Landas

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ARTICLES

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JOAQUIN C. YAP, D.PHIL.

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JOSEPH L. ROCHE, S.J., PH.D.

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

A Different Paradigm: Amending the Reproductive Health Bill
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DISCUSSION

Catechesis as Ministry of the Word: A Defense of the National Catechism
JOSEPH L. ROCHE, S.J., PH.D.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

At first glance, this issue of Landas Journal brings together what seems to be a collection of rather disparate articles. A more profound look however would show that they all have something in common. They all attempt to deal with current and crucial *ad intra* and *ad extra* questions that the Church in the Philippines has been grappling with in the last few years.

1. Mariology and Ecumenism. The first article, "Mary is for all Christians," was written by **Joaquin C. Yap** after he was appointed to the Jaime Cardinal Sin Professorial Chair for Marian Studies of the Loyola School of Theology several years ago. The obvious significance of Dr. Yap's article for ecumenical dialogue among the Churches in the Philippines is borne out by his judicious, sensitive and profound tackling of issues connected to Mariology, which aims to contribute to an "irenic, responsible and convergent way of relating with the mother of Jesus, both doctrinally and devotionally." Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant perspectives are brought into play in order to ground Marian doctrine and practice that are "ecumenically sensitive, theologically sound, and devotionally sincere."

2. Doctrine and Religious Education. The second article, "Renewed Focus on Doctrine in Religious Education/Practical Theology," is by **Fr. Joseph Roche**, Professor Emeritus of the Loyola School of Theology and the Ateneo de Manila University. Religious Education and Catechesis have been the life-long passion

of Fr. Roche. In this article, he explores the *nature* of doctrine and the *role* it plays in faith education. Given the misunderstandings that many people have of "doctrine" and its being sidelined in programs of religious education and catechesis, Fr. Roche's essay contributes to the clarification of doctrine as an essential dimension of religious education itself. The four practical principles he proposes at the end of his essay should serve as guideposts for religious educators keen on bringing to life and expression the nature and role of doctrine in their work and mission.

3. Church and Society. No issue is perhaps more alive today than current political unrest connected to the upcoming 2010 elections. The article "The *Diakonia* of an *Ekklesia* to the *Res Publica*," subtitled "Prospects of the Philippine Church in Transforming the Filipino Polity for the Common Good," by **Fr. Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas**, boldly states that "lost in the church's discourse is an ethical vision honed by the deep convictions of the Christian faith and the sciences of political reason, namely the 'common good.'" What role does the Church play in the public sphere? What public persona does it need to assume given the demands of the social, political, economic, and cultural situation of the nation, a situation that threatens once again to plunge the country into chaos and violence? Fr. Cartagenas calls for a "society-leavening church" that is not afraid to embed itself in the "complex and multi-linear political, social, and cultural transformative process" if it wants to contribute to the redemption of Philippine society.

The next two articles fall under the heading "Notes and Comments."

4. Catholic Social Ethics. Perhaps something of what Fr. Cartagenas envisions in his essay may be seen in the article written by **Fr. Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, S.J.**, Professor of Moral Theology at the Loyola School of Theology. In "A Different Paradigm: Amending the Reproductive Health Bill," Fr. Genilo tackles the issue of House Bill 5043 on "Reproductive Health and Population Development" proposed by some members of the House of

Representatives of the Philippine Congress. This is not the first time that Fr. Genilo has addressed this issue, but the article he has written attempts to critically and constructively engage the public sphere and to propose creative ways for committed Christians to enter the political process in order to promote their own vision of life. His call for "critical and constructive engagement" certainly deserves to be heard and put into practice.

5. Liturgy. **Fr. Timoteo Ofrasio, S.J.**, in "On the Reformed Mass of Vatican II and Benedict XVI's Letter *motu proprio* Summorum Pontificum," succinctly traces the recent history of the Catholic Mass, moving from the "Reformed Mass of Vatican II" as mandated by *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to the Mass of Paul VI to Benedict XVI's *Summorum Pontificum*. He strongly recommends that a program of catechesis be designed to help Catholics understand the liturgy and the values that inform the celebration of the mass. He does this with an obvious appreciation for the Tridentine liturgy, but he is also cognizant of the many "good reasons" that ensure a secure future for the reformed mass of the last Council. Perhaps what is required is an informed study and sustained conversation on the place of liturgy itself in Christian life.

The last article in this issue falls under "Discussion."

6. Catechism for Filipino Catholics. In the interest of promoting critical thinking and respectful discussion, the editors readily agreed to have a second article by **Fr. Joseph Roche, S.J.** published in this issue. The article, "Catechesis as Ministry of the Word: A Defense of the National Catechism," responds to a critical review of the ***Catechism for Filipino Catholics*** written by Rafael Dy-Liacco and published as "Catechesis is a Practice of Faith: A Critique of the National Catechism," in *Diwa: Studies in Philosophy and Theology* 33:1 (2008), 88-108, the journal of the Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay. Dy-Liacco's essay "provides the occasion for bringing out needed clarifications and positive guidelines for

a more effective study and use of our national catechetical tool, created precisely to aid, support and raise the quality of Catholic catechesis throughout our country."

Here then is rich fare, and it is our hope that this issue of Landas may stimulate more profound thinking, discussion and writing on issues currently affecting the life of the Church in the Philippines and the role she must play in Philippine society.

Landas 23:1 (2009) 1-45

MARY IS FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

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Introduction

From an ecumenical point of view,[1] it is quite possible that no area of contention between Catholics and Protestants is today as vehement and fraught with emotion as that concerning Mary, the mother of Jesus. This being the case, it might be helpful to know that the Christian churches' understanding of, and attitude towards, Mary has actually had a chequered past.

At the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, Mary was not as disputed as other theological subjects were. Luther, Zwingli

[1]Throughout this paper, the term "ecumenism," following the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* of the Second Vatican Council, will refer to "the initiatives and activities encouraged and organized ... to promote Christian unity" (n. 4); henceforth cited as *UR*. *Pace* Hans Küng: "...we have less reason than ever today for understanding ecumenism in a narrow, constricted, ecclesiocentric fashion: Ecumenism should not be limited to the *community of Christian churches*; it must include the *community of the great religions,* if ecumenism – in accordance with the original meaning of *oikumene* – is to refer to the whole 'inhabited world'." Cf. Küng, et al., *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1986), xiv.

and even Calvin for the most part held "catholic" beliefs about Mary. All three certainly took for granted her perpetual virginity and held her motherhood of Christ in high esteem. "Mary was not a central or prominent issue in the sixteenth-century Reformation," writes David Wright.[2] Why not? First of all, because most of the Marian doctrines at that time were taken for granted and accepted. Secondly, because the reformers' Marian concerns were more related to devotion than to doctrine. "The Reformers' teachings about Mary were to a considerable measure a critique of piety and liturgy."[3] Pastoral considerations were almost always paramount, so much so that Luther would write in 1523: "I could wish that the cult of Mary would be completely abrogated, solely because of abuse."[4] It is this attitude of the later Luther which has largely determined post-Reformation developments within Protestantism. By the mid-20th century, it has become common fare for Protestants to state that Mariology sums up all that is heretical in Roman Catholicism.[5]

Significantly it was in that same century that the ecumenical movement began to pick up speed. More than 1500 years after the first disastrous break in the Christian communion (when the Oriental Orthodox churches did not accept the Chalcedonian definition), 900

[2]David Wright, *Chosen by God: Mary in Evangelical Perspective* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1989), 161.

[3]Ibid., 162.

[4]*WA* 11.61.

[5]E.g., Roger Mehl: "C'est pourquoi nous ne pouvons opposer à la mariologie prise dans son ensemble qu'un non résolu. Nous sommes persuadés qu'elle constitue une sorte d'engrenage mortel pour la foi évangelique. En elle se rejoignent toutes les héresies du catholicisme...." *Du Catholicisme Romain. Approche et Interpretation* (Neuchâtel-Paris, 1957), 91; cited by Heiko Oberman, "The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1 (1964): 282. Or the statement Jason Byassee attributes (unreferenced) to Karl Barth: "In the doctrine and worship of Mary there is disclosed the one heresy of the Roman Catholic Church which explains all the rest." Cf. Byassee's article, "What About Mary?" in *Christian Century* (December 14, 2004): 28-32, at 28.

years after the division between the Christian East and West, and 400 years after Western unity itself was shattered, finally there was a concerted attempt to come to terms with Jesus' prayer, "That they may all be one…" (John 17:21). The ecumenical movement could echo St. Augustine's poignant words concerning the Donatists in North Africa:

> If they say, "Why do you seek us? What do you want of us?" we should reply: You are our brothers. They may say, "Leave us alone. We have nothing to do with you." But we have everything to do with you, for we are one in our belief in Christ; and so we should be in one body, under one Head.[6]

In addressing the place of Mary, Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (1974) decreed that honor shown to her is to be biblical, liturgical, anthropological, and *ecumenical*. In 1995, Pope John Paul II matter-of-factly wrote: "At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself *irrevocably* to following the path of the ecumenical venture…."[7] In the same encyclical, John Paul listed five areas which require fuller theological study "before a true consensus of faith can be achieved." One of these is "the Virgin Mary, as Mother of God and Icon of the Church, the spiritual Mother who intercedes for Christ's disciples and for all humanity."[8]

If all this fails to give sufficient warrant for an ecumenical study on Mary, one can cite a growing number of recent publications, both popular and scholarly, written by Protestants.[9] Three ecumenical study

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[6]Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps. 32 (33)*, 29; cf. Office of Readings, Tuesday of Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time.

[7]Encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*, 3; hereafter cited as *UUS*.

[8]*UUS* 79.

[9]Cf., among others, Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, eds., *Mary, Mother of God* (Grand Rapids, MI & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004); Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia Rigby, eds., *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary* (Louisville & London: Westminster John Knox, 2002); John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990); John de Satgé, *Down to Earth: The New Protestant Vision*

groups or ventures deserve special mention. In 1967 the "Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary" was formed in London, its *raison d'être* being "to promote ecumenical devotion and the study, at various levels, of the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Church, under Christ."[10] In 1978 the same group of scholars that had previously studied the complex NT picture of Peter came out with *Mary in the New Testament*, jointly contributed to and edited by Roman Catholic and Protestant exegetes.[11] The year 2002 saw the publication in English translation of *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints* by Le Groupe des Dombes, a French-speaking group of ecumenists who have been meeting annually since 1937 to discuss various theological issues.[12] The Dombes study group asserts:

> We need to remind ourselves forcefully that Mary has never been a cause of separation among the churches. On the contrary, she has become a victim and even a virulent expression of such separations. A number of other factors of disunity are polarized around her and made visible in her. This is why the [Dombes] Group has decided to deal with this individual who is emblematic of the Christian faith and tradition….[13]

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of the Virgin Mary (Wilmington, NC: Consortium, 1976); Sarah Jane Boss, *Empress and Handmaid: On Nature and Gender in the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London & New York: Cassell, 2000); Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1996).

[10]Cf. John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians*, ix-x. Cf. the ESBVM's publications, notably: *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue* (Occasional Papers of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary 1970-1980), ed. Dom Alberic Stacpoole (Slough, England: St. Paul, 1982); *Mary is for Everyone,* eds. William McLoughlin and Jill Pinnock (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 1997); *Mary for Earth and Heaven: Essays on Mary and Ecumenism*, eds. William McLoughlin and Jill Pinnock (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2002).

[11]Raymond Brown (ed.), et al., *Mary in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress; New York: Paulist, 1978).

[12]Alain Blancy & Maurice Jourjon, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York & Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2002).

[13]Ibid., 11.

This paper is intended to contribute to an irenic, responsible and convergent way of relating with the mother of Jesus, both doctrinally and devotionally. Its focus is theological and pastoral rather than historical. The essay does not intend to seek an ecumenical *rapprochement* in all the doctrinal and devotional differences concerning Mary among the main Christian traditions of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism, but it seeks to offer approaches to her which, if not completely satisfactory to all Christians, would serve to mitigate animosities and mutual intolerance. It presupposes that an ecumenical approach to Mary is not only possible and desirable but even necessary; that Christians from various traditions have much to learn from one another concerning a healthy Mariology (for lack of a better term which would be more acceptable to Protestant and Orthodox Christians); and that the remaining differences in doctrine and devotion, while creating distinctions, do not necessitate separation.[14]

Being "ecumenical" does not necessarily mean being "church-neutral"; the writer of this paper therefore writes from his own Roman Catholic perspective, all the while striving to maintain a respect and even admiration for other Christian traditions. He invites his Protestant and Orthodox readers to share the same spirit of mutual courtesy and openness to learn from and to understand one another. He intends his Catholic readers to appreciate the urgency of the ecumenical moment; to learn how to think of, speak of, and love better the Blessed Virgin; and to avoid excesses in doctrine and devotion, indeed anything that will be suggestive of "Mariolatry."

This latter concern is of particular relevance in the Philippines, in which Marian devotion is markedly "omnipresent."[15] In this "only

[14]At the end of their discussions, the Dombes study group offers this summary statement: "As members of the Dombes Group, and in light of the proposals for conversion with which our journey ended, we no longer consider the described differences such as to separate us. At the end of our historical, biblical, and doctrinal study *we do not find any irreducible incompatibilities, despite some real theological and practical divergences*" (Ibid., 129; emphasis added).

[15]This writer is here borrowing Alexis Kniazeff's description of Mary's place

Christian" country in Asia, in which approximately 85% of the population is Roman Catholic, Mary has been given an exalted place not only in ecclesiastical practice but also in popular culture. She is the patroness of the entire archipelago; an astonishing number of parishes are named in her honor; much popular and folk religiosity revolve around her person and the belief in her powerful intercession; and countless Filipina women have been christened with Mary's name or with one of her titles and attributes.[16] It is precisely in such a context of ardent devotion that pastoral concern is called for. Instruction in and renewal of devotion would then lead to that *true devotion* which (in the words of Vatican II) "consists neither in fruitless and passing emotion, nor in a certain vain credulity. Rather it proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God, are moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues."[17]

This paper, then, addresses the ecumenically important, though often neuralgic, question of Mary and the quest for Christian unity.

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in Orthodox faith and spirituality; cf. his *La Mère de Dieu dans l'Eglise Orthodoxe* (Paris: Cerf, 1990).

[16]According to the pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines on the Blessed Virgin Mary *Ang Mahal na Birhen: Mary in Philippine Life Today* (February 2, 1975), the most popular Marian names for girls are: Concepción, Natividad, Purificación, Dolores, Asunción, Rosario, Guadalupe, Pilar, Carmen, Lourdes, Paz, Socorro, Remedios, Consuelo, Victoria, Nieves, Milagros, Candelaria, Mercedes, Salvación, Estrella, Amparo, Fatima, etc. Cf. note 11 of the said pastoral letter.

In contrast to this, Nora Lozano-Diaz writes that "most Hispanic Protestant families would never name their daughter 'Maria' or 'Guadalupe.' They would feel proud of the names of other biblical women but not that of Mary." Cf. Lozano-Diaz, "Ignored Virgin or Unaware Women: A Mexican-American Protestant Reflection on the Virgin of Guadalupe," in *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary*, 85-96, at 87.

[17]Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 66; henceforth cited as *LG*.

We begin by clarifying the ecumenical differences in belief about Mary, not by way of listing all doctrinal agreements and disagreements, but by seeking to understand the theological presuppositions and emphases, as well as the sensibilities and mindsets, in the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant traditions, respectively.[18] We do this for two reasons.

First, taking our cue from Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism, we wish to appreciate that "some, even very many, of the most significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church…."[19] To recognize what the various historic churches and ecclesial communions have emphasized can be a salutary check on one's own theological stance, as a way of ensuring that the "fullness of faith and life" which one claims for one's church is truly so. Pope John Paul II once asked: "Why did the Holy Spirit permit all these divisions?" His reflection was: "Could it not be that these divisions have also been a path continually leading the Church to discover the untold wealth contained in Christ's Gospel…?"[20] If we consider the divisions in the Church – however tragic and grievous – in a *positive* light, we might be able to affirm the salubrious ways in which the different traditions "discover the untold wealth" of Christ.

Second, by understanding where the other dialogue-partner is "coming from," we are less likely to engage immediately in polemic

[18]It must be admitted that the following characterizations are, by necessity of the constraints of a brief academic paper, broad generalizations. This writer does not intend to convey the impression that the three traditions of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism are each monolithic blocks of uniform thinking. The most elusive is that of the "Protestant" theological ethos. Short of a very detailed exposition which space does not allow, this paper contents itself with "broad strokes" descriptions which, it is the writer's hope, are fair and adequate for this paper's purposes.

[19]*UR*, 3.

[20]John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 152, 153.

and debate. We will be more "quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20).

In the second part, this paper examines the ecumenical differences in devotion to Mary. The relationship between doctrine and devotion, between "official teaching" and "popular religiosity," will need to be addressed. It will be argued that doctrine and devotion are distinct but inseparable; that doctrine which does not lead to devotion is arid and lifeless; that doctrine must guide and govern devotion which, in its turn, if cast off from solid theological moorings, will frequently run amok.

As this paper will make clear, doctrinal differences between Catholic and Orthodox Christians revolve much more around the legitimacy of dogmatic pronouncements and the perceived "imposition" of Western, Augustinian categories – for the Orthodox, it is the spectre of Roman "authoritarianism" *redivivus*. But in matters of devotion to Mary, Catholics and Orthodox are in great accord. It is a much more serious matter of contention between Catholics (and Orthodox) on the one hand, and Protestants on the other. This section ends with the hope that Catholic and Orthodox Christians would respect the Protestant reticence in honoring and especially in praying to Mary, while Protestants would acknowledge that Catholics and Orthodox might well have good reasons to do so – reasons which render them innocent of "Mariolatry."

This paper will then conclude with its most original section; it will offer some ecumenical proposals and guidelines in the hope, not perhaps of resolving all disagreement, but of lessening it and making some headway in mutual respect and understanding. It might be the case that the most that can be hoped for is courteously to "agree to disagree." But in seeking the path to fuller unity among Christians, one is perhaps allowed to hope that agreement will gradually far outweigh disagreement, and that the agreement will be in truth and in love.

