith: From Ages of Belief to an Age of Creedal Malaise," *Religious Studies Review* 31 (Jan.-April 2005): 37-45.

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later years when trying to provide critical grounding for accurately understanding these faith truths.

Functions

Most of the studies on the Creeds focus primarily on their purposes or functions. With individual differences, five general purposes can be discerned.[63] The most obvious is **self-identity** – whether the Church community or the individual believer. The Creed is clearly one way persons have to establish who they are, and what they stand for. But there is nothing self-centered about a Creed; on the contrary, Creeds lift us beyond ourselves, in a **relationship of worship** -- praising, thanking, giving glory to God, in community worship, as exemplified in all baptismal Creeds. These Creeds exemplify a further purpose, namely **instruction**. The Creeds were created to serve as one norm for judging entry into the Church through baptism; they summarized the catechesis given to those preparing for baptism. They thus became a **test for orthodoxy**, often used to settle disputes by inserting new phrases in the accepted Creed in order to settle the dispute. Moreover public confession of the Creeds by believers constituted a **personal, public witness** to the Faith before the world, and an invitation to others to listen, believe, and join the community of faith. To this day, these functions are being fulfilled by the traditional Creeds, for the majority of Christians.

But if this be the case, **why is there a proliferation** of new statements of Faith? One reason is surely to supplement the traditional Creeds by settling new doctrinal questions and thus warding off

[63]From among the general works, most helpful on Creedal functions are Jan Milic Lochman, *The Faith We Confess* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 7-27; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Creed: What Christian Believe and Why It Matters* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 40-64, 297-324; and Berard Marthaler, *The Creed: The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology*, rev. ed. (Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1993), 1-15. Cf. also Concilium General Secretariat, "The Creed in the Melting Pot," *Dogma and Pluralism*, *Concilium* 51 (1970), 131-53; and Antonius Brekelmans, "Origin and Functions of Creeds in the Early Church," Ibid., 33-42.

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possible new heresies.[64] But most new professions of Faith respond to **two new concerns**: "**historical consciousness**," and the "**turn to the subject**." Both these new emphases tend to create a certain climate of restlessness regarding the past, traditional expressions of what is to be believed and how it is to be shown. Rather the focus has shifted to what we ourselves really believe enough to stake our lives on it. Thus the aim or purpose of these new confessions of faith are created within a basic sense of relativity, from a particular perspective situated in a concrete context of time and place -- -- two qualities which are in sharp contrast to the traditional stable, universal creeds.

Thus the new creeds are more expressive than normative. Their **language** draws from everyday experience rather than traditional biblical and ecclesiastical terms; their **structure** arises from the human situation, often recounting the ***via inventionis,*** the personal path of discovery, rather than any prior (ecclesial) faith-convictions. Hence their Christian doctrinal content usually remains on the level of generalities – a compassionate, generous God grounding the meaning of life, but avoiding all metaphysical explanations of the Incarnation, the Trinity, or the Holy Spirit's divinity. Their content rather relates in general terms to common human experience and growth, oriented toward praxis. Even their eschatological descriptions usually avoid specifying any specific ultimate hope, or assurance of personal survival after death. Instead they focus on arousing Christians to practical commitment to social justice, against all violence, hunger, poverty, etc.[65]

From a religious educator's point of view, these newer formulas of the faith are very effective positively in terms of **self-identity** and self-expression, and in **mediating traditional faith formulas** to the

[64]Avery Dulles, "Foundation Documents of the Faith: Modern Creedal Affirmations," *Expository Times* 91(July 1980): 291-96, at 292-93. Chapter five of *The Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (*CFC*) offers three main Creedal functions: a summary of beliefs, a pledge of loyalty, and proclamation of identity. Cf. also David Harned, *Creed and Personal Identity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

[65]Cf. Marthaler, *The Creed*, 367-80; Dulles, "Foundation Documents," 295-96.

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current times. This fosters two positive results: 1) it helps today's Christians to interiorize the Christian truths, and 2) thus alerts them to crucial implications of the Gospel in the present times, such as Christian faith's counter-cultural stand against some features of the prevailing consumerist, hedonistic mass culture. A further positive asset is their **ecumenical openness**, which avoids stressing the distinctive positions of individual denominations while concentrating primarily on what is common among the Christian Churches.[66]