Ecumenical Differences in Belief About Mary

Orthodoxy

What are the distinctive theological emphases of Orthodox Christianity? First of all, Orthodoxy has not experienced the artificial and disastrous separation of theology and spirituality to the extent that the West has, and from which the latter is now only recovering. The East has always prized theology as doxological, and prayer as theological. Writes Jason Byassee:

> Theology is certainly an intellectual endeavor for the Orthodox, but it is more pronouncedly doxological. Theology is a loving word of praise to the God who first speaks his Word to us in Christ and by the Spirit draws us into the church. […] For the Orthodox, theology is simply commentary upon the saints' commentary on scripture for the sake of the church's worship.[21]

To speak of "the church's worship" is to refer to the liturgy; the East has preserved a strong liturgical tradition, and this is something shared with Catholicism. Bishop Kallistos Ware asserts:

> Our belief as Orthodox concerning the Mother of God is expressed above all through the medium of prayer and worship. *Lex orandi lex credendi*: our faith is disclosed through, and conditioned by, the way in which we pray. […] In the words of Archpriest George Florovsky, Christianity is first of all a worshipping community. Worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second. If this is true of Orthodox theology in general, it is true in a special sense of the Orthodox approach to the *Theotokos*. The mystery of the Mother of God is *par excellence* a liturgical mystery.[22]

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[21]Jason Byassee, "Looking East," *Christian Century* (December 28, 2004): 24.

[22]Kallistos Ware, "The Mother of God in Orthodox Theology and Devotion," in *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue: Occasional Papers of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1970-1980)*, 180.

A second characteristic (and this is once again a trait shared with Western Catholicism) is the appeal to the early Church Fathers, whose authority over doctrinal matters is unquestioned. "The Orthodox Church would not be what it is if it had not had St. Cyprian, St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great. No more could the Roman Catholic Church do without St. Athanasius, St. Basil or St. Cyril of Alexandria."[23] In turn, the Fathers' doctrinal expositions undergird and often include devotional flourishes. The famous homilies of St. John of Damascus *On the Dormition of the Holy Mother of God* are a good case in point.[24] Theological assertions about Mary's holiness, perpetual virginity, death and glorification, are freely and seamlessly woven into the fabric of panegyric. The praise of Mary leads to the praise of Christ; powers and privileges normally predicated of Christ are also predicated of Mary; there is a profusion of scriptural types said to be fulfilled in the person and office of Mary; and so forth. The Orthodox acceptance of these assertions must ultimately be attributed to (what Catholics call) the *sensus fidelium*, but one must admit that the scales are tipped considerably because of the authority and prestige of the Damascene.

In other words, both Orthodoxy and Catholicism share a high regard not only for Scripture but also for Tradition. According to Louis Bouyer, once we begin to relate to both as not only distinct but as *separate* things, we have already taken apart their necessary unity and complementarity:

> The inspired expression of the Word of God in Holy Scripture is the kernel, or better the heart, of this tradition. […] Scripture itself is

[23]Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge & London: James Clarke, 1957), 12.

[24]According to Brian Daley, these homilies were likely delivered *in situ*, near the traditional site of the burial and assumption of the Virgin. Cf. Daley's excellent translations and notes in *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998).

> the central element of tradition, but it is also part of it. Inversely, a Christian tradition isolated from Scripture would be a body from which the essential organs had been removed. By its nature, which flows from its origin, Scripture is not only incomprehensible but also devitalized as soon as it is isolated from the tradition of living truth in which it originated and in which alone it can be preserved as a Word of Life.[25]

A third, classical feature of Orthodox theology is its stress on God's ineffability, what is often called *apophatic* or negative theology. Vladimir Lossky refers to the two possible theological ways distinguished by Pseudo-Dionysius: The positive (or *cataphatic*) approach proceeds by affirmations; it leads to some knowledge of God, though imperfectly. "The perfect way, the only way which is fitting in regard to God, who is of His very nature unknowable, is the second…."[26] This is the *apophatic* way. It is not a mere plea of ignorance but an invitation to union. "God no longer presents Himself as object, for it is no more a question of knowledge but of union. Negative theology is thus a way towards mystical union with God, whose nature remains incomprehensible to us."[27]

Orthodox reticence in perhaps saying "too much" about God has contributed to the relatively slow development of Orthodox theology. There is no "Scholastic" period in Orthodoxy comparable to that which flourished in medieval Catholicism. This is also reflected in its approach to Mary. One of the most striking convergences *and* divergences between Orthodox and Catholic Marian beliefs is that, while both assert the total sinlessness of the all-holy Virgin and her glorification in heaven, Orthodoxy steadfastly refuses to go the way of

[25]Louis Bouyer, *The Decomposition of Catholicism*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1969), 92.

[26]Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 25.

[27]Ibid., 28.

dogmatization.[28] Bishop Kallistos shares an anecdote which illustrates well the Orthodox approach to Mary:

> In 1950, when Pope Pius XII was about to proclaim the dogma of the Assumption, members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in France approached Metropolitan Vladimir, head of the Russian Archdiocese, and they enquired what the belief of the Orthodox Church might be in this matter. In reply the Metropolitan recommended them to read the service for 15 August in the Orthodox liturgical books; and he said that he had nothing to add to what was written there. Such is precisely the Orthodox approach.[29]

Catholicism

As already mentioned, Catholic theology presupposes the unity of Scripture and Tradition, and the liturgy as a *locus theologicus*. These have to do with the "sources" of theology, but there is, as well, a "worldview" which often becomes the tacit substructure of Catholic theology, indeed, of the Catholic "mind." The lines separating the "Catholic mind" and the "Protestant mind" (if such phenomena exist) are not easily drawn, chiefly because neither is a monolithic reality and because the differences are often a question of emphasis, not outright contradiction. While the following contrasting characteristics might be validly offered, one must remember that these are general tendencies and that exceptions may be found on either side.

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[28]Orthodox reserve about the two modern Marian dogmas has to do partly with terminology ("dormition" is preferred over "assumption"), partly with a demand for scriptural support (no explicit biblical testimony on Mary's "immaculate conception"), and partly with a non-acceptance of an Augustinian interpretation of "original sin" and Duns Scotus' solution of Mary's preservation from original sin by anticipation of Christ's redemption. Moreover, Orthodox Christians are unhappy with Rome's perceived tendency to "dogmatize" unilaterally, defining doctrines without any external circumstances which would make such a definition necessary, and making such magisterial actions after the separation of 1054 without any concurrence from the East. Cf. Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 96-97.

[29]Ware, "The Mother of God in Orthodox Theology and Devotion," 180.

We begin with an observation of the American sociologist-priest, Andrew Greeley:

> Catholics live in an enchanted world, a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures. But these Catholic paraphernalia are mere hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility which inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation. As Catholics, we find our houses and our world haunted by a sense that the objects, events, and persons of daily life are revelations of grace.[30]

In other words, the Catholic "religious sensibility" sees the transcendent God suffusing creation with his immanent presence. In contrast, Protestantism (very likely in protest against an excessive immanentism and sacramentalism) emphasizes an immanent God who is radically different from his creation. The outstanding Reformed theologian Karl Barth has repeatedly stressed the dissimilarity and asymmetry between Creator and creation.[31] More recently, John Webster has described the difference in the primary theological criterion of both Catholicism and Protestantism in terms of, respectively, "plenitude" and "purity." For Webster, the critical question is "whether the Protestant zeal for purity – in the doctrines of God, Christ, the church and elsewhere – leads to a segregation of the divine from the creaturely, which in turn inhibits grasp of the [Catholic appreciation of the] plenitude of God's self-communication."[32]

What might be a more fundamental theological reason for this difference in worldview or sensibility? Yves Congar has argued

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[30]Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 1.

[31]One must, however, remember that, for Barth, God's transcendence does not mean his absence or distance. In fact, according to Barth, it is transcendence that makes possible an immanence without confusion.

[32]John Webster, "Purity and Plenitude: Evangelical Reflections on Congar's *Tradition and Traditions*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7/4: 399-413, at 402.

persuasively that it is a question of how one appropriates and approaches the utterly unique event of the Incarnation. "The Incarnation is the key to the whole mystery of the Church and the sacraments," he wrote in his first major book on ecumenism. "In the degree to which Protestantism can school itself in a profound and realist contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation will it return to the sphere of apostolic Christianity and prepare itself for reunion in the Church."[33] While contemporary ecumenism has moved beyond the language of "reunion," Congar's insight remains valid. In other words, Catholics and Protestants "do different things with the Incarnation." For Catholics, the Incarnation opens up a whole new way of looking at the universe, at physical creation, at God's relation with human beings, etc. Thus undergirding Catholic teaching on the Church, sacraments, Mary, the human person, and so forth, is the so-called *incarnational principle*. It will most likely be around the theology of the Incarnation that Protestants and Catholics find a more convergent view of Mary.

Another Catholic principle of theological reflection is the idea of the *development of doctrine*. This has become central in post-Reformation debates: Does doctrinal amplification extend the biblical norms of Christian belief without sufficient warrant? This is the Protestant challenge. The Catholic claim and response is, because there is a continuum of inspired understanding (that is, Sacred Tradition) between early and later interpretations, the emergence of later normative doctrine is integral to God's revelation in Jesus Christ. The debate is a continuing one, and is far from simple. Writes John McDade:

> For many modern writers, "development" may be an unavoidable way of designating the issue, but neither it nor any other single analogy can be an adequate characterization of the process. Can the *continuity* between "then" and "now", and all points in between, be adequately described by a single category (e.g. development, homogeneous evolution, logical

[33]Yves Congar, *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*, trans. M. A. Bousfield (London: Geoffrey Bles/Centenary, 1939), 274-5.

> implication, implicit knowledge becoming explicit) and still respect the elements of *discontinuity* and transformation that history introduces? To treat the process as linear and cumulative, without any significant variation or change, is to write an unrealistic history. The challenge of any theory of development is to see historical change as the matrix within which Christian identity is consistently reappropriated in a living stream of tradition.[34]

Closely related to this is the principle of the *analogia fidei*, the analogy of faith. It is a matter of becoming aware of a revealed truth, although not affirmed explicitly in Scripture, from other truths which are formally taught and which contain it implicitly. Explains Jacques Bur: "Plenary revelation forms a global whole, the revealed truths of which are linked together in the indivisibility of a single revealed mystery, that of the economy of salvation." Applying this to Mary, "one can emphasize the deep parallels between all her privileges: motherhood, virginity, association with the saving work of Christ her son, and her assumption." The analogy of faith does not consist in "logical deductions," but recognizes a harmony and "fittingness" in the global revelation of salvation realized in Jesus Christ, born of Mary.[35]

Already one might see how these theological emphases and principles of Catholic theology explain much of how Mariological developments take place. It is a complex synthesis of liturgical accretions (which are themselves reflections of beliefs); an approach to Scripture which is decidedly not *sola scriptura* but which seeks validation and expansion in Tradition; and a recognition that the mystery of Christ, although revealed once and for all in "the mighty Christ event" (to borrow Oscar Cullmann's felicitous phrase), takes time for the human mind and the believing community to understand in its blessed fullness. In his published reply to the Anglican canon Edward Pusey, John Henry Newman wrote:

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[34]John McDade, "Development of Doctrine," in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings, et al. (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 163.

[35]Jacques Bur, *How to Understand the Virgin Mary* (London: SCM, 1994), 82-83.

> I begin by making a distinction which will go far to remove [a] good part of the difficulty of my undertaking, as it presents itself to ordinary inquirers – the distinction between faith and devotion. I fully grant that *devotion* towards the Blessed Virgin has increased among Catholics with the progress of centuries; I do not allow that the *doctrine* concerning her has undergone a growth, for I believe that it has been in substance one and the same from the beginning.[36]

When Newman avers that doctrine concerning Mary "has been in substance one and the same from the beginning," behind that assertion lies the great weight of the Catholic regard for doctrinal development.

One final comment on the Catholic religious sensibility: a propensity to dogmatize, as with the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Assumption (1950). Orthodoxy complains: why formalize and define as divinely revealed, and therefore obligatory to faith, what has long been regarded as "pious" opinions and beliefs? To this Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) has an attractive answer. He points out that, especially with the two modern Marian dogmas, the dogmatic element in Catholicism becomes the vehicle for devotion. The dogma of the Assumption, for example,

> was promulgated for the honor of the Son, for the glorification of the mother, and for the joy of the entire Church. This dogma was intended to be an act of veneration, the highest form of Marian praise. What the orient achieves in the form of liturgy, hymns, and rites, took place in the occident through the form of a dogmatic proclamation, which was intended to be, so to speak, a most solemn form of hymnology. This is how [the Assumption] is to be understood. It distinguishes the last two Marian dogmas in a certain respect from the earlier form of ecclesial confessions, even though the doxological element always played a more or less accentuated role.[37]

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[36]John Henry Newman, *Mary, the Mother of Jesus* (New York: Paulist, no publication date; subtitled "Being a Letter addressed to Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D., in 1864"), 34. By "growth" Newman means in this context any haphazard and alien addition, like a mutation, to the original "substance."

[37]Joseph Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief*, trans. John McDermott (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983), 73.

Protestantism

We have already seen (admittedly in broad strokes) a major difference between the Catholic and Protestant worldviews regarding the Creator-creature relationship. One might say that Catholic theology posits a greater continuity between nature and grace, whereas Protestant theology stresses the discontinuity. We must also keep in mind the fundamental difference between the Catholic construal of the Incarnation, and that of some Protestants. Expressed differently, the way a tradition approaches and makes use of the Incarnation – which is the absolute meeting point of the divine and the human – shapes the rest of its theology. For Catholics, the Chalcedonian description of the Incarnation is extended *analogously* to the Church, the scriptures, sacraments, and the like.[38] Catholic theology makes much use of the "incarnational principle," in which the unity of the divine and the human in Christ invites application to human realities. Many Protestants, however, regard the Incarnation as the boundary line beyond which absolutely no comparison or analogy to human realities may be made; the Incarnation's uniqueness and non-repeatability need to be vouchsafed at all cost.

Besides this, we must remember the three classical *solas* of Protestantism: *sola scriptura*, *solo Christo*, and *sola fide*. These could be described as the "pillars" of Protestant theological reflection, and they have a direct bearing on any doctrine of and devotion to Mary. *Sola scriptura* requires every Marian doctrine to be explicitly taught in the Bible. Truth is therefore seen to be not served and even affronted when a Marian teaching not explicitly found in Scripture is elevated to the status of divine and catholic faith.[39] The principle or doctrine of

[38]Cf., for example, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8: The Church is "one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element. For this reason the Church is compared, not without significance, to the mystery of the incarnate Word."

[39]Jacques Bur, a *peritus* at Vatican II, admits that "Holy Scripture says nothing about the assumption of Mary. Whereas the resurrection of Jesus is attested to us by the accounts of his appearances, the assumption of Mary is not mentioned by any explicit scriptural testimony. […] The constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*

solo Christo underlines the all-sufficiency of Christ in redemption; it is also related to the great Protestant appreciation – surely admirable and praiseworthy – of the awesome majesty and sovereignty of God. Some Protestant proponents of this doctrine would rule out any notion of human "cooperation" in salvation; in its extreme position, *solo Christo* would deny any role to human freedom. Much Marian doctrine and devotion would therefore be seen to be a threat to Christ's singular dignity and sufficiency. Finally, the fundamental Reformation battle cry of *sola fide* (often combined with *sola gratia*) allows the sinner's justification "only by grace through faith." This is the most important Lutheran principle, foundational for the churches of the Reformation, "the Pauline principle by which 'the church stands or falls' but which also makes it possible to judge every particular doctrine."[40] By this principle, strictly interpreted, the Catholic dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception is unacceptable.[41]

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of Pius XII does not resort to any biblical text as a basis for an explicit attestation of the assumption of Mary. Nor does it appeal to an oral tradition." (Bur, *How to Understand the Virgin Mary*, 79).

[40]Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 76.

[41]The Catholic response to this objection is that *sola gratia* still applies in Mary's case. Like the rest of humankind, Mary is redeemed by the grace of her Son, Jesus, the unique savior of the world. The Franciscan Duns Scotus (the "subtle doctor," d. 1308) supplied the answer to the vexing question, "How could this have happened?" The redemptive action of Christ, he responds, is extended to Mary by anticipation, in order to preserve her from original sin. Mary was indeed redeemed (by anticipation, by a preservative grace), but *meliori modo*, in a better (perhaps even the best) way. According to Scotus, preservation from original sin is the most perfect form of redemption, so it was fitting that Christ should have redeemed his mother in this way. Vatican II echoes this teaching: "Redeemed in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her son and united to him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of the Mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth" (*LG* 53).

As for how *sola fide* might apply to Mary, Catholics could point to the scriptural

While these *solas* can be interpreted and accepted in a Catholic sense, in the mind of the Reformers and their theological descendants today they spell all the difference between what may be said about Mary and what may not. The Protestant critique that much of Catholic Mariology fails to meet the standard of explicit biblical attestation is valid, but only if *sola scriptura* denies the necessary role of tradition. Catholics (and Orthodox) stand by the principles of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*, but not to the exclusion of human and ecclesial mediation, which is understood to be *not* in opposition to divine grace.[42] And the universal *Christian* instinct that "to God alone be the glory" might mean different things depending on whether one is Protestant or Catholic/Orthodox: for the former, it means a decided antipathy to accord (too much) honor on any human person; for the latter, it means that God is honored when his creatures are honored.

Louis Bouyer has argued that these pillars of Protestant theological reflection are in fact part and parcel of the common Christian

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witnesses to her remarkable faith, expressed in her readiness to obey (Luke 1:38) and in her discipleship which led her to the foot of the cross (John 19:25) and the upper room (Acts 1:14). However, whether *sola fide* could be reconciled with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is a complex question which is beyond the scope of this paper.

[42]"The Catholic Church has always held that in God's plan this essential tie lies in Jesus Christ himself, God made man, and since his ascent to the right hand of the Father, [it lies] in the joint action of the Holy Spirit, and his representative the Apostolic College. […] The essential tie then is simultaneously divine and human, the invisible spirit, soul of the Church and effective source of its life, and the visible framework of its organization, the priesthood and the sacraments, by which truth and grace are mediated to mankind. The radical criticism of the Reformers abolished or changed precisely these means in order to make salvation exclusively an act of God's grace only. […] The opposition of Protestants to the Catholic tradition on this point arises out of the historic debate concerning the question of man's co-operation in his own salvation. The question is of capital importance" to any ecumenical dialogue on Mary. Cf. Yves Congar, *Christ, Our Lady and the Church: A Study in Eirenic Theology*, trans. Henry St. John (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1957), 7, 16.

patrimony.[43] Put differently, they are thoroughly "catholic" instincts which were perhaps sidelined in the course of the centuries and which the Reformation could be said to have called the entire Church to recover once more. Seen positively, might not the grievous and scandalous divisions of the 16th and following centuries be, in a mysterious way known only to God, "a path continually leading the Church to discover the untold wealth contained in Christ's Gospel and in the redemption accomplished by Christ? Perhaps all this wealth would not have come to light otherwise…."[44]

Ecumenical Differences in Devotion to Mary

At the present moment, Christians are separated, not only by what they think of or believe about Mary, but also by how they relate with her. The simplest way to put this is: while Catholic and Orthodox Christians relate with Mary a lot,[45] Protestant Christians do not. "So fearful have we been of what seems to us excessive attention to Mary in Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions that Mary is virtually absent among us," confess Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia Rigby.[46] And Nora Lozano-Díaz writes: "Given that the Virgin Mary is so central to Catholicism, she became also a casualty of this anti-Catholic perspective. The Protestants, in an effort to differentiate themselves from the Catholic Church, rejected and dismissed even the biblical Mary. They did this simply by ignoring her."[47]

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[43]Cf., for example, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Westminster: Newman, 1956).

[44]John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 153.

[45]Even if individual Catholics and Orthodox Christians might not have a personal devotion to Mary, her "omnipresence" (again borrowing Alexis Kniazeff's word) in the liturgy would be unavoidable.

[46]*Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary,* 1.

[47]Nora Lozano-Díaz, "Ignored Virgin or Unaware Women: A Mexican-

From the outset this paper has championed the notion that Mary is for all Christians. We will need to clarify what this means before we end, but before we proceed with proposing some constructive ways of moving forward in an ecumenical regard for Mary, we will attempt a phenomenology of devotion, as distinct from doctrine. In this matter, our guides will be John Henry Newman and Yves Congar.

"Faith and devotion are as distinct in fact as they are in idea," wrote Newman to Pusey in 1864, "We cannot, indeed, be devout without faith, but we may believe without feeling devotion."[48] Newman was writing as an Englishman; this is no racist or cultural slur, for Newman earlier admitted to preferring English habits of belief and devotion to foreign ones.[49] His statement that belief may not necessarily be expressed in devotion is true enough, but in many other cultures besides his own (such as the Philippines) such a devotionless belief-system would sound very strange. But that is not Newman's main point. He wishes to describe the nature of devotion as distinct from doctrine, and he proceeds with several illustrations. "For instance, a great author, or public man, may be acknowledged as such for a course of years; yet there may be an increase, an ebb and flow, and a fashion, in his popularity. And if he takes a lasting place in the minds of his countrymen, he may gradually grow into it, or suddenly be raised to it."[50] Newman gives the example of Shakespeare. Today one might think of public figures who are lionized by the media one day and vilified the next, or candidates for canonization who are finally recognized for who they were and raised to the Catholic Church's altars. Such examples, writes Newman, illustrate the difference between doctrine and devotion, a difference which is like the distinction between objective and subjective truth.

American Protestant Reflection on the Virgin of Guadalupe," in *Blessed One*, 87.

[48]Newman, *Mary, the Mother of Jesus*, 34.

[49]Ibid., 29.

[50]Ibid., 35.

> The sun in the spring-time will have to shine many days before he is able to melt the frost, open the soil, and bring out the leaves; yet he shines out from the first notwithstanding, though he makes his power felt but gradually. It is one and the same sun, though his influence day by day becomes greater; and so in the Catholic Church it is the one Virgin Mary, one and the same from first to last, and Catholics may have ever acknowledged her; and yet, in spite of that acknowledgment, their devotion to her may be scanty in one time and place, and overflowing in another.[51]

Newman observes that devotions, like life, are irrepressible. Life has the same right to decay as it has to wax strong, and so it is with devotions, for example, to the Blessed Virgin Mary. They too have their propensities either to burst out in heedless vigor or to wither away. "You may stifle them; or you may refuse them elbow-room; or again, you may torment them with your continual meddling; or you may let them have free course and range, and be content, instead of anticipating their excesses, to expose and restrain those excesses after they have occurred. But you have only this alternative; and for myself, I prefer much wherever it is possible, to be first generous and then just; to grant full liberty of thought, and to call it to account when abused."[52]

Even with his English reserve, Newman can appreciate the extravagant passions generated by belief. "Religion acts on the affections; who is to hinder these, when once roused, from gathering in their strength and running wild?"[53] He also points out the extremely private nature of (true) devotion.

> What mother, what husband or wife, what youth or maiden in love, but says a thousand foolish things, in the way of endearment, which the speaker would be sorry for strangers to hear; yet they are not on that account unwelcome to the parties to whom they are addressed.

[51]Ibid., 36.

[52]Ibid., 85.

[53]Ibid.

> Sometimes by bad luck they are written down, sometimes they get into the newspapers; and what might be even graceful, when it was fresh from the heart, and interpreted by the voice and the countenance, presents but a melancholy exhibition when served up cold for the public eye. So it is with devotional feelings. Burning thoughts and words are as open to criticism as they are beyond it. What is abstractedly extravagant, may in particular persons be becoming and beautiful, and only fall under blame when it is found in others who imitate them. When it is formalized into meditations or exercises, it is as repulsive as love-letters in a police report.[54]

The Dominican theologian Yves Congar distinguishes between "theology proper" and what he calls "spiritual theology." This distinction is equivalent to what we have been calling "doctrine" and "devotion." Spiritual theology, or devotion, does not aim at "limiting various aspects of the mystery under consideration to their due proportions within the whole. Its object is rather to give the greatest possible weight to a particular aspect of the mystery because it has been the basis of a religious experience of a specially vital kind, and one calculated to stimulate fervor."[55] In other words, devotion is by its very nature single-minded in its purpose; indeed there is a very thin line separating devotion and fanaticism. Devotional literature (writings, hymns, prayers and the like) are written in the light of a particular spiritual experience, and with a view to increasing fervor towards that experience.[56] "The governing principle of a theology [better: devotion] of this kind is, in consequence, to raise the value of everything which subserves this particular end, while keeping, at least negatively, within the limits of orthodoxy."[57]

It is the role of dogmatic theology to counter this tendency in devotion towards fanaticism. "It is a function of intellect to watch

[54]Ibid., 86.

[55]Congar, *Christ, Our Lady and the Church*, 78.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., 78-79.

over abuses of sentiment, especially when the latter present a travesty of thought itself."[58] In other words, devotion is always answerable to doctrine, and doctrine is always answerable to "the sovereign rule of the objective data of Revelation, proclaimed and interpreted by the Apostolic preaching, the life of which is perpetuated in the magisterium and tradition of the Church."[59]

Let us summarize this phenomenology of devotion: Doctrine is chiefly the activity of the intellect; as such it can afford, indeed demand, to be analytical and dispassionate, maintaining an objective distance from the object of its scrutiny. No such clinical reserve can be asked of devotion, which is chiefly the activity of the affections. By definition it is akin to love, and Newman says he "would not give much for that love which is never extravagant, which always observes the proprieties, and can move about in perfect good taste, under all emergencies."[60] To express this symbolically: it is the difference between the head and the heart; each is master of its own domain, one needs the other, and neither is superior or inferior. The heart must listen to the head, and the head must concede a certain freedom to the heart. In the same way, the extravagance of devotion is not a license to error; devotion must always answer to correct doctrine. But doctrine, for all its certitude and correctness, must let devotion express itself with freedom, with passion, and sometimes with exaggeration. Again, Newman's words are apropos: "For myself, I prefer to be first generous and then just; to grant full liberty of thought, and to call it to account when abused."

In devotion as much as in doctrine, there are denominational differences of approach. Catholics and Orthodox Christians are united in a much more affective and symbolic approach to religious reality and experience; they are much more open to emotion, more prone to hyperbole, and less squeamish about praise of the creature. Protestant

[58]Ibid., 82, quoting J. Guitton, *La Vierge Marie* (Paris, 1949), 104.

[59]Congar, *Christ, Our Lady and the Church*, 82.

[60]Newman, *Mary, the Mother of Jesus*, 86.

Christians tend toward caution and concern for correctness; after all, the *raison d'être* of the Reformation was to correct doctrine and to purify devotion. According to Greeley, Protestants are most alarmed by the risk of superstition and idolatry, and "there is solid instinct in the Reformation's resistance to superstition. Metaphors can easily be abused. There was and is still abuse of the Mary metaphor. But one need not throw out the baby's mother with the bathwater."[61] If Protestant reserve towards Mary can be likened to the "head," then Catholic and Orthodox exuberance can be compared with the "heart." In this neither is superior or inferior, one is not preferable over the other, each one completes and corrects the other.

"Praying to Mary" is particularly troubling to Protestants.[62] Writes Jason Byassee:

> This is precisely the point at which Protestant theologians get most nervous. Such a request of prayer from Mary smacks of an effort to gain divine favor by some route other than Christ – the height of idolatry. To prop the door open here even an inch threatens to bring back the medieval system of veneration of scores of saints in an effort to earn the favor of a distant and foreboding Jesus. Hence we slam the door shut. To honor Christ, the saints must be excluded.[63]

Byassee is himself sympathetic to a new Protestant outlook on praying to Mary and the saints. He therefore cites Robert Jenson as emblematic of such openness. Jenson recently argued that it has long seemed plain to him that praying to the saints for their prayers "must be possible and if possible surely desirable." He draws the analogy of

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[61]Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination*, 99.

[62]Protestant anxiety partly arises (sometimes with good reason) from a cavalier, unconscious and uncritical use of the phrase "praying to Mary." The more theologically apt phrase, of course, is "asking Mary for her intercession before God," thus making clear that it is God who saves, forgives, heals, guides, etc. Used indiscriminately, "praying to Mary" suggests that it is she herself who saves, forgives, heals, and so forth.

[63]Byassee, "What About Mary?," 31.

asking a fellow Christian still living to pray for him. "If death severed the fellowship of believers, I could not of course ask a *departed* fellow believer to pray for me."[64] But death does *not* sever the fellowship of believers (the "communion of the saints" of the Apostles' Creed), hence justifying asking even a departed fellow Christian for his or her prayers. Jenson concludes: "And if I *can* do it, there will certainly be contexts where I *should* do it. Thus there should be no problem about asking Mary in her capacity as *sancta*, Saint Mary, to pray for us."[65] For a Catholic or Orthodox believer, this argument is hardly new. But the novelty is that some Protestants are now advocating this perspective. Adds Byassee: "Each saint's particular graces can be seen as reflections of the grace of Christ, whose greatness grows in our eyes as we attend to the saints' individual stories. The strengthening of the bonds of the body of Christ, stretching as they do across the divide between earthly life and death, should bring tribute to Christ rather than discredit."[66]

However, the French-speaking, ecumenical study group of Dombes has a more sober assessment of Marian devotion, especially at the point where "veneration turns into invocation and invocation into prayer to Mary."[67] For some Protestants, the veneration given to Mary ("hyperdulia") is enough cause for anxiety; to begin to invoke her aid and intercession is simply too much.[68]

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[64]Robert Jenson, "A Space for God," in *Mary, Mother of God,* 49.

[65]Ibid., 49-50.

[66]Byassee, "What About Mary?," 31.

[67]Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 81.

[68]Enrique Gonzales, a Mexican Methodist pastor, writes: "Doctrinal statements in Roman Catholicism talk clearly about the veneration (*doulia*) [better: *hyperdulia*] of Mary, not the worship (or adoration, *latreia*) of Mary. In any kind of academic, theological arena, Catholic theologians will emphasize the word 'veneration' rather than 'adoration.' Yet the practical theology in the life of Catholicism in Latin America promotes the adoration of Mary. It promotes not only adoration

> Here again, when Protestants are unable to address any prayer to Mary or the saints, Catholics can only agree inasmuch as, strictly speaking, no prayer or praise can be addressed to anyone but God alone and, more specifically, to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Catholics have recourse to Mary and the saints only to ask that they intercede for them with God, not because such intercession is necessary or more efficacious, but simply in order to enter together with them into the great intercession that is as it were the constant expression of the solidarity among believers which even death cannot end. Intercession is thus the everlasting conversation of believers with their God in their concern for one another. It is within these limits that Catholics can legitimately turn to Mary and the saints, as they do in the Angelus or the rosary, in which they simply ask Mary to pray for them. Protestants who reject such prayer out of fear of confusion or excess must nonetheless be on guard not to forget to praise God for Mary and for the saints he has given them.
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> May we not humbly ask, not that those who invoke Mary should cease to do so nor that those who evoke her should invoke her, but rather that both should, in their understanding of the faith, be brotherly witnesses to the convictions of their brethren? These convictions would no longer be a cause of separation and an admission of differences within a unity "already given."[69]

Note the theological care with which the intercession of Mary and the saints is explained and defended. Where proper catechesis on the intercessory role of the saints is lacking, all the more Protestant fears of "Mariolatry" might appear to be justified. Notice, too, that this statement of the Dombes group goes beyond a mere "agree to disagree" policy when it advocates being "brotherly witnesses" to one another's convictions.

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of her as a person but the adoration of the doctrines of Mary…." Cf. his brief article, "The Problem with Mary," *Christian Century* (December 14, 2004): 33.

[69]Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 81.

Brief Excursus: The Philippine Situation

In the Philippines, Mary is both venerated and invoked; venerated by Filipinos out of their filial love for her who is mother to their Savior and who is also now their own spiritual mother, she is likewise invoked out of a strong belief in her powerful intercession. Among her many honorific titles, two are especially prominent in Philippine religious culture: the Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of the Rosary.[70] In 1975, the Catholic bishops could assert that Filipinos very often address Mary as "Ang Mahal na Birhen" (the Holy Virgin).[71] One could argue today the dominance of the more familiar address, "Mama Mary."

From an ecumenical standpoint, Mary is still considered a dividing issue among Filipino Christians. The 1975 pastoral letter noted that Marian devotion is not exclusive to Filipino Catholics, for even the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (popularly known as the "Aglipayan" church) has certain Marian practices and the Philippine Episcopal Church observes some Marian feast days.[72] In response, one could argue that the Aglipayan and Episcopalian communities differ not so much theologically from Roman Catholicism as from historical and political reasons. In point of fact, Marian doctrine and practices are what continue to fuel the animosity of Filipino evangelicals, fundamentalists, Pentecostals, and other groups towards the Catholic Church.[73]

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[70]Cf. the CBCP 1975 pastoral letter on Mary, no. 9.

[71]Ibid., no. 53.

[72]Ibid., no. 23.

[73]With regards to these denominational labels, some explanation might be in order. Evangelicals in the Philippines would see themselves as theologically "fundamentalist" but would prefer not to call themselves by that name because (1) over the years, "fundamentalist" has come to connote one who is divisive, intolerant, anti-intellectual, and unconcerned with social problems, and (2) *because* evangelicals adhere to the "fundamentals" of faith, to call themselves fundamentalists (in addition to being evangelical) would be redundant. In other words, "evangelical" (in the Philippine context) *means* "fundamentalist" – but

What are some of the most common Protestant objections to Marian doctrine and devotion? One could cite three: (1) Mary is perceived to surpass or supersede Christ; (2) Mary is seen to be pitted against Christ; (3) Mary is thought to be worshipped or treated as someone divine. The upshot of all this is that Mary seems to be loved, remembered, turned to and invoked more than Christ. Her statues and images proliferate and are handled in such a way as to evoke suspicions of superstition and idolatry. To the casual observer, Mary, invoked under her title of "Mother of Perpetual Help" or "Succor of Christians," appears to be far more popular and powerful than Jesus himself.

It might be relatively easy to deny the charge of "Mariolatry" in these instances on the grounds that the official teaching of the Catholic Church is very clear on these points; it would be harder to affirm that the average Filipino Catholic is well catechized and sufficiently nuanced on these same points. It is one thing to argue that Filipino Catholics, in remembering Mary, do not forget Christ; it is quite another not only to assert but to prove that they in fact love Christ, follow Christ, and obey Christ. Cardinal Newman recounts a memorable saying by a holy Jesuit priest in Rome: One could not love Mary too much if one loved Jesus a great deal more.[74] That is indeed an excellent rule of thumb, provided the "if" is well-attested and faithfully lived out.

Popular Marian hymns sung in the Philippines often say nothing about Christ; thus Mariology is divorced from its necessary connection

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not the other way around. Then, there are Protestant "fundamentalists" of the born-again, anti-Catholic and separatist sort; e.g., the Association of Baptist Churches of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao (ABCLVM). Finally, there are Christian "Pentecostal" and "Charismatic" groups which would not necessarily call themselves Protestant; e.g., Jesus Miracle Crusade. Cf. Averell Aragon, "The Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches," in *Chapters in Philippine Church History*, ed. Anne Kwantes (Manila: OMF, 2001), 367-89.

[74]Newman, *Mary, the Mother of Jesus*, 29-30.

to Christology.[75] One song has the words: *Inang sinasamba, ang Diyos sa 'yo nagpala* (Mother who is worshiped, God has blessed you). The words "Mother who is worshiped" are defended on the grounds that, first, the Filipino language has no word to express hyperdulia; second, the song is intended to express extravagant and exaggerated love of someone; and third, it is written in the style of a *kundiman* (traditional Filipino love song) so that the genre justifies the word's usage. But the questions remain: Is the *sinasamba* said of Mary so patently clear and self-explanatory as to rule out "Mariolatry" and to justify its continued use? Does the appeal to the Filipino sensibility and cultural value of extravagant filial love for Mary exonerate composer and singers alike from the misunderstandings and confusions among Catholics and non-Catholics alike which this song perpetuates?

Where, then, does one draw the line between what one may say about Mary, and what one may not? At what point can it be said that a particular devotional statement has crossed the line from acceptability to heresy? Some errors are so egregious as to be clearly "out of bounds"; some examples cited by Newman are: that the mercy of Mary is infinite; that God has resigned into her hands his omnipotence; that it is safer to seek her than to seek her Son; that the Blessed Virgin is superior to God; that our Lord is subject to her command; and so forth.[76] For the rest, it is not easy to decide where to draw the line. Newman admits that "Burning thoughts and words are as open to criticism as they are beyond it."[77] Words uttered in prayer must be taken in context. Devotional language is especially susceptible to historical fallout. What was acceptable, even admirable, a century or decades earlier, can today sound strange and trite at best, and heretical

[75]One fine exception is the Filipino Marian song, "Mary, Mother of All" which, besides focusing on Mary's virtues of faith and motherly love, points beyond Mary to God himself in the refrain: *Be our yes to God as we offer our all / To the Father Creator / To the Son the Redeemer / To the Spirit Consoler.*

[76]Newman, *Mary, the Mother of Jesus*, 115.