Limitations

Nevertheless, these new formulas of the faith exhibit certain clear limitations. The first is their admitted inadequacy in expressing the strong convictions of Christians who stick to the traditional consecrated terminology as necessary for safe-guarding the biblical and ecclesial Faith of the Church, A second limitation is the absence of the strong **doxological quality** of the traditional Creeds which grounded the prayer life of the community. Consequently the new formulas make no attempt to summarize the main truths of the biblical and ecclesial teaching. Moreover, **few** could be described as "**kerygmatic**," arising rather from individual or group reflections on specific personal faith commitments. Hence witnessing to the Church's traditional faith is not one of their primary goals. Perhaps they're better understood as an attractive first step apologetic, a "pre-catechesis," helpful but in no way substituting for the traditional Creeds, particularly in regard to serving as test of orthodoxy.[67]

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[66]Karl Rahner, "The Need for a 'Short Formula' of Christian Faith," *Theological Investigations* 9 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), 117-26; and "Reflections on Problems involved in Short Formulas," *Theological Investigations* 11 (1974), 230-44.

[67]Cf. W. Beinert, "Do 'Short Formulas' Dilute the Faith," *Theology Digest* 22 (1974): 253-60; and Ronald Modras, "The Functions and Limitations of Creedal Statements," *An Ecumenical Confession of Faith? Concilium* 118, Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, eds. (1978), 36-44.

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Finally, Creeds can function properly only within a believing, worshipping community, whose members clearly recognize that their Christian faith, as directed immediately to the ultimate Mystery of God revealed by Jesus Christ, can never be reduced to explicit series of statements – or to any set of formulas. In today's scientific–technological climate, this positive, uplifting notion of Mystery–the "unexplainable" reality in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28)–demands a real intellectual, moral and religious conversion that many find very difficult.[68]

Relationships

Perhaps the best way to gain a proper understanding of the Christian Creeds is to focus on their intrinsic relationships with their source, means and purpose. The **primary source** of all Creeds is **Scripture**, and hence the early Creeds can only be properly grasped through their direct historical relationship with the Gospel. Thus Cardinal Kasper traces the process from the "living Gospel" and obligatory doctrinal truths of apostolic times, through the long developing theological tradition to the Post-Tridentine theology, and finally to the uneasy integration of the binding force of dogma with the freedom of the Gospel in our present age of religious pluralism, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue.[69]

A second dimension of this same fundamental relationship of Creeds to Scripture is their "**confessional**" characteristic, which raises the paradox of how the community's Faith proclaimed in the

[68]Creeds are fashioned by and for the faith community, designed not to impose external, uniformity but for ecclesial unity and interior inspiration -- for total conversion to Christ within the Church, for mission to the world. Cf. Johnson, *The Creed*, 297-314.

[69]Walter Kasper, "The Relationship between Gospel and Dogma: An Historical Approach," in *Man as Man and Believer*, *Concilium* 21 (New York: Paulist, 1967) 163-67. Cf. also David Burton Bryan, *From Bible to Creed: A New Approach to the Sunday Creed* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988).

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Apostles' Creed can be contemporary, "confessed today." How can the continuity of a universal, unchanging formula be reconciled with faith's contemporary character dependent on non-universal changing formulas? Jürgen Moltmann examines the dilemma in terms of Jesus' own "true witness" (Rev 1:5; 3:14), and the Holy Spirit's witness of Jesus (Jn.15:26). Thus he argues that Christ is confessed today by the Holy Spirit and through him, in the innumerable Spirit-inspired actions in the struggle for justice, for freedom from oppression and the deified powers of race, sex, the state and capital, in witnessing to Christ in suffering and silence. Moltmann sees "the confession of Christians to Jesus Christ today as borne up by Christ's confession to them, manifested to them through the common acts of Christian witness inspired and supported by the Holy Spirit who brings about the new creation."[70]

Other essential relationships fill out this appreciation of the Creeds' full value. Their value for the life of faith is sharpened by the current positive developments in liturgical renewal,[71] and the contrasting studies in **unbelief.**[72] They are used to ground the social doctrine of

[70]Jürgen Moltmann, "The Confession of Jesus Christ: A Biblical Theological Consideration," in *Ecumenical Confession of Faith? Concilium* 118 (1978), 13-19.

[71]Cf. French Bishops, "Great Is the Mystery of Faith (4th Eucharistic Prayer)," *Origins* 9 (Jan. 10, 1980): 477, 479-89; Mark Chapman, "Why Do We Still Recite the Creed at the Eucharist," *Anglican Theological Review* 87 (Spring 2005): 207-23; also E. Byron Anderson, *Worship and Christian Identity: Practicing Ourselves* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003); and Dorothy Bass, "Christian Formation in and for Sabbath Rest," *Interpretation* 59 (Jan. 2005): 25-39.