[77]Ibid., 86.

at worst.[78] One must have the prudence and courage to set aside (to "retire") quietly such outdated and unbalanced devotional literature and songs, not only in the name of ecumenical sensitivity, but also for the sake of doctrinal integrity – not to mention sometimes for aesthetic purposes!

Ecumenical Proposals

After having examined the varying doctrinal standpoints and devotional approaches of the three main groupings of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christianity towards the Blessed Virgin Mary, this paper is now ready to make the following proposals and recommendations.[79] These are divided into two parts. The first

[78]Once again Newman expresses this in his usual fine prose: "And so again certain statements may be true, under circumstances and in a particular time and place, which are abstractedly false; and hence it may be very unfair in a controversialist to interpret by an English or a modern rule, whatever may have been asserted by a foreign or mediæval author. To say for instance, dogmatically, that no one can be saved without personal devotion to the Blessed Virgin, would be an untenable proposition; yet it might be true of this man or that, or of this or that country at this or that date; and, if that very statement has ever been made by any writer of consideration (and this has to be ascertained), then perhaps it was made precisely under these exceptional circumstances. If an Italian preacher made it, I should feel no disposition to doubt him, at least if he spoke of Italian youths and Italian maidens" (Ibid., 107).

[79]This paper presupposes and therefore will not repeat the recommendations found in such magisterial or authoritative documents as: Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation for the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary *Marialis Cultus* (February 2, 1974); Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Ang Mahal na Birhen*, nos. 63ff.; John Paul II, On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church *Redemptoris Mater* (March 25, 1987), esp. nos. 29-34; Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* (December 2001).

Special mention is due to the Dombes study group's *Mary in the Plan of God*, esp.

suggests more ecumenically-sensitive principles in speaking of Mary and in relating with her. (It must be noted that being "more ecumenically-sensitive" does not mean compromising the more "maximal" approach of the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. If anything it means having a more correct and healthy approach purified of excesses and exaggerations. As the Dombes study group expresses it, the aim is to give Mary "the place that belongs to her in the Christian faith – her full place, of course, but also nothing but her place."[80]) The second part proposes ways by which Christians of different traditions can enter into more amicable and fruitful dialogue with one another concerning the mother of the Savior.

Ecumenical Principles of Marian Doctrine and Devotion

1. "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12:3).

Christians can be united to the extent that Christ's lordship is proclaimed and lived out in their lives. When Christ becomes more and more the center of their theology and spirituality (not just in theory but in actual practice), the more he becomes the point at which the various Christian communions can meet in fraternal love and solidarity. One Lutheran friend of this writer remarked that he would have no problem

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the chapter entitled "Toward the Conversion of the Churches." The Group calls for a mutual conversion in attitude, in doctrine and in devotion. Not surprisingly, the injunction upon Catholics is to apply the Vatican II principle of the "hierarchy of truths" to Marian doctrines, to strive for correct and responsible preaching and catechesis, and to be especially vigilant in Marian hymnology and statuary. Likewise, Protestants are urged "to restore to Mary a proper place, both doctrinal and liturgical, in the mystery of salvation and the communion of the saints. By doing so, they will make a useful contribution to the quest for communion among [the] churches and will better situate themselves within the great tradition of the entire church" (Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 127).

[80]Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 114.

if, when speaking of Mary, one began with Jesus, continued on with Mary, but ended again with Jesus. This Christocentric rule of thumb applies just as well to theology as to spirituality. John Macquarrie recalls the "fundamental principle that has always been acknowledged in the Church, though it may sometimes have been obscured – that all our devotion, including any that has been inspired by Mary, is ultimately devotion to God in Christ."[81] Or again, quoting Newman: one could not love Mary too much if one loved Jesus a great deal more.[82]

2. "And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother" (Mt 2:11).

Marian doctrine and devotion must always be clearly aligned with Christology. It is somewhat easy to affirm (although this affirmation is not stated often enough) that the Marian doctrines are at root Christological: they say something, primarily and not simply tangentially, about Christ. Thus *all* truths about Mary (her motherhood of the Son of God, her holiness, her faith, her special privileges, etc.) need to be taught in express relationship with Christ, the sole Redeemer.

However, this principle cuts both ways. Many Christological affirmations can and must be related to Mary, she who is not only the means by which the eternal Logos became incarnate, but also the one who best represents humanity as the addressee of revelation and the beneficiary of redemption. Joseph Ratzinger asserts somewhat paradoxically that "only when [Christology] touches Mary and becomes Mariology is Christology itself as radical as the faith of the Church requires."[83] He gives the example of the Nestorian controversy in the fifth century. Nestorianism, which opposed the title *Theotokos*, involved the fabrication of a Christology from which the human mother and

[81]Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians*, 133.

[82]Newman, *Mary, the Mother of Jesus*, 29-30.

[83]Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 35.

the human birth are removed – a Christology without Mariological consequences. "Precisely this operation, which surgically removes God so far from man that nativity and maternity – all of corporeality – remain in a different sphere, indicated … that the center of Christ's mystery was endangered, if not already destroyed. Thus in Mariology, Christology was defended."[84]

Both Catholicism and Orthodoxy also insist on relating Mary with the Church; she who provided the material of his human body may not be separated from his *entire* body, from the "whole Christ." Protestant Christians must surely welcome this. The fact that Vatican II incorporated its teaching on Mary into the constitution on the Church is highly significant (although the affirmative vote won by only a slim margin – just 17 votes, the narrowest majority and the lowest favorable vote in the entire history of the council).[85] In classical Eastern icons, Mary is never represented by herself, but always with Christ or with other believers. Writes Bishop Kallistos: "When we speak of Mary, we must speak of her relationship with Jesus: we must keep in view her role at His Incarnation and her place as a member within His Mystical Body. There can be no 'Mariology' as such: 'Mariology' is a facet of Christology or of ecclesiology."[86]

3. "I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1:38).

It must be remembered that Mary, for all her excellences, is a human being and a creature of God. Karl Barth's insistence on the radical asymmetry between God and creation is always theologically and pastorally relevant. It is significant that Mary's response in the Lucan

[84]Ibid., 35-36.

[85]Michael Hurley, "Ecumenism and Mariology Today," in *Mary for Earth and Heaven: Essays on Mary and Ecumenism*, eds. William McLoughlin & Jill Pinnock (Gloucester, England: Gracewing, 2002), 188.

[86]Ware, "The Mother of God in Orthodox Theology and Devotion," 169.

narrative identifies herself not simply as a human creature but as a female slave (*doulē*, feminine of *doulos*). There is something appropriate that he who "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7) should be born of a handmaid. Remembering that their Protestant brethren are most allergic to any suggestion of divinity ascribed to Mary, of divine favors expected of Mary as if she were the source, Catholic and Orthodox Christians will do well to keep her complete humanity in mind. Like her Son, she is fully human; unlike her Son, she is *only* human. Her assumption into heavenly glory is no apotheosis. It may surprise some people that Louis de Montfort, often seen as a Marian devotee of the first degree, would write:

> I avow, with all the Church, that Mary, being a mere creature that has come from the hands of the most High, is in comparison with his infinite majesty less than an atom; or rather, she is nothing at all, because only he is He Who Is … Jesus Christ, our Savior, true God and true Man, ought to be the last end of all our devotions, else they are false and delusive. If then we establish solid devotion to our blessed Lady, it is only more perfectly to establish devotion to Christ … When we praise her, love her, honor her or give anything to her, it is God who is praised, God who is loved, God who is glorified and it is to God that we give, through Mary and in Mary.[87]

4. "What does the scripture say?" (Rom 4:3; Gal 4:30).

Pope Paul VI reminded his readers: "Today it is recognized as a general need of Christian piety that every form of worship should have a biblical imprint."[88] The more the Bible becomes the basis (and canon) of Christian doctrine and devotion, the more it serves as the common language of all Christians. Certainly this ecumenical principle is easier said than done. There are numerous issues relating

[87]Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary* (Tan Books, 1985), 11, 37-38, 105; cited by Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians*, 133.

[88]Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 30.

to scriptural interpretation and the role of tradition which make this a complex principle in actual practice. But in the end, all Christians stand to gain from a fresh and concerted reassessment of the scriptural portrait of Mary. "What she lacks in quantity of appearance in scripture she makes up for in quality."[89] All Christians can be united in appreciating her as the disciple *par excellence* whose "fiat" not only changed the course of human history but who is also a perennial model of complete surrender to God. Without diminishing their regard for her as "intercessor," Catholics and Orthodox will serve their Protestant brethren well by meditating on her "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). Heiko Oberman says that in seeing Mary as "the light of the beacon pointing away from herself to Jesus Christ, Protestants and Roman Catholics can join in hailing her as 'the Mother of God'."[90] Writes the Lutheran nun, Basilea Schlink, with a touch of ruefulness: "When Martin Luther bids us to praise the Mother Mary, declaring that she can never be praised enough as the noblest lady and, after Christ, the fairest gem in Christendom, I must confess that for many years I was one of those who had not done so, although Scripture says that henceforth all generations would call Mary blessed (Luke 1:48). I had not taken my place among these generations."[91]

5. "All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up" (1 Cor 10:23).

The Second Vatican Council has decreed that Catholics must "carefully refrain from whatever might by word or deed lead the separated brethren or any others whatsoever into error about the

[89]Byassee, "What About Mary?," 29.

[90]Oberman, "The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective," 298.

[91]Basilea Schlink, *Mary, the Mother of Jesus* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1986), 114-5.

true doctrine of the Church" regarding Mary.[92] St. Paul in his letter to the bickering Corinthian Christians offers the criteria of *helpfulness* and *edification*: whatever helps in mutual respect and understanding, and whatever builds up the faith and unity of the Church, are to be given priority.

The vital difference between doctrine and devotion must be kept in mind. The members of the Dombes study group testify that as they engaged in their common task they could discuss things all the more serenely because they had been able to differentiate between "what faith demands and what devotion allows." It is important, they say, "to distinguish between devotional freedom (within the limits set by the rule of faith) and the one thing necessary."[93]

Marian doctrines and devotions must somehow be judged upon the bar of ecumenical sensitivity. *Is this devotional practice helpful, or potentially scandalous, to our separated brethren? How can we understand and explain this Marian belief in a more ecumenically acceptable manner?* The story is told of a curé in a predominantly Protestant village in France who wanted to dedicate its new parish church to Mary. His reason was that Catholics should not hide their beliefs but rather give witness to them. His parish committee, on the other hand, wished to dedicate the church to Christ the Redeemer or Christ the King. Cardinal Bea, when asked for his advice, sided with the parishioners (adding, diplomatically, that perhaps one of the principal side altars in the church might be dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary). This is ecumenical sensitivity at work.[94] Another telling example is of more recent vintage. About four million Catholics, including some 500 bishops and 42 cardinals had petitioned Pope John Paul II to have the Marian titles of "mediatrix," "co-redemptrix" and "advocatrix" solemnly defined. Seeing that such a definition would

[92]*LG* 67

[93]Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 11-12.

[94]Hurley, "Ecumenism and Mariology Today," 198-9, citing H. du Manoir SJ, *Maria* (Paris, 1964), xii.

be an added obstacle to the pursuit of Christian unity (not to mention the theological and pastoral problems these titles would present), the Vatican disapproved the petition.[95]

6. "Test everything, hold fast what is good" (1 Thes 5:21).

There is a need for ongoing vigilance, renewal, and purification of Marian doctrines and devotions. Not to do so would indeed *dishonor* Mary, not to mention Christ. Thérèse of Lisieux, herself a devotee of the mother of Jesus, remarked that "we ought not to say things [about Mary] which are improbable or which we do not know…. We know indeed that the holy Virgin is Queen of heaven and earth, but she is more a mother than a queen, and we ought not to say that because of her prerogatives she eclipses the glory of all the saints, just as the rising sun makes the stars disappear. Dear Lord, what a strange thing to say!"[96]

Christians of the various traditions must also recognize the extent to which their own church or ecclesial community presupposes and emphasizes certain distinctive theological approaches. They must seek for balance in their presuppositions and mindsets, for one can easily succumb to an unhealthy and imbalanced theological posture, such as by emphasizing distinctives rather than points of unity. Jaroslav Pelikan has expressed the hope that "Evangelical," "Catholic" and "Orthodox" might no longer in the first instance be labels of denominations or doctrinal positions, but "mutually reinforcing norms" in the praise of Mary.[97] This vision of Christians of all hues united in their praise

[95]Ibid., 188.

[96]St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, *J'entre dans la vie. Derniers entretiens* (Paris: Cerf/ Desclée De Brouwer, 1973), 140-1, cited by Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 158 (footnote 19).

[97]Jaroslav Pelikan, "*Most* Generations Shall Call Me Blessed: An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Liturgy," in *Mary, Mother of God*, 18.

of the mother of Jesus in a manner that is evangelical, catholic and orthodox (note the lower-case adjectives) is an attractive one.

Heiko Oberman's proposition that "Protestantism … searches to find the *via media*, to avoid not only Marian excesses at the right but also Marian minimalism at the left" is a welcome statement of Evangelical openness to self-critique and flexibility in its quest for a "middle way."[98] One might ask if this "middle way" between excess and deficiency can also be the goal of Catholicism and Orthodoxy. In theory, yes, but perhaps not in practice. Can one find an objective "midpoint"? Can "balance" be quantified, measured, or even agreed upon by broad consensus? The notion of a *via media* in theology usually works better in theory than in practice; one only has to remember Newman's idea of an Anglican *via media* before he completely renounced the idea in 1843. But the challenge remains for each of the historic Christian churches and traditions to exercise self-critique and self-policing in order to separate the wheat from the tares.

John de Satgé, an evangelical Christian, delicately asks "whether the Reformers were as right in their denials as they were in their affirmations; and whether their struggle for the truth as they saw it led them to overstate their case, imparting to it an exclusivism which need not have been there."[99] To be more specific, he questions whether the three great Protestant *solas* need to remain so trenchantly *sola*: "Is it necessarily the case that, if you take away the exclusive 'only', the nerve of the gospel is irretrievably cut?" It is a pertinent question. When the Reformers thundered "Scripture alone" or "justification by grace alone and through faith alone," the "alone" was not merely a restatement or recovery of gospel truths, it was a declaration of war. Almost five hundred years after the 95 Theses, can these vaunted Reformation ideals be restated in a way which both guards the truth and offers tokens of peace?

[98]Oberman, "The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective," 294.

[99]De Satgé, *Down to Earth: The New Protestant Vision of the Virgin Mary*, 135.

Recommendations for Ecumenical Dialogue on Mary

It is perhaps unrealistic to expect that ecumenical dialogue should lead to complete agreement in all matters.[100] A full century – the twentieth – of progress in ecumenism still bequeaths to the present-day Church many unresolved disagreements. Apropos to this Michael Hurley asks whether so much ecumenical effort has been spent on issues of "faith and order" (doctrine, discipline, church structure), while so little on "the problem of charity and mutual forgiveness."[101] In other words, there has been too little of the "dialogue of love." Hurley recommends that, whereas doctrinal unity would have to wait and be worked hard for, here and now the exercise of mutual charity could and must begin.[102] And he quotes John Wesley's striking line in his famous *Letter to a Roman Catholic*: "If we cannot as yet *think alike* in all things, at least we may *love alike*."[103]

This call for mutual respect and fraternal charity even in the face of disagreement is not new. Scripture instructs us to "above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14), and a common patristic dictum has been "*In necessariis unitas, in*

[100]With insight and humility Joseph Ratzinger comments on Paul's enigmatic phrase "there must [*dei*] be factions" (1 Cor 11:19): This could mean that "even if schisms are to begin with the work of men and women and their fault, nevertheless there is in them a dimension that corresponds to God's disposing. Hence it is only to a certain point that we can repair them through repentance and conversion; but it is only the God who judges and forgives who decides entirely on his own when the point is reached that we no longer need this split [among Christians] and that the 'must' drops away." Cf. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 139.

[101]Hurley, "Ecumenism and Mariology Today," 196.

[102]Ibid.

[103]Ibid.; cf. Wesley, *Letter to a Roman Catholic*, ed. Michael Hurley (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 56.

dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas" (that is, unity in necessary things, liberty in doubtful things, and love in everything).

Christians dialoguing with one another about Mary should strive to focus more on what unites them, rather than on what divides them. Beginning with this position of unity and consensus about Mary, they can then discuss the differences (some not insignificant) that remain. Discussions about Mary across denominational lines must be characterized by a "quickness to hear, slowness to speak, slowness to anger" (James 1:19). One must also "seek first to understand, rather than to be understood." The late Jesuit ecumenist, Edward Yarnold, once wrote: "The greatest assent I can hope to have won from someone who is not already committed to [the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption] is the judgment that they are not unreasonable, that they may well be true; but articles of faith – that is another matter."[104] That seems to be a fair and wise position for all Christians to take.

Conclusion

At the close of this paper, the question, "How can Mary be *for all Christians*?" still requires an answer. It is perhaps inadequate (and ecumenically impertinent) simply to recall the title which Pope Paul VI conferred upon Mary in 1964, "Mother of the Church," for this will neither please nor satisfy everyone.[105] But surely there are a few

[104]*Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue: Occasional Papers of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1970-1980)*, 129.

[105]While both the Anglican theologian John Macquarrie (cf. *Mary for All Christians*, 26f, 92f, 114) and the Evangelical John de Satgé (*Down to Earth*, 117, 138) approve of this Marian title, seeing in it an advance in an ecumenical appreciation of Mary, they are perhaps the exception rather than the rule. Among Orthodox theologians, Alexis Kniazeff is deeply troubled by the same title; cf. *La Mère de Dieu*, 203-5.

other ways in which it is both meaningful and inoffensive to make such an assertion.

Mary is for all Christians because of her unique dignity as "the one who bore the one who is God."[106] This singular privilege of bearing Jesus Christ (in other words, her divine maternity) is the "fundamental idea" of both Catholic and Orthodox teaching on Mary.[107] Christ, the only Son of God and sole Savior of the world, is without parallel "for all Christians," indeed for all human beings. But without obscuring or diminishing the unique mediation of Christ[108] and neither taking away anything from nor adding anything to his dignity,[109] Mary too can be seen as being "for all Christians" by virtue of her special role in the economy of salvation.

Because of this, Mary is for all Christians to thank for her generous and courageous *fiat*, her consent to the Father's invitation to be, by the power of the Spirit, the human mother of his incarnate Son. Although specific practices of veneration or devotion to Mary will vary greatly among Christians, it behoves all to thank God for his gift of this woman whose "Yes" made her the mother of our Savior. Even Karl Barth could give her superlative praise: "There is one here who is greater than Abraham, greater than David, and greater than John the Baptist, greater than Paul and greater than the entire Christian Church; we are dealing here with the history of the Mother of the Lord, the Mother of God himself. This is a unique and unparalleled event."[110] Cautions the

[106]This is the literal rendering of her title *Theotokos*, conferred upon her by the ecumenical council of Ephesus in 431.

[107]Kallistos Ware insists that *Theotokos* "provides the key to the whole Orthodox understanding of Mary"; cf. "The Mother of God in Orthodox Theology and Devotion," 170. See also Newman, *Mary, the Mother of Jesus*, 69ff.

[108]*LG* 60.

[109]Ibid., 62.

[110]Barth, "Quatre études bibliques," *Foi et Vie*, nos. 85-86 (1936): 487, cited by

Dombes Group: "Protestants who reject [Marian devotional practices of Catholics and Orthodox] out of fear of confusion or excess must nonetheless be on guard not to forget to praise God for Mary and for the saints he has given them."[111] To honor Jesus rightly, it is unthinkable to refuse to honor his mother.

Mary is for all Christians as a biblical model. "What she lacks in quantity of appearance in scripture she makes up for in quality."[112] Scripture presents us with many men and women who, though imperfect and flawed, nevertheless respond with valiant and praiseworthy faith to God's action in their lives. To be sure, their response is possible because of God's grace, yet we honor and strive to imitate them. Christians do not have to share an identical belief in Mary's holiness and sinlessness before they can agree (with Reformed theologian Daniel Migliore) that

> the biblical stories of Mary are testimonies to the grace of God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. They are stories of Mary as witness to God's sovereign, electing grace. They are stories of the zeal of this woman of faith for the coming of God's righteousness and mercy to transform the whole creation. They are stories of Mary's and our need for continuous reform by the word of God. They are stories of what it means to live faithfully as women and men ordained to ministry under the cross of Christ, commissioned by him to bear one another's burdens and to serve God's work of reconciliation. They are stories of a woman who prays and waits with the whole people of God for the coming of God's Word and Spirit to empower us for ministry and mission.[113]

Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 123.

[111]Blancy, et al., *Mary in the Plan of God*, 81.

[112]Byassee, "What About Mary?," 29.

[113]Daniel Migliore, "Woman of Faith: Toward a Reformed Understanding of Mary," in *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary,* 129.

All Christians then can revisit the scriptural data on Mary and, with minds not prejudiced either to unwarranted adulation or to unthinking rejection, come to appreciate together the biblical portrait of her as a disciple and servant – one who "hears the word of God and keeps it" (Luke 11:28). Mary can be for all Christians as a model of faith and obedience.

Finally, Mary can be for all Christians a way to Jesus her Son. Again this must be understood, first and foremost, in terms of Mary's motherhood in the order of history, and her exceptional example of Christian discipleship as glimpsed in the Gospels. Christians of different traditions will of course regard the phrase "Mary as a way to Jesus" with denominational pre-understandings which are, in themselves, not necessarily exclusive. Orthodox Christians will recall immediately the "Holy Theotokos" and will unblushingly sing:

> It is truly worthy
> to proclaim you magnified, O Mother of God,
> eternally blessed and immaculate
> and Mother of our God.
>
> More venerable than the cherubim
> and incomparably more glorious than the seraphim,
> You who without stain has given birth to God the Word,
> You, true Theotokos, we magnify you.[114]

Protestants might evoke Mary's words at Cana, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5), as a measure of her self-effacement and humility, pointing to her Son as her Lord and our Lord; as the one who alone deserves our obedience. As for Catholics, many might recall the slogan, *To Christ through Mary* – a time-honored yet admittedly ambiguous phrase which demands proper catechesis. A responsible Catholic catechesis striving for both ecumenical sensitivity and doctrinal integrity must make clear that the slogan, properly understood, does

[114]Kniazeff, *La Mère de Dieu*, 23.

not mean that one cannot go to Jesus directly, nor that Mary herself mediates salvation because (as it might be wrongly thought) only by her mediation can one arrive at the Savior.[115] Beyond the ambiguities and denominational pre-understandings which still remain, might we be allowed to hope that Mary can come to be appreciated by all Christians as *a* way to Christ who is *the* Way?

As a conclusion, it is perhaps fitting to quote Pope Benedict XVI, who recently issued his first encyclical letter *On Christian Love*.[116] He ends his reflections by invoking Mary, in a manner that is ecumenically sensitive, theologically sound, and devotionally sincere:

> Holy Mary, Mother of God,
> you have given the world its true light,
> Jesus, your Son – the Son of God.
> You abandoned yourself completely to God's call
> and thus became a wellspring
> of the goodness which flows forth from him.
> Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.
> Teach us to know and love him,
> so that we too can become
> capable of true love
> and be fountains of living water
> in the midst of a thirsting world.

[115]The preposition "through" (in the phrase *To Jesus through Mary*) in particular requires considerable nuance, similar to the Marian title, "Mediatrix." Concerning the latter, Vatican II teaches that, while Mary is so invoked in the Catholic Church, such an honorific (but not infallibly declared) title "neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator" (*LG* 62).

[116]Benedict XVI, On Christian Love *Deus Caritas Est* (December 25, 2005).

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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

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.

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).

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.

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.

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

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,

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).

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**

"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.

"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-

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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:*

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.

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]

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[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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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);

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.

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.

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.

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.

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).

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.

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."

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).

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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THE *DIAKONIA* OF AN *ECCLESIA* TO THE *RES PUBLICA*

Prospects of the Philippine Church in Transforming the Filipino Polity for the Common Good

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Five years after having led the Filipino people in the restoration of democracy, the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines asked "what kind of church must we be to meet the challenges of our society into the third millennium?"[1] Two decades hence the nation still suffers from a deeply rooted and widespread lack of a sense of the common good.[2] Certainly the church has continued to provide the "moral center" in the public arena but, in terms of official policy as reflected in its 1997 pastoral letter on Philippine politics, the favored socio-pastoral strategy revolves around the axis of the moral integrity of public officials and civil servants. Seduced by the powerful yet simplistic discourse of corruption,[3] church countermeasures include timely condemnations of public scandals – usually of the marital and/

[1]See *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines: Manila, 1992); hereafter cited as PCP II.

[2]See, for instance, Patrick Riordan, "Is there a Common Good," *Landas* 4 (1990): 70-89, and Manuel Quezon III, "The civic imperative," *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (March 20, 2008): A11.

[3]See, for instance, Walden Bello, *The Anti-Development State: The Political Economy of Permanent Crisis in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 2004).

or financial kind – as well as exerting its influence in the appointments of persons to operate the bureaucratic offices, not to mention the power of the ballot or the judiciary to hold officials accountable.

Somehow lost in the church's discourse is an ethical vision honed by the deep convictions of the Christian faith and the sciences of political reason, namely the "common good." As the sum of all the conditions of social living by which members of a community or society are empowered to more fully and readily achieve total and integral human development (cf. MM 65, PT 58, GS 26, 74),[4] the common good requires a stable democratic polity that allows for participatory deliberation and envisioning of it as well as a truly democratic culture that nourishes both collective and institutional commitment for it. The lack of such democratic polity, we contend, explains the appalling lack of the sense of the common good in the Filipino political life.

To be an *ecclesia* at the service of the common good or, better yet, the *res publica,* appears to be the call of the times to which the Philippine church has yet to respond. This paper aims to sketch pathways to respond to the signs of the times.

1. The challenge to be a church of the poor by advocating with them their legislative agenda

A poverty institutionalizing political exclusion

Literature on political participation shows that intensity of political

[4]The abbreviations and paragraph numbers refer to the following social documents of the Church: *Mater et Magistra* (MM) and *Pacem in Terris* (PT) by Pope John XXIII, and *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) or the "Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World" by the Second Vatican Council. Other documents cited in this paper are *Rerum Novarum* (RN) by Leo XIII, *Quadragesimo Anno* (QA) by Pius XI, *Octogesima Adveniens* (OA) by Paul VI, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (SRS) and *Centesimus Annus* (CA) by John Paul II, and *Libertatis Conscientia* (LC) by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

participation is high among high-status groups in society and low among lower social groups.[5] At best, people in lower socio-economic groups participate specifically through the ballot while at worst they simply withdraw from the world of politics. While it is incorrect to attribute participation solely to socio-economic factors, still a situation of "daily misery inhibits many of the poor from carefully studying public issues and participating in public debates" and "makes it difficult for the individual to act as a free agent who can decide and act responsibly on public issues on the basis of the evidence."[6] It "tends to foster an understandable myopia which dismisses as irrelevant any fact that has no bearing on short-run survival,"[7] thus rendering the person susceptible to manipulation by those who can respond to his immediate need to survive.

The structural sin of political exclusion

At the heart of the church's ethical vision of the common good are two of the most fundamental aspirations of human beings, namely: equality and participation (cf. OA 22). A "greater sharing in responsibility and in decision-making is a basic demand of human nature, a concrete exercise of human freedom and a path to human development." It is true that more often than not the choices proposed for political decision are complex, its considerations numerous, and consequences full of risks. But "these obstacles," according to church teaching, "must not slow down the giving of wider participation in

[5]See, for instance, Pia Bennagen Raquedan, "If Things are So Bad, Why Aren't People Out in the Streets?" in *Understanding Poverty: The poor talk about what it means to be poor,* ed. Paulynn Sicam (Makati City: Institute for People Power and Development, 2007), 49-60, at 51-53.

[6]Fernando Zialcita, "Barriers and Bridges to a Democratic Culture," in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Volume I,* ed. Maria Serena Diokno (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 39-68, at 43.

[7]Emmanuel de Dios, "Amid Great Political Difficulty, Some Economic Progress" in *Understanding Poverty,* 2-8, at 2.

working out decisions, making choices and putting them into practice" (OA 47). But "when a man falls into extreme poverty, human freedom is crippled" and he/she "can scarcely arrive at the needed sense of responsibility" (GS 31). In a country where daily misery is not only widespread but also intergenerational,[8] the fundamental aspirations to equality and participation are unmet, even as the right of the poor "to take an active part in public affairs and to contribute one's part to the common good of the citizens" (PT 26) does not have juridical guarantees. In the Philippines, the social sin of poverty has become "a pandemic that threatens the very essence of nationhood."[9]

What the church can do

If poverty breeds political exclusion, the *diakonia* the Filipino church can render to Philippine society is to become truly a church, not just for, but, more importantly, of the poor (cf. PCP II, 122-136). Simply alleviating poverty through income-raising projects cannot arrest the political exclusion. Neither can the simplistic but enticing discourse about the crusade against corruption. The church can instead advocate for laws – in a more united and purposive way – that aim to arrest the fundamental structure that breeds poverty and alter the cultural system that perpetuates patronage and dependence.

One such example is the church's current struggle to extend and complete the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) against the will of the landed class and their allies in the legislature. Although it is far from perfect, like previous agrarian laws, and way beyond the deadline,[10] the law can still make a big

[8]See, for instance, Ana Maria Tabunda, "Perceptions of the Poor: The Poverty Scorecard," in *Understanding Poverty,* 16-39, at 16-17.

[9]Howard Dee, "The Need for a Christian Response," in *Understanding Poverty,* 98-101, at 99.

[10]See, for instance, the studies by James Putzel, *A Captive Land: The Politics of Agrarian Reform in the Philippines* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1992); Bello, *The Anti-Development State,* 33-90; and Rona Mercado, "Is the end near for

difference in the aspirations to equality and participation of poor, landless farmers – the social class which, the Filipino bishops said, has "the single most urgent claim of the conscience of the nation."[11] The strong resistance by the landed class and some legislators, many of whom have historical and/or personal ties with the church, presents an extraordinary opportunity for the Philippine church leadership to honestly examine its traditional ties. Church policy says, "(the church) does not lodge her hope in privileges conferred by civil authority" and "stands ready to renounce the exercise of certain legitimately acquired rights if it becomes clear that their use raises doubt about the sincerity of her witness or that new conditions in life demand some other arrangement" (GS 76).

2. The challenge to help in institutionalizing participatory democracy

An elite and predatory democracy

A serious barrier to envisioning the common good in the Filipino polity is the endurance of a "powerful oligarchic class that enjoys an economic base outside the state," yet depends upon "access to political machinery" and state bureaucracy "as the major avenue for private accumulation."[12] They are preoccupied with "the need to gain or maintain favorable proximity to the political machinery. Even those oligarchs temporarily on the outs with the regime exert far more effort

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CARP?" *Intersect* 21/4: 26-29.

[11] *Thirsting for Justice: A Pastoral Exhortation on Agrarian Reform* (Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines: July 14, 1987). Landlessness is a global problem, says the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in "Towards a Better Distribution of Land: The Challenge of Agrarian Reform," *L'Osservatore Romano* 3 (January 21, 1998): 1-8.

[12] Paul Hutchcroft, *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 12.

in trying to get back into favor than in demanding profound structural change."[13] A related and equally strong constraint is the "considerable pressure" under which legislators are "to secure as large a share in the national budget as they can, and to deliver material improvements to their districts."[14] Although "the battles take place for the most part within institutional bounds," securing political leverage has become an end in itself, and legislation and legislative budget have become the means to that end.[15]

Elections as fanatical appropriation of power by the already powerful

This fanatical self-appropriation of power starts with the process of elections and in the structures of power that surround it. Conventional analysis has it that Philippine elections are always a triumph of 'personality politics,' in large measure due to the Filipino culture's penchant for, among other things, *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), smooth interpersonal relations, and charismatic leaders. Without doubt personality is still a factor in Filipino politics, for by definition it is "about nothing more or less than individuals, rather than discernibly broader interests or ideologies." But its role takes effect only within the nexus of the money and machinery of the local bosses, for personality is the "mechanism by which individual politicians attempt to secure something of a hold on the flows of money, muscle, and machine manpower that are essential to electoral victory."[16]

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[13]Ibid., 55.

[14]Rupert Hodder, "The Philippine Legislature and Social Relationships: Toward the Formalization of the Polity?" *Philippine Studies* 53/4: 563-598, at 570.

[15]Ibid., 584.

[16]John Sidel, "Take the Money and Run? 'Personality' Politics in the Post-Marcos Era," *Public Policy* II/3: 27-38, at 30.

Elections as the poor man's ritual of gambling for momentary power

Nevertheless, Filipinos in general do not feel alienated from this kind of electoral system. In fact, the lower social groups do not view elections as necessarily elitist,[17] perhaps because, "in the absence of sustained interest in authentic political issues as defined by party platforms, elections are major community activities," which give them "the sense of momentary power to decide local or national outcomes."[18] Elections, like a cockfight, momentarily suspend hierarchy and dominance, even as the long-standing inequality in political power is reaffirmed. Rather than a "leveling mechanism", Aguilar contends, the ritual of sharing the "tokens of the bounty" after winning in an electoral contest is merely "a recirculation of luck and the re-inscription of all within the world of gambling" in preparation for the next elections. No wonder, despite the deception and trickery that almost always accompany games of chance, the whole electoral process is regarded as legitimate and an obligation.

Weakly institutionalized political parties and family political dynasties

The "highly non-programmatic, weakly institutionalized nature of Philippine political parties"[19] exacerbates the situation. Political parties "are visible and active only during election season" and "their primary concern is to get and keep power rather than to advance great

[17]For details of the survey results, see Anna Marie Karaos, "Perceptions and Practices of Democracy and Citizenship among Urban Middle Class Families," in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Vol. 1,* 113-32, esp. 124-27.

[18]Luisa Canieso-Doronila, "An Overview of Filipino Perspectives on Democracy and Citizenship," in Ibid., 69-111, at 82.

[19]Hutchcroft, *Booty Capitalism*, 250; also see Paul Hutchcroft, "The Politics of Economic Liberalization," Public Policy I/1: 121-133, at 132.

principles."[20] Membership in a political party or faction as a form of democratic practice, according to a survey, is not even common.[21] There is also the omnipresence of family-based political dynasties and the omnipotence of their narrow interests. These dynasties, according to Hodder, are "determined to keep the office within the family or, when circumstances require, to hand it temporarily to a close ally over whom they have a strong influence. They desire power, both for its own sake and because they fear that they and their family might suffer all kinds of retribution were their office to fall into the hands of their opponents."[22] In effect, the line that differentiates public office and private legacy is blurred and rendered meaningless.

However, this "anarchy of families,"[23] as McCoy rightly calls it, has long endured, thanks to the multitude of "professional vote-getters" or wards financed by political bosses through the spoils of office. Recruited from large families and clans known to deliver the votes, and possessing power and authority in villages, wards are the ones who "think up, implement and monitor the execution of campaign strategies, especially when it comes to generating and engaging in illegal activities" such as "tampering of election results, coercing opponents

[20]Ladylyn Lim-Mangada, "Grooming the Wards: Dynamics between a Political Party and Community Groups," in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Civil Society Making Civil Society, Volume 3,* ed. Miriam Coronel Ferrer (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 259-270, at 259.

[21]Karaos, "Perceptions and Practices of Democracy and Citizenship," 127. Of the total respondents only 48% said they were members of a political party, and "middle class individuals are twice more likely than those from the lower class to be engaged in partisan political activities."

[22]Hodder, "The Philippine Legislature and Social Relationships," 577 and 586-587; also see Belinda Aquino, "Filipino Elections and 'Illiberal' Democracy," *Public Policy* II/3: 1-26, at 16-19.