[72]Cf. Michael Paul Gallagher's trilogy, *Free To Believe: Ten Steps to Faith* (Loyola Univ. Press, 1978), *Help My Unbelief* (1987), and *Struggles of Faith* (Columba Press, 1990), with his later article, "Struggle and Conversion," *Tablet* (Sept. 10, 2005): 10. Still valuable is the classic article in new approaches to unbelief of J.B. Metz, "Unbelief as a Theological Problem," in *The Church and the World*, *Concilium* 6 (1965), 59-77, and Karl Rahner's many articles in his *Theological Investigations*, vol. 3, 355-72; vol. 9, 145-64; vol. 11, 166-84; and vol. 21, 130-50.

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the Church.[73] Without such solid grounding in the basic truths of the faith, the personal and social moral life of the Church is always in danger of various ideological pressures that weaken the impact of the Gospel message. From the religious educator's point of view, the balanced integration of Creedal doctrines, Catholic moral principles and values, and the liturgical worship of the Church, is the best safeguard for assuring the accurate communication of the Gospel message and mission.

III. Some Conclusions Relative to the Religious Educator

It is time to pull together some results of this study, in the form of some general conclusions. The following are expressed from the viewpoint of the religious educator, not that of the professional Scriptural exegete nor systematic, moral or liturgical theologian. Moreover, these conclusions are necessarily very general and tentative – each would require a major paper for adequate grounding and explanation. But they hopefully point the way toward deepening one's understanding of Catholic doctrine in living the Faith today. The following summarize some major points of this study:

1) Doctrine holds an irreplaceable yet limited role in living the Christian Faith, exemplified in the Church's evangelization, catechesis, and pastoral ministries.
2) Positively, Catholic doctrines express the truths of the Gospel message, and can be ordered in a certain hierarchy relative to the foundation of the Faith: Jesus Christ in his Paschal Mystery, revealing the Triune God, for our salvation

[73]Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CBCP, 2004), which grounds the social thrust on the basic doctrines of creation: Jesus Christ, the human person in God's plan, the mission of the Church, etc. Cf. also Judith Merkle, *The Heart of the Church: Catholic Social Tradition* (Liturgical Press, 2004), Chapter 2, "The Faith to Walk."

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3) Proper understanding of Catholic doctrines is gradually achieved by recognizing the unique symbolic character of religious knowing (as distinct from scientific knowledge), and the "poetic and imaginative qualities" of Creedal language.
4) Catholic doctrines constitute a major part of the **living tradition** of the Church, in constant development and growth, currently exemplified in the new appreciation of the Paschal Mystery, Christ's Resurrection, eco-theology's new grasp of creation, the Trinitarian ground of every part of the Gospel message, etc.[74]

Drawing on this whole study and the summary conclusions just presented, some brief practical principles could be formulated for the religious educator. **First**,Catholic doctrine is not some dead letter from the past, but a dynamic force communicating Christ's saving truth NOW. **Second**, all the contemporary means for communicating can be used, but selected and adapted in "handing on" the saving truths of the Faith, now integrated and ordered towards actual living out of the Gospel message. Thus social science data and communications' media can thus become **intrinsic catechetical factors** in effectively communicating Catholic doctrine in an inculturated manner. **Third**,

[74]Some typical examples of new doctrinal insights would be: **Paschal Mystery**: Francis Durwell, *Christ Our Passover: The Indispensable Role of Resurrection in Our Salvation* (Liguori, 2004); **Resurrection:** Andreas Schuele, "Transformed onto the Image of Christ: Identity, Personality, and Resurrection," in Ted Peters (ed.), et al., *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments* (Eerdmans, 2002), 219-35; and Gunter Thomas, "Resurrection to New Life: Pneumatological Implications of the Eschatological Transition," in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, 255-76; **Eco-Theology:** Denis Edwards, "Ecology at the Heart of Christian Doctrine," *Aust. Cath. Rec* 81 (Jan. 2004): 58-69, and his edited book, *Earth Revealing—Earth Healing: Ecology and Christian Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001); **Trinity**: Anne Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005); Anselm Min, *Paths to the Triune God: An Encounter between Aquinas and Recent Theologies* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 2005); and Neil Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition* (Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 2005).

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much depends on adequately formed catechists and religion teachers who can creatively make Catholic doctrine "come alive," in a radical change from simply making students memorize doctrinal formulas. **Finally**, Catholic doctrines have both an objective content and a subjective, existential, experiential dimension as guiding and motivating the faith life of the believer. Both, as inter-related yet distinct, are absolutely essential to Christian Faith, and hence must be recognized and used in practice by the religious educator.

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