[23]For such an apt description see the comprehensive analysis of this long-standing political pattern in *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines,* ed. Alfred McCoy (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).

and their supporters, etc."[24] They also "run errands for the boss and eventually integrate into his family," even as they act as his "eyes and ears," ever ready to sacrifice their life and, at times, even their families. Wards are not only "responsible for the success of mediocre, incompetent and '*trapo*' (traditional politician) candidates," their power also explains the inability of a majority of Filipino voters to express their dissatisfaction of public officials and hold them accountable by voting them out of office.[25]

The sin of a structural usurpation of power

Integral to the pursuit of the common good is the continuing struggle for the control and exercise of power. It is "served to a greater or lesser degree by the continuing interplay of the selfish and altruistic interests of political actors as they seek state power and influence the content of public policy." The national common good triumphs over the selfish individual or group interests "to the extent that a particular nation is continually able to attain social, economic, political, and cultural development which enhances the quality of life of its citizens." [26]

The church recognizes that, given the inherent dynamism and diversity of human societies, it is impossible to set once and for all the most suitable manner of governance (cf. PT 67). In fact, it may vary "according to the character of a people and their historical development" (GS 74). There are, however, constants that are "in keeping with the innate demands of human nature" (PT 68), most crucial of which is what the church values as "the democratic system," for in it "each power (is) balanced by other powers and by other spheres of responsibility which keep it in proper bounds" (CA 44). Guided by a "charter of fundamental human rights", it upholds the supremacy of the rule of law and "guarantees to the governed the possibility

[24]Mangada, "Grooming the Wards," 261-262.

[25]Ibid., 259.

[26]Jose Abueva, "Tracking the Nation," *Public Policy* II/2: 83-104, 83-84.

of electing and holding accountable those who govern them and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate" (CA 46; also PT 52).

The moral scandal in Philippine polity is that where the separation of powers is supposed to set the pattern of relations between the government and the governed in mutual check and balance, each of the three instrumentalities of governance - the legislative, executive and judicial – has been, in varying degrees and for a long time, captured by a predatory oligarchy propping up a patrimonial state and family political dynasties perpetuating power through the ritual of elections. Filipino politics has yet to succeed in systematically curtailing "the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the state for individual interests or for ideological ends" (CA 46) so that the climate necessary for and conducive to the deliberation of the common good is ensured (cf. RN 26; PT 70).

What the church can do

The church cannot arrest the trajectory of political exclusion of the poor majority of the country if it continues to make elections the main axis of its public interventions. The alternative is to institutionalize an advocacy – from the level of the diocese down to the grassroots – for laws meant to institutionalize people-power. Worthy of the church's pastoral advocacy and vigilance are the Local Government Code of 1991 and the Party List Representation Law of 1995. In the former, "governance is in the hands of local government units who are required to institute systems of transparency and participation, so that the citizenry can effectively take part in governance and delivery of basic services." In the latter, the marginalized, or "those who are often left out of the direct discourse of national legislation," are guaranteed 20 percent of seats in Congress.[27]

[27] Agustin Martin Rodriguez, "The Limits of Legislating Democracy: A Sketch for a Study on the Possibility of Legislating Discourse," *Philippine Studies* 50 (2002): 93-112, at 94 and 103.

Integral to this advocacy is monitoring, inasmuch as in the transition of devolving power from the elite to the grassroots, resistance is a normal reflex. The Party-List Law, for instance, did not go as far as "to ensure that only groups genuinely representing the marginalized are accredited for participation in the party-list elections."[28] Even among sectors genuinely represented, a profile of their party-list representatives shows that only "a few, if any, are organic members of their sectors."[29] Vigilant monitoring is also a must because decentralization, or the transfer of authority from national to local governments, could be a double-edged sword. In the hands of corrupt and inefficient local officials, it will be ineffective. Where, for instance, the passage of local laws requires the participation of civil society organizations, "some local executives set up dummy non-governmental organizations so that the people who will fill the seats" of local consultative bodies are people of their own mind or kind.[30] Be that as it may, "in the hands of progressive local officials" decentralization creates "new avenues for political space and institutional reforms can be made."[31]

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[28]Ibid., 106. For details of the law, see Patricia Ann Paez, "State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making: Focus on the Legislative," in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making, Volume 2,* eds. Marlon Wui and Glenda Lopez (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 33-70, at 38-39.

[29]Rodriguez, "The Limits of Legislating Democracy," 110. For their struggles to represent the marginalized, see Jeremiah Opiniano, "Party List Groups: Struggling to represent the marginalized," *Intersect* 18/6: 20-24.

[30]Rodriguez, "The Limits of Legislating Democracy," 102.

[31]Tom Villarin, "Decentralizing Government," *Intersect* 18/3: 4-6, at 6. Another possibility, strongly opposed by the local political elite, is the Local Sectoral Representation System which reserves three seats of the local legislating bodies for representatives of marginalized sectors such as the workers, women and another sector to be determined by the local legislative itself. The representatives are "to be elected by the people" and "will have the rights and powers of the other local legislators." See Rodriguez, "The Limits of Legislating Democracy," 101.

By helping to institutionalize grassroots democracy, the church helps prepare the ground for the birth of genuine political parties of the poor or parties based on politics that genuinely represent their agenda. They can provide a countervailing force to the predatory and patrimonial features of an elite-controlled Filipino polity and serve as an alternative to personality-based or family political dynasties.

3. The challenge to nurture a democratic polity in and through its Base Ecclesial Communities

Hierarchized patterns of relations

Filipino society is still divided into "roles with high versus low status attached to them" and "those in roles of low status are expected to defer to the opinions of those above them."[32] "It is not customary for decisions to be deliberated upon in a collective manner where family members who are not directly involved in a problem also participate," says Karaos. "Discussions of public issues do take place at home but not very frequently" and whenever it occurs, the focus is on scams, crimes and other issues with sensational if not moralistic flavor rather than policy issues.[33] In most Filipino schools, whether private or public, the democratic ethos is, to a serious extent, also wanting.[34] No wonder a "favorite metaphor for the Philippine nation-state and its local units is the family."[35] All Filipinos are brothers and sisters, and the executive, from the national to the local level, is the father. Though Filipino culture has some democratic content, given the dominance

[32]Zialcita, "Bridges and Barriers to a Democratic Culture," 44; also see 59-61.

[33]Karaos, "Perceptions and Practices of Democracy and Citizenship," 123.

[34]For a discussion on the "mixed record" of the Philippine educational system as agent of political socialization, see David Wurfel, *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988), 44-46.

[35]Ibid., 46.

of the hierarchized mindset, such allusions to family and fraternity are not egalitarian at all. Instead they promote perpetual subservience to those vested with power and authority, it is often wielded as an effective excuse for stifling dissent, and it publicly stigmatizes questioning by a social inferior.

Preference for patron-client relations and the lure of populism

Equally a threat is the Filipino's general weakness toward structural changes that can empower the poor. A nationwide survey reveals Filipinos do not see welfare policies as obligations performed by the state, Abad explains, "but as a set of rights and duties expected between patron and client."[36] This is not to say that Filipinos cannot be strong advocates of welfare measures for in fact they are, except that, according to Abad, they "will stop short at giving overwhelming support for leveling schemes." For them the legitimacy of "a harmonious asymmetry of ranks" is preferable to "equality of positions," in which case welfare policies that enhance rather than sever the symbiotic union of patron and client are likely to gain stronger support.

An alarming reproduction of the poor people's preference for patronage is populism.[37] As a "mode of mobilization" and a "form

[36]See Ricardo Abad, "Attitudes towards Welfare and Inequality," *Philippine Studies* 45 (October-December 1997): 447-76, at 469-73. Abad's conclusions are based on data gathered from a 1992 nationwide survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) and were compared with selected countries that participated in the 1987 and 1992 international surveys on social inequality initiated by the International Survey Programme (ISSP), a consortium of twenty-five nations of which the Philippines is a member.

[37]This is exemplified by the People Power III of May 2001 which "saw the mobilization of urban poor by politicians opposed to the Arroyo regime and the incarceration of former president Estrada." See Aya Fabros (ed.), et al., *Social Movements in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2006), 31-35. Other examples may include Joseph Estrada's election to the presidency in 1998 and the campaign with which movie actor Fernando Poe, Jr. ran for the 2004 presidential elections. In contrast, People Power I (1986), which ousted

of political representation" by social movements, populist politics have mobilized poorer groups into enduring labor unions or political parties. But populism Filipino-style, according to Karaos, is "unguided by ideological commitments" or an "independently critical frame of analysis on which to anchor their actions." It cultivates the poor people's victimization, targets "political institutions and the political elite" as the enemy, and cultivates "the dependence of subaltern groups on politicians who represent the poor's only access to the political system." Without a durable bond with "institutionalized channels of access to representation in the power structures of society," the poor people's struggle to empower themselves stands in danger of being constantly subverted by the self-interest of patronage.

Extreme familism

Studies also show that "the problem of developing national unity is accounted for, in part, by the inability to transcend family and self-interest in favor of the local and national community."[38] Where state welfare institutions are largely ineffective and perceived to be unreliable, Filipinos "tend to rely more on extensive family networks than on public institutions for meeting their welfare needs." Filipinos would frame their relations with public civil servants as "extensions of their family with whom they have personal ties, rather than as public officials performing their official roles." This, according to Doronila, adds "to the instability and weakness of political institutions that are supposed to be governed by bureaucratic and universalistic norms," thus rendering them less necessary. Where there is the proclivity to exact "compliance and loyalty over and above the common welfare,"[39] a

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Marcos and installed Aquino, and People Power II (2001), which removed Estrada to be replaced by Arroyo, were mainly middle class-led movements for political reform.

[38]Doronila, "An Overview of Filipino Perspectives," 83.

[39]Karaos, "Perceptions and Practices of Democracy and Citizenship," 114.

"concern for the broader community's interests is notably weak," while the concepts such as "the nation" or "Filipino people" as owners of the *res publica* "are too abstract a concept for many."[40]

Culture of impunity

Last but not least, Filipinos in general seem to be willing to forget massive crimes against the nation. Unlike other countries that prosecuted the perpetrators of their authoritarian regimes, there was "little desire to punish the Marcos family," even as the family's accomplices and cronies have been elected into public office or able to get back to their business interests.[41] This was not, however, the first and will prove to be not the last such case. By a series of accommodations the newborn Republic of 1946 failed to prosecute most of those accused of collaboration with the Japanese occupying forces during the Second World War.[42] Propped up by the military to power in 1986, Aquino did not punish the military officers who staged a series of bloody coup d'etat during the democratic transition.[43] The culture of impunity continues in the current government's inability or,

[40]Zialcita, "Barriers and Bridges to a Democratic Culture," 47.

[41]John Carroll, "The Philippines: Forgiving or Forgetting?" *Public Policy* III/2: 83-92, at 90. Carroll mentions the countries of South Africa, Brazil, Guatemala, and Chile. For instance, two of Marcos's top henchmen, General Fidel Ramos became president of the Philippines, while Juan Ponce Enrile is until now a senator. See Ibid., 83-85, 87-88.

[42]Ibid., 85-87, 89 and John Carroll, "Entomb Them Alive," *Intersect* 18/6: 4-8, at 5-6 citing the study by Frank Golay, *Face of Empire: The United States-Philippines Relations, 1898-1946* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1997).

[43]See Mark Thomson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day, 1996), 168-170; and Aurora Javate de Dios, "Intervention and Militarism" in Aurora Javate de Dios (ed.), et al., *Dictatorship and Revolution: Roots of People's Power* (Manila: Conspectus, 1988), 269-324, esp. 289-314.

better yet, unwillingness to solve extrajudicial killings of, mostly, civil society leaders, human rights advocates, land reform advocates, and labor union leaders.[44]

The vices of an undemocratic culture

These are deeply rooted cultural traits that create not only dysfunctions in the bureaucracy but, more importantly, distortions in the trajectory of democratization of the Filipino polity. In a hierarchical socialization "the desire to assume a larger role in organizing the life of the political community (GS 73; also OA 24), as well as the habit of "contributing to the common good according to (one's) own abilities and the needs of others" (GS 30) are not at all nurtured. There is a lack of "a lively awareness of the value of the rights of all and each person" (SRS 33). Even where personal or group interests are brought "into harmony with the needs of the community," this is done not "in accord with the norms of justice and within the limits of their competence" (PT 53).

The proclivity for patron-client relations and the lure of populism devoid of a critical frame of analysis do not in truth appreciate and validate "the growing awareness of the solidarity of the poor among themselves, their efforts to support one another" and the public manifestations of "their own needs and rights in the face of the inefficiency or corruption of public authorities" (SRS 39). They are rather part of the continuum of elite machination of "continued exploitation, and actual contempt" as well as of the absence of "deeper feeling of respect and service to others" and the refusal "to renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others" (OA 23).

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[44]See Jay Carizo, "Human Rights, Human Wrongs and the Fallacies of the Palace" in http://ipd.org.ph/main/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=95&pop=1&page... (accessed on July 14, 2008). The report was done by Philip Alston who is the UN's Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. The Philippine government's Commission on Human Rights placed the number at 403 from 2001 to 31 May 2007 while the human rights alliance reported 863 deaths.

The hegemony of family in Filipino culture has contributed to the "growing inability to situate particular interest within the framework of a coherent vision of the common good" (CA 47). This is not to say that the Filipinos are self-centered, it's rather that the moral universe of their loyalty does not readily expand to the national community and their sense of solidarity is difficult to apply to fellow citizens when mediated by policies, structures and institutions. Finally, the culture of impunity is a collective refusal to bring "social reality into line with the objective requirements of justice" (cf. PT 154-155) The historical legacy passed on is that, between traitors and patriots, perpetrators and victims, there is no difference, or that it is not worth the effort to sort them out. The inability or unwillingness of Philippine society to call powerful and prominent people to account for their wrongdoings shows the weakness of the 'common conscience' or that "common set of values that give unity and coherence"[45] to a community or nation. This failure has led many to "reduce a community's values to a matter of personal preference" or mere "recommendations."

What the church can do

No wonder the Philippine church, according to a judicious study, "has had only limited success as an agent of social change."[46] The reason may not be the lack of institutional resources or moral ascendancy, for the church has both in abundance. What could, perhaps account for it is the Church's inability or, better yet, unwillingness to witness, in its own institutional life and organizational structures, to the moral values, ethical standards and democratic virtues it demands from political life, processes and agents. A church that nurtures and practices a democratic polity holds tremendous potential for its own

[45]Carroll, "The Philippines: Forgiving or Forgetting?" 90, appropriating the theory of Emile Durkheim.

[46]Patricia Licuanan, "Basic Christian Communities as a Force for Social Change," in Gabino Mendoza (ed.), et al., *Church of the People: The Basic Christian Community Experience in the Philippines* (Manila: Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development, 1988), 28-34, at 28.

ecclesial life and the renewal of society. Because "polity affects not only how churches govern their own affairs and how they relate to each other as ecclesial institutions, but the stances they take in relationship to the world and its institutions."[47]

In this vein there is a general need to evaluate whether or not the Philippine church still cultivates the democratic culture of "communion, participation, and mission" (PCP II 137-140) and, in particular, to examine to what extent its base ecclesial communities (BEC) are still holistic and prophetic.[48] BECs hold a tremendous potential for the integration of Christian faith and daily life, prayerful discernment and incisive analysis, prudent decision and innovative action for the common good. The BEC ethos of participation can tilt the balance of ecclesial power toward the laity, even as it can mitigate, if not neutralize, the too hierarchized patterns of relations. Sharing of power with the poor in society in ecclesial processes could alter the penchant to depend on patrons. Reliance on communal resource and the BEC's social orientation could expand the narrow confines of extreme familism and kinship. Where members possess greater self-confidence and sense of efficacy, they become more responsible to hold accountable the integrity and competence of church and state leaders alike. The BEC's bias for democratic processes could be an antidote to the Filipino society's deeply rooted undemocratic features.

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[47]Edward LeRoy Long, Jr., *Patterns of Polity: Varieties of Church Governance* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 156.

[48]For the history of the BEC as vision and structure of the Philippine church, see John Carroll and Francisco Claver, "The Pastoral Priorities of the Philippine Bishops: A Report on a Survey," *Philippine Studies* 34 (1986): 21-40; Mendoza (ed.), et al., *Church of the People*; *Building Basic Ecclesial Communities: Case Studies from the Philippine Experience,* eds. Antonio Ledesma and Amado Picardal (Manila: NASSA-Caritas Philippines, 2000); and Karl Gaspar, *To be Poor and Obscure: The Spiritual Sojourn of a Mindanawon* (Quezon City: Center for Spirituality, 2004), 152-163.

4. The challenge to embed in civil society and collaborate with new partners

The last set of culturally embedded barriers to the growth and maturation of a democratic polity refers to citizenship. Filipinos in general have yet to overcome certain habits so that the "processes by which (they) negotiate the nature and extent of their rights as individuals and their obligations to the community"[49] will be fruitful for all.

The uncivil habits of reluctant citizens

Filipinos in general conceive of citizenship almost solely in terms of electoral exercise. Even the church and the powerful business community consider elections as the most decisive instance of belonging to a political community.[50] But "a political system should be judged not by its ability to hold elections but to serve democratic ends," says Aquino, and elections are not a sure test of democratic values.[51] "It is possible…to have free and democratic elections but the governments produced by such elections may be corrupt, inefficient, incompetent, or incapable of functioning for the public good."[52] If the good citizen is nothing more than one who exercises the right to vote and helps ensure clean and honest elections, the formal and official mechanisms of legislation and policy-making as well as the enforcement

[49]Maria Serena Diokno, "Becoming a Filipino Citizen: Perspectives on Democracy and Citizenship," in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Vol.* 1, 17-38, at 19-20.

[50]Eva-Lotta Hedman, "Whose Business Is It Anyway? Free and Fair Elections in the Philippines," *Public Policy* II/3: 145-170, at 145.

[51]Aquino, "Filipino Elections and 'Illiberal' Democracy," 5.

[52]Ibid., 4. For an account of business interests in recent Philippine politics, see Hodder, "The Philippine Legislature and Social Relationships," 578-579.

and implementation thereof will remain the most under-utilized areas of civil society intervention[53]

Filipinos have the proclivity to influence policy and legislation through the "parliament of the streets". Banking on a "resistance paradigm," public protest action and rhetoric dramatize the agenda, but achieve little in terms of enlightened shaping of public opinion in an atmosphere of participative, truthful and free deliberation as the issue becomes an easy prey to sensationalism and oversimplification. As long as civil society "depend[s] mainly on indirect channels of information and indirect methods of intervention," Paez contends, "they will continue to play a relatively weak role in shaping the legislative agenda."[54]

Most Filipinos have a basic lack of understanding of legislative processes and dynamics. They are less concerned as to how a bill becomes a law, who are the players involved, when the right timing is, which views need to be adjudicated and for what reasons, and, above all, in what way they can optimize the official avenues available for effective intervention. There is also "the unwillingness of some civil society actors to accept that legislation (and policy-making) is the politics of consensus."[55] Consensus and compromise are worked out very rarely on the basis of the readiness to give up if not refine one's position in view of better arguments or more reliable evidence.

There are those who no longer vote, protest or advocate a legislative agenda because they have lost confidence in political institutions to be made responsive to govern for the collective good. With a long

[53]See Alex Brillantes, "State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making: Focus on the Executive," and Paez, "State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making: Focus on the Legislative," in Marlon Wui and Glenda Lopez (eds.), *Philippine Democracy Agenda: State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making, Vol. 2,* 21-32 and 33-70, respectively.

[54]Paez, "State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making," 55.

[55]Ibid., 56.

history of political betrayal, many Filipinos "have a defeatist attitude that nothing worthwhile will ever come out of being involved in legislative advocacy,"[56] given the fact that the legislative and executive institutions are run mostly by elites with vested interests to protect and promote.

A narrow sense of moral obligation to the polity

What we have is a narrow sense of obligation to the polity and too limited understanding of the necessary civil habits and virtues. Citizenship is the political expression of the fact that "the social nature of the human person is not completely fulfilled by the state" (CA 13). For this reason, every member of the political community has to navigate within the "the web of autonomous associations independent of the state, bringing citizens together in pursuit of their common interests."[57] It is therefore very crucial that the diversity of interests among social groups, which are more often than not conflicting, is adjudicated "in the spirit of sincere concord" (MM 65) necessitating the positive and constructive role certain political habits (cf. GS 43).

Going to the polls to vote or to the streets to protest are certainly not enough, unless each one has the habit to pursue "honest discussion of differences founded on a desire for justice" or, if opportune and necessary, the openness for "reasonable compromise" (CA 14; cf. LC 77). The Filipino's general lack of capacity for respectful dialogue as means to adjudicate legitimate plurality cannot lead to forms of collaboration which may be possible "for the attainment of economic, social, cultural and political ends which are honorable and useful" (PT 160). All this speak of a narrow sense of moral obligation to the polity.

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[56]Ibid., 57.

[57]Miriam Coronel Ferrer, "Civil Society: An Operational Definition," in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Vol. 1,* 5-15, at 9.

What the church can do

In this light, the Philippine church needs a new socio-pastoral location from where it can learn how to overcome these shortcomings. Besides the moral content of its interventions in the public sphere, a church's social location is also crucial in the effectiveness of its pastoral mission. The Philippine church has to overcome its fixation on being the secular state's equivalent in the sacred realm. Church leaders have to stop passing themselves off as administrators of spiritual goods, being the religious counterparts of elected public officials in charge of public material services. By locating itself as the counterpart of the state, the church can easily function as a power-broker or a patron – an institution that can depose or install even the highest office of the land or influence in the appointment or removal of public officials. The evidence we presented implies that as long as the church allows itself to be trapped in this socio-pastoral location, it will only enlarge the heritage of uncivil habits and apolitical virtues instead of fill the gaps created by the deficits of the structures, institutions, and culture of the Filipino polity.

The as yet unexplored and promising alternative for the Philippine church is to shift its socio-pastoral location and collaborate with new partners. It is our contention that if the church embeds itself in civil society[58] its prospects as a credible and effective social force for the common good will gain new life. For, according to studies, where a local church (e.g. arch/diocese) collaborates with people's organizations (POs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and/or social movements (SMs) "the avenue of participation" widens and "a climate

[58]The term is contested and its scope is varied. By "people's organizations" we mean the formation of sectoral groups that refer either to class (e.g., labor, peasants), non-class (e.g., women, indigenous peoples, youth), or issues (e.g., human rights, environment). "Social movements" may mean organized political action or social mobilization of poorer or disenfranchised sectors of society, while "non-governmental organizations" refer to organized non-state groups that provide support to the previous entities. For these distinctions, see Fabros, (ed.), et al., *Social Movements in the Philippines*, 15.

favorable to the democratization of state and society" is created.[59] The interaction may also offer the church, like every human institution and social organization, a historic opportunity to be enriched by these groups in the exercise of its pastoral mission in the Filipino polity.

Conclusion

Going back to the terms of the question, the challenges we have sketched would all point to the answer hinted at by the Philippine bishops not too long ago when they envisioned a "society-leavening church."[60] The vision seems to hold the key, that is, if we are correct in arguing that the collective deliberation and envisioning of the common good does not merely require an electoral exercise nor a democratically elected government, but rather "a complex and multi-linear political, social, and cultural transformative process," which involves the synergy and "the active participation of citizens in decision-making in all aspects of life, and in actualizing these decisions as well."[61] Only such an ecclesiological vision can offer prospects to the Filipino *ecclesia* to be able to exercise its *diakonia* to the *res publica* with new vigor, new methods, and new collaborators. There is no better time for the Philippine church to be true to one's own vision than now.

[59]See, for instance, Antonio Moreno, *Church, State, and Civil Society in Postauthoritarian Philippines: Narratives of Engaged Citizenship* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006). Also see John Carroll, "Society: Civil and Uncivil," *Intersect* 17/8: 4-6 and "Democracy from Below," *Intersect* 19/3: 12-18.

[60]CBCP, *Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics* (Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines), 28.

[61]Ferrer, "Civil Society: An Operational Definition," 5-6.

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A DIFFERENT PARADIGM:
Amending the Reproductive Health Bill

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The polarization of Philippine society over House Bill 5043 on "Reproductive Health and Population Development," has been a source of discouragement and discontent among Filipinos. It is unfortunate that the debate has focused only on whether the Bill should be passed or rejected in its present form. Either option would not be good for Filipinos. The proposed Bill has serious flaws that lead to violations of human rights and freedom of conscience. It would not be acceptable to pass it in its present form. Total rejection of the Bill, however, will not change the status quo of high rates of infant mortality, maternal deaths, and abortions. It is a moral imperative that such dehumanizing conditions should not be allowed to continue. What is needed is a third option: **critical and constructive engagement**. By working together to amend the objectionable provisions of the Bill and retain the provisions that actually improve the lives of Filipinos, both the proponents and opponents of the current Bill can make a contribution to protection of the dignity of Filipinos and an improvement of their quality of life.

The CBCP has shown signs of openness toward critical and constructive engagement regarding the Bill. The bishops' statement on the Bill, "Stand up for the Gospel of Life," reveals a shift in the local church's approach. Previous to the statement, the bishops' initial

reaction was outright rejection of the whole Bill and a condemnatory stance toward its proponents. With the statement, however, the bishops acknowledged that the Bill had positive aspects which "no humane institution would have any reason to oppose—maternal, infant and child health and nutrition, promotion of breastfeeding, adolescent and youth health, elimination of violence against women, etc." They urged the proponents of the Bill to reconsider certain provisions that would be harmful to the common good and they called for wider dialogue. This shift in the bishops' stance is consistent with Catholic social teaching which urges a more positive and charitable engagement with those who think differently from the Church. This is spelled out clearly in *Gaudium et Spes* (#28): "Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them."

As a starting point for dialogue and negotiation on certain provision of the Bill, the following proposals from a Catholic moral perspective are offered. These proposals are not meant to be exhaustive nor perfect; they are open to additions, revisions, and improvement.

The Protection of Human Life and the Constitution

The Bill needs to be aligned with the Philippine Constitution regarding the starting point of the protection of human life. There must be a statement in the Bill that states in clear terms that it affirms the constitutional protection of human life from conception. Such a statement will address the criticism that the Bill is too vague on its objection to abortion and that it might provide a loophole for certain contraceptives which prevent the implantation of fertilized embryos, which the Church considers as a form of abortion. Having such a statement in the Bill will protect it from constitutional challenges.

To align with the Constitution, the Bill must explicitly state that it rejects the promotion, sale, or provision of any medicine, devices, or procedures that lead to direct abortions which include the causing of non-implantation of embryos as well as the direct killing/removal of implanted embryos or fetuses. Such a statement will ensure that abortifacient devices, medicines, and procedures will not be part of the Bill's reproductive health program. This will address the objection made against the current Bill that it provides access to medicines and devices that have abortifacient effects.

A panel of objective medical experts can evaluate currently available contraceptive medicines and devices for any abortifacient effects.

Age Appropriate, Value-Based, Integral Human Sexuality Education

For the purpose of protecting academic freedom and respecting religious traditions, religious schools should be allowed to write and implement their own human sexuality education curriculum according their religious traditions. For Catholic schools, the CEAP can spearhead the writing of the curriculum using the best practices found in its best schools.

For public schools and non-religious private schools, an appointed panel of parent representatives, DEPED educators, experts in child development and psychology, medical experts, and representatives of religious traditions can write the human sexuality education curriculum and the DEPED can monitor the implementation.

Parental involvement in the writing of the curriculum for public schools is supported by Article XV, Section 3 of the Constitution: (4) The State shall defend "the right of families or family associations to participate in the planning and implementation of policies and programs that affect them."

It would be better for the POPCOM not to be directly involved in the writing of the public school curriculum to avoid the accusation that the curriculum would focus mainly on contraceptive methods.

The question of whether information on contraception would be part of the public school curriculum should be addressed by an examination of real empirical evidence and not by mere speculation and emotional rhetoric. Does the provision of information about contraceptives to teenagers reduce or increase incidences of teenage premarital sex, teenage pregnancies, abortions, or STDs? These are serious public heath questions that need to be answered truthfully through a consideration of concrete, verifiable, and reliable empirical evidence and not speculations based on anecdotal evidence, personal opinions, or propaganda from lobby groups.

Parents with children in public and private schools should have the right to have their children exempted from the sexuality education class if the curriculum is not acceptable to them.

The Bill must respect the conscientious objection of individual educators who refuse to teach a human sexuality curriculum that violates their religious beliefs.

Providing Reproductive Health Information and Services for a Multi-Religious Society

Even if the majority of the population of the country are Catholics, our democratic system should ensure that public polices are not determined solely by majority vote but also by a careful consideration of the common good of all, including non-Catholics. There are other religious groups in the country that allow the use of contraceptives for their married members. Our laws should not discriminate against them.

The Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church rejects any imposition of norms by a majority that is discriminatory of the rights of a minority: (#422) "*Because of its historical and cultural ties to a nation, a religious community might be given special recognition on the part of the State. Such recognition must in no way create discrimination within the civil or*

social order for other religious groups;" (#169): "*Those responsible for government are required to interpret the common good of their country not only according to the guidelines of the majority but also according to the effective good of all the members of the community, including the minority.*"

It is the duty of various religions to teach their faithful and form their consciences about what their religious tradition allows and prohibits with regard to family planning. It is the duty of the government to provide correct and comprehensive information on all non-abortifacient family planning methods that are available. Informed and formed consciences will thus be better equipped to make correct choices according to their religious traditions.

Information on effectivity/failure rates and side effects of all family planning methods should be taken from reliable evidence-based sources, not from special interest groups such as drug companies and ideological organizations. The Philippine Medical Association can verify the accuracy of the information provided by the government on NFP methods, contraceptives, and sterilizations. Prominent warning labels about side effects should accompany contraceptive medicines and devices.

The conscience of health workers and trainers should be respected. If a Catholic health worker or trainer conscientiously objects to teaching contraception methods, he or she should be allowed to teach only NFP methods.

The conscientious objection of health care professionals should also be respected (as provided by the present Bill). They should be exempted from providing contraceptive/sterilizing services if this goes against their religious beliefs.

Limits to the Anti-Discrimination Provision

The current Bill prohibits the refusal of quality health care services and information based on a patient's marital status, gender or sexual

orientation, age, religion, personal circumstances, and nature of work. (Sec. 21, a, 5).

This anti-discrimination provision must have parameters. For example, if a doctor refuses to administer an IUD to a minor who requests for it, would that be considered age discrimination? Should the provision apply equally to health care providers both in the public and private healthcare system or shouldn't private practitioners have more leeway in practicing their medicine as they see fit?

Proper Promotion of Natural Family Planning

The Bill should not use the term "modern" to describe artificial contraception because it implies that natural family planning methods are not modern or are unscientific. A more technically accurate distinction can be made by using the term "fertility awareness methods" for NFP in contrast to "contraceptive methods or devices."

The NFP advocates can be involved in monitoring the manner that NFP methods are taught in health centers.

Sterilization in Public Hospitals

Sterilization services in government hospitals and clinics should not be provided free of charge (i.e., supported by taxpayers funds). If these services are offered, they should be paid for by those who requests for them.

No monetary enticements should be offered to encourage persons to have sterilizations.

Employers' Responsibility

Employers should not be required to provide in their CBAs reproductive

health services of their employees. To enforce this requirement would be a violation of the conscience of Catholic employers.

Such a provision is also unnecessary because the general Philhealth medical coverage, which is mandatory for all employees, can provide for such reproductive health services. This allows employees with religious objections to contraceptives or sterilizations to avoid formal cooperation in the provision of such family planning methods to their employees.

Contraception as Essential Medicines in Government Health Centers and Hospitals

The question of whether contraceptives are essential medicines should be resolved by a panel of objective medical experts. What contraceptives actually prevent diseases? What contraceptives actually improve the general health of the population? What are the side effects of these contraceptives which can adversely affect the health of the user? Should some contraceptives be considered as emergency medicines for extraordinary cases where the life, health, or general well-being of a person is seriously threatened?

If some contraceptives are ultimately decided as essential or emergency medicines that should be stocked in government health centers and hospitals, no contraceptives with abortifacient effects are to be allowed.

Freedom of Speech

The Bill's provision that penalizes malicious disinformation against the intention and provisions of the Bill should be refined by a clear description of what constitutes "malicious disinformation," or failing that, the provision should be scrapped.

Implementing Norms

The committee to be in-charge of the Bill's implementing norms should have representatives from major religious traditions to ensure that the rights of people of various faiths would be protected.

The above proposals are intended to generate constructive and respectful dialogue leading to concrete actions that would correct the RH Bill. It is hoped that the parties involved in the RH debate would move away from hard-line positions and consider negotiations as a more positive step towards working for the good of all Filipinos, with special consideration for the unborn, the youth, women and families in difficult circumstances.

Finally, we can turn to the following Christian maxim as our guide in our search for answers and solutions regarding the RH Bill: **"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity."** For things pertaining to protecting human life and dignity, we need to come to a consensus for the common good; for things that can be left to individual decisions without violating human life and dignity, we need to respect freedom of conscience; in all our discussions, we need to speak and act with charity and understanding as members of the same human family.

(The final draft of this paper was written on 6 February 2009. Persons consulted by the author for various parts of this paper include Frs. John C. Carroll, SJ, Romeo J. Intengan, SJ, and Joaquin G. Bernas, SJ.)

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ON THE REFORMED MASS OF VATICAN II AND BENEDICT XVI'S LETTER *MOTU PROPRIO* SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM

Timoteo J.M. Ofrasio, S.J., S.L.D.

Introduction: Before the Council

Catholics who had the good fortune to be born in the 40s and 50s, perhaps even earlier, will no doubt have had experience of Holy Mass before the liturgical reform of Vatican II – the Mass was then celebrated in Latin. It began with the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar. The celebrant faced the same direction as the congregation,[1] with the Eucharistic Prayer or Canon recited in a low voice (the silent Canon), and with only the Mass server responding to the priest. The readings were also in Latin, as well as the sung parts of the Mass, which only the choir at the choir loft sang. Holy Communion was placed on the tongue of the communicants kneeling at the Communion rail. The Last Gospel (the Prologue of Saint John) was recited at the Gospel side of the altar after the dismissal, as well as the Leonine Prayers at the foot of the altar, before the celebrant and server exited back to the sacristy. Our present Liturgy of the Word used to be called Mass

[1]This position of the celebrant at Mass derived from the ancient practice of facing east, where the sun rose, an ancient symbol of Jesus Christ as the "Sun of Justice."

of the Catechumens, and our Liturgy of the Eucharist was then called Mass of the Faithful.

Holy Mass was then celebrated in basically two forms: Low Mass and High Mass. The basic difference between the two was that Low Mass or *Missa Recitata* was recited and was the ordinary form of celebration, and which might or might not be accompanied by some singing, while High Mass[2] was the more solemn form, with more elaborate movements of celebrant and altar servers, with Gregorian chant and responses in Latin, and the use of incense. Also, the celebrant at High Mass was normally assisted by a deacon and a subdeacon, or by ordained priests taking the role of deacon or subdeacon. This more solemn form was normally celebrated during high feast days.

Vatican II: *Aggiornamento*

In 1962, Blessed Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council or Vatican II, in order to, in the blessed pope's own words, "open the windows of the Church" to let in the fresh wind of renewal and change, and ostensibly to pave the way for Church unity.[3] The keyword then was *aggiornamento*, or updating, to let the Church "keep up with the times." It is no coincidence that that era was also the time when changes began to be felt in the secular world: social ferment and student activism were on the rise, reactions against current moral standards, exemplified by the "flower power" and hippie generation were beginning to surface, and social mores were changing. The very

[2]High Mass either took the form of *Missa Cantata* (Sung Mass with only one celebrant), *Missa Solemnis* (Sung Mass with subdeacon, deacon and celebrant), or *Missa Pontificalis* (Sung Mass of the bishop, either at the throne or at the faldstool).

[3]One of the documents to come out of the Council was the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio,* published on November 21, 1964. It was followed by subsequent documents from the Holy See on the same topic from 1965 to 1973.

first document to come out of that council that lasted until 1965 was *Sacrosanctum concilium* (Constitution on Sacred Liturgy), published on December 4, 1963.

A pontifical commission, the *Consilium,*[4] under the leadership of Father (later Archbishop) Annibale Bugnini, was created to plan, oversee and implement the directives for reform contained in the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy. The changes envisioned by the *Consilium* sought to strip the Mass of its medieval accretions, with a view to restoring it to its original "noble simplicity" which is a characteristic of the Roman rite (cf. *SC* 50). In its work of restoration, the *Consilium* sought the help of experts, including Protestant consultants.[5] According to the *Consilium,* the presence of the Protestant observers at the Council was to know their reactions to the decrees and deliberations,[6] and the consultants invited to sit in the commission were supposed to

[4]The Latin word *consilium* means "advice," "counsel," or "a group of advisers." Archbishop A. Bugnini, who was secretary of the *Consilium* since its foundation and later became secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, says that the *Consilium* was set up on December 3, 1974 (*Notitiae,* 1973, p. 395). However, presumably in the absence of any other documentation on its inception, Pope Paul VI's *motu proprio, Sacram Liturgiam,* and the date of its publication (January 25, 1964) have usually been associated subsequently with the inauguration of the *Consilium.* The *Consilium* ceased to have an independent existence on May 8, 1969, when Pope Paul VI, by his Apostolic Constitution, *Sacra Rituum,* made it part of the new Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, which he set up by the same Apostolic Constitution. The Pope directed that the *Consilium* would persist as a special commission of the Congregation until the reform of the liturgy should be completed, retaining its members and consultors (see *AAS* 61 [1969], 299 and 301).

[5]There were six official Protestant consultants: Dr. George, Canon Jasper, Dr. Shepherd, Dr. Kunneth, Dr. Smith and Bro. Max Thurian, representing respectively the World Council of Churches, the Anglican and Lutheran Communions, and the Taizé Community. Bro. Thurian of Taizé later converted to Roman Catholicism and eventually became a Roman Catholic priest.

[6]They did not take part in the deliberations on the floor, and did not vote.

ensure that the new rites and prayers of the reformed liturgy would be acceptable to Protestants in order to facilitate ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Protestants.[7]

Notwithstanding the General Instruction which accompanied the new Roman Missal of 1970, the first steps in the celebration of the reformed rite were understandably tentative; it was obvious that everybody, beginning with the bishops, was not quite sure of what steps to take. Stories abound concerning the fumbling steps of so many of the clergy who were unfamiliar with this new terrain of liturgical renewal. In fairness, the Holy See did not introduce changes at one fell swoop. Rather, change was gradual. The first to undergo change was the language of the Mass: from entirely Latin to some parts in the vernacular; second, the position of the celebrant with regard to the altar: from facing the same direction as the congregation, to facing the people. The resulting external form of the Mass was clearly transitional in character, with older elements retained from the Mass before the reform, like the *Prayers at the Foot of the Altar* and the *double or triple Collects*, and some new elements introduced from Vatican II, like *the Prayers of the Faithful, Offertory Procession,* and *the Kiss of Peace.* If my memory serves me right, this took place sometime in 1965.[8] The Ordinary of the Mass of 1965 was still essentially the Tridentine Mass, but celebrated completely in the vernacular. Before Vatican II, it was inconceivable to celebrate the Mass in any other language except Latin.

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[7]And probably with a view to attracting them to the Catholic Church as well.

[8]The Instruction *Inter Oecumenici,* issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on September 26, 1964, gave instructions on the proper implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and Pope Paul VI's Motu Proprio *Sacram Liturgiam* (January 25, 1964). This was followed by *Tres abhinc annos,* the second instruction on the proper implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on May 4, 1967*,* and the Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* of Pope Paul VI promulgating the new Roman Missal and the reformed Rite of the Mass, thus effectively ending the manner of celebrating Holy Mass as known in the Latin Roman Rite up until then.

The celebrant always faced the same direction as the people. Prior to 1963, of course, changes already began to be introduced in the Mass. Pope Pius XII, for example, allowed the celebration of the dialogue Mass in the 1950s with readings in the vernacular, and some hymns, also in the vernacular, which the congregation could join in. The Mass remained, however, basically the same, still celebrated in Latin, with priest and people facing the same direction.

The Mass of Paul VI

In 1969, Pope Paul VI authorized the publication of the first official edition (*editio typica*) of the Roman Missal in Latin, which came out in 1970. Its translation in the various vernaculars came out soon after. That first official edition of the Roman Missal, by which the reformed Mass, then called *Missa Typica* or *Missa Normativa,* was celebrated, radically altered the face of the Mass as celebrated for over 1,500 years, codified and given its definitive form by the Council of Trent, authorized by Pope Pius V, in the 16th century, now referred to as the "Tridentine Latin Mass." The Roman Missal of 1970 was accompanied by a General Instruction that described how each part of the Mass was to be carried out by the celebrant and other ministers.

Notwithstanding the General Instruction, many, if not most, of the clergy who were formed in the former (Tridentine) way, felt lost. Some of the older priests refused to celebrate the Mass as reformed by Vatican II and sought permission to continue celebrating Mass in the Tridentine rite. Others, perhaps the majority of the clergy, reveled in the new-found freedom of celebrating Mass without the rigidity of detailed rubrics of the older form of celebration, which they might have felt was constricting. Even the vestments of the priest were altered. In tropical countries like the Philippines, only the cassock or the alb was used under the chasuble, and the stole which used to be worn under the chasuble began to be worn as an overlay stole over the chasuble. The chasuble itself, which up until then was in the shape of a violin and usually with brocade embroidery, became a flowing robe, poncho-like, and could remain white with only the stole in the liturgical color of the

day. Concelebration was allowed,[9] and the sanctuary, which used to be the exclusive domain of the clergy, became no longer so – anyone could set foot in it. In time the Communion rail was removed; Holy Communion was given with the communicant standing up instead of kneeling. The tabernacle, which used to be located at the center of the apse above the altar, was relocated to the right side.[10]

At about this same time too, the veil of women worshippers began to gradually disappear. Before this time, women used to worship with their heads covered with *mantillas*, either rectangular or triangular. By the mid-70s the *mantillas* had morphed into small round doilies perched atop their heads. By the end of that decade the veil had disappeared completely. The most visible change took place at the altar table itself which was pushed forward to the edge of the sanctuary closer to the nave and the people, and had the appearance of a meal table, and the chair for the celebrant began to make its appearance at the place vacated by the tabernacle. The priest who celebrated Mass was no longer called celebrant but "presider" or "president." One of the significant changes also took place in the name for the Mass. While before it used to be referred to as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, it now began to be called the Eucharistic celebration or, in some places, also the "Supper of the Lord."[11]

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[9]Decree *Ecclesia Semper,* issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on March 7, 1965, on Concelebration and Communion under Both Species.

[10]The reason given for the tabernacle's relocation was that at the Mass, the center of the celebration is the altar table where the Sacrament was confected and not the tabernacle in which the Sacrament was reserved.

[11]It is interesting to note that the Protestant reformers of the 16th century used this term instead of what they called the "Popish Mass" and replaced altars against the wall with wooden tables in their churches "for the use of an altar is to make sacrifice upon it; the use of a table is to serve men to eat upon." (cf. Michael Davies, *Cranmer's Godly Order: The Destruction of Catholicism through Liturgical Change* [1984], 97). The change signified their rejection of sacrifice, which is explicitly expressed in the Roman Catholic Mass.

"Creativity" and Improvisation

Having been relieved of the strict and rigid rubricism of the Tridentine Latin Mass, many priests, in their new-found posture of facing the people, also began to *ad lib* in the celebration in the name of "creativity."[12] The early 70s were heady days of experimentation. Improvisations became the order of the day, depending on the "creativity" of the priest. Some priests even went to the extent of celebrating Mass using *pan de sal* and *lambanog* in place of bread and wine, and using other readings from non-Christian sources in place of the Scriptures. This situation gave rise to the phenomenon of varying "styles" of celebration, depending on who the celebrant was. Owing perhaps to the fact that there was really no concerted effort to reorient the priests in the reformed rite of the Mass—recall that we did not have any clear direction on how the reform was to be carried out[13]—priests as celebrants had to make do with what they thought should and could be done. The result was that the priest did pretty much "his own thing" and the more "creative" he was, the better. The only thing clear then was that this was part of *aggiornamento* or updating. As an aside, I have observed that some of the strongest reactions to corrections on the manner of celebrating the reformed Mass of Vatican II come from older priests who were trained in the

[12]The Instruction *Tres abhinc annos* seems to allude to and warn against improvisations in the liturgy of the Mass: "It seems necessary to take this opportunity of recalling to mind the capital principle of ecclesiastical discipline which was solemnly reiterated by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: 'the regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church… Therefore no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority' (*SC* 22: 1, 3)."

[13]The Instruction *Inter Oecumenici,* referring to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, art. 15, 16, 17 & 18, gave instructions on the liturgical formation of the clergy, but these were in broad terms. Much of the instructions on the celebration of Mass according to the reformed rites of Vatican II were contained in the General Instruction on the Roman Missal of 1970.

Tridentine tradition. This is perhaps a reaction, albeit unconscious, to the time when they felt oppressed by the rigid rubrics of bygone days. There were certainly dissenting voices worldwide to the reforms initiated by Vatican II; they refer to it as more of a liturgical *revolution* rather than a *reform*, much akin to the Protestant revolution of the 16th century. Traditional Catholics regret the changes—some merely dragging their heels, others with bitter resistance. Many had mixed responses: confusion, relief at the easier discipline, shock at the easier discipline, apathy, and a readiness to give up going to church. But the dissenters are sadly in the minority. The majority of Catholics, including Filipino Catholics, were docile to the changes. Their only source of information was the press which was united in extolling the merits of the innovations, which were endorsed by the bishops and which came with the authority of the Pope.

Today, much of the experimentation has, by and large, ceased, although there are still pockets here and there of enterprising celebrants who resort to improvisation and *adlib*bing. As far as I know, this is not something that we priests are conscious of, but it seems to me that the underlying mentality in the reformed Mass of Vatican II is that the priest, because he faces the congregation, is the center, and animator, of the celebration and the people are his audience. The "spotlight" is on him, as it were. While there is no official document from the Holy See telling priests to improvise, the rubrics themselves of the reformed Mass give ample go signal for improvisation in its directives which have been liberally interpreted by liturgists. A case in point is the article, "Style and Presence in Celebration"[14] written in 1967 by Father Robert Hovda, and the book on liturgical presidency, *Strong, Loving and Wise,* also by the same author, which became *de rigueur* reading matter for candidates for Ordination in the late 1970s.[15] Unwittingly, because of the encouragement to improvise in order to avoid looking

[14]*Worship* 41/9: 514-22.

[15]Robert Hovda, *Strong, Loving and Wise: Preaching in Liturgy* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1976).

stiff and monotonous, there is pressure on the priest to "perform," and the congregation, because of the blessing of modern media, especially television, also unconsciously expects entertainment similar to what can be seen on television shows. Admittedly there are priests who can measure up to the challenge of presiding in an impressive and deeply stimulating celebration or who can make a celebration of the reformed Mass an inspiring and devotional celebration simply by the force of their personality, but they are the exception. The majority of priests are incapable of such *tour de force* performances. Through no fault of their own, they cannot make the celebration of Mass living and relevant. They do the best they can with the God-given talents they have, and they cannot be expected to do more. Otherwise, they would look silly and ridiculous in the sanctuary. Here, the question is: to whom is Holy Mass addressed? To God or to the people? Putting it more bluntly, is Holy Mass still considered the unbloody sacrifice of Calvary, a communal worship rendered to God by His people, the body of Christ, under the headship of Jesus Christ to Whom the priest is configured,[16] or an entertainment with audience participation? The plea of some devout Catholics for a restoration of the sense of the sacred, of mystery and awe in the celebration of Mass is not without merit.

Summorum Pontificum

It is in the light of the foregoing that the most recent document from the Holy See, written as a letter on his own initiative by Pope Benedict XVI, *Summorum Pontificum*, is to be considered. The

[16]The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharist is "the very sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus which He instituted to perpetuate the Sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until His return in glory. Thus He entrusted to His Church this memorial of His death and Resurrection. It is a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet, in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us" (CCC 1322-1323; 1409).

document was published on July 07, 2007 together with a covering letter addressed to bishops detailing the reasons for the document, which would take effect on September 14, 2007, Feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross.

In brief, the *motu proprio* regularizes the celebration of the Tridentine Latin Mass. It affirms that the celebration of Mass in the Roman Rite has two forms: the reformed Mass of Vatican II as the ordinary form, and the Tridentine Mass as the extraordinary form. The document supersedes the Apostolic Letter *Ecclesia Dei* of Pope John Paul II issued in 1988, which allowed bishops to indicate churches/places where Mass following the rite of the 1962 Missal could be celebrated.

In *Summorum Pontificum* the Pope affirms that the Tridentine Mass was never abrogated in the Church, and that in private Masses, any priest is free to use either Pope John XXIII's Missal of 1962 or Pope Paul VI's Missal of 1970. Further, that the Missal of 1962 could be used on any day except during the Easter Triduum. There is no need for the priest to obtain permission either from the Holy See or from the bishop in order to celebrate the Tridentine Mass. The faithful may also attend such private Mass if they so desire.

With regard to public Masses, the Pope asks pastors and rectors of churches to allow the celebration of the Tridentine Mass on Sundays and solemnities if there is a stable group of the faithful who request it. Pastors may also administer the sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony, Penance and Anointing of the Sick, and bishops may administer Confirmation, in the Tridentine rite, if it is for the good of the faithful. The rites of Holy Orders, however, are only to be celebrated according to the rite of the reformed liturgy.

The bishop is also given the right to erect 'personal' parishes for the Tridentine rite and to appoint chaplains who can celebrate in those places. Should a bishop or a priest refuse the request for the celebration of Mass and the sacraments in the Tridentine rite, the faithful may have recourse to Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* in Rome which will give its decision on the matter.

The Covering Letter

In his covering letter, the Pope states the reason for his decision to regularize the celebration of the Tridentine Mass, thereby placing it on equal footing with the reformed Mass of Vatican II: it is to work toward "interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church" between the Church and traditionalist Catholics opposed to the reformed Mass of Vatican II, *e.g.,* the *Society of St. Pius X.* The Pope adds that while in the past it was thought that interest and attachment to the Tridentine Mass among its older adherents would eventually wane, it turns out that now there are young people who express attraction to the Tridentine Mass which they experience as the form of Eucharistic celebration with which they can resonate. Due to fears expressed in some quarters in the Church *vis-à-vis* the effect of the document on reforms achieved by the council, the Pope assured doubters that his decision does not mean he was turning his back on the authority of Vatican II. According to him, since the celebration of the Tridentine Mass presupposes a prolonged period of formation in the Tridentine liturgy and requisite familiarity with the Latin language, the reformed conciliar Mass (our present way of celebrating Mass), remains the ordinary form of the Roman Rite of Eucharistic celebration. In other words, there is only one Roman Rite in the Catholic Church, and it has two forms: the ordinary (the Mass of Paul VI) and the extraordinary (the Mass of John XXIII).

As far as we are concerned, I believe that there is no reason for the majority of Catholics to expect that the celebration of Holy Mass according to the reformed rite of Vatican II will be changed anytime soon. There are many good reasons going for the reformed Mass of Vatican II: principally the variety of readings for the Liturgy of the Word, as well as the deeply theological contents of the variety of Prefaces and Eucharistic Prayers. These advantages assure us that Holy Mass as we celebrate it now will not soon disappear. Also, the advantage of the congregation comprehending the flow of the celebration is a plus sign for the reformed Mass of Vatican II. However, we also need to admit that some changes do need to be set in place (reform of the reform?). In this, it seems that Pope Benedict XVI himself is setting

the example which others may follow, not so much by official liturgical directive, but simply by his quiet witness.[17]

Conclusion: Need for Catechesis

Finally, while I personally see as positive the present trend that Catholics are now more appreciative and more aware of what is going on at the Mass, still there is much to be done. One of the apparent reasons for the convocation of the Second Vatican Council was to attract our separated Christian brethren, the Protestants and Eastern Orthodox, to the Catholic Church in order that we may all be one as Our Lord prayed for at the Last Supper. Looking at the present situation, it is the Catholics who seem to be bolting out of the Catholic Church to join other denominations. I must confess that I am not knowledgeable of the reverse trend from other denominations to the Catholic Church. The number of defections from the Catholic Church to other religious denominations is alarming. This is perhaps part of the fallout resulting from the reform of Vatican II, and is perhaps to be expected. If our former Catholic brothers and sisters are happy where they are, we give thanks to the Lord for that. God acts and saves even outside the confines of the Church. But if we can do something to stem the tide of defections, it is imperative that we do it. One of the most glaring lacunae that I see at present is the lack of organized catechesis, not only on the Mass, but also on the doctrines of the Catholic Church. We are thankful for the rise and continuing growth of lay movements in the Church and the Vatican itself is cognizant of this, but the hunger for spirituality and deeper communion with God among Catholics persists. Such spiritual hunger, I believe, needs to be accompanied and nourished by an informed faith, and in this catechesis is of paramount importance. The liturgical reform initiated by Vatican II is only some 40-odd years distant from us. We do not

[17]Alciun Reid, "What is Pope Benedict doing to Catholic Liturgy?" in *CANews* (July 2008), 28-29.

know what is yet to come in a hundred years. The Council of Trent exerted its influence on the Church for over 400 years, so 44 years is just a drop in the bucket in the history of reform in the Church. For now, however, I believe that we need to acquaint ourselves with the tenets of our faith so that we can truly worship in spirit and in truth the Lord God Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Landas 23:1 (2009) 135-159

CATECHESIS AS MINISTRY OF THE WORD: A DEFENSE OF THE NATIONAL CATECHISM

Joseph L. Roche, S.J.

This "Note" aims to be a positive and constructive response to Rafael Dy-Liacco's study, "Catechesis is a Practice of Faith: A Critique of the National Catechism," recently published in *Diwa*.[1] Since I consider Mr Dy-Liacco as both friend and colleague, a co-faculty member in the School of Humanities' Theology Department, Ateneo de Manila University, my response intends to be completely positive and constructive, in no way disparaging or demeaning the article or its author. Rather the whole purpose of this response is to offer some important clarifications that may eventually, in the Spirit's transforming power, lead to some common consensus.

But first Mr. Dy-Liacco must be thanked for his interest in, and serious study of, our National Catechism, i.e., *The Catechism for Filipino Catholics* [CFC].[2] His article provides the occasion for bringing out needed clarifications and positive guidelines for a more effective study and use of our national catechetical tool, created precisely to aid, support and raise the quality of Catholic catechesis throughout our country.

[1]Cf. *Diwa* 33 (2008): 88-108.

[2]CBCP, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: ECCCE, 1997).

Two preliminary points must be raised before entering into the text itself. **First**, **"catechesis"** is usually approached together with evangelization as the basic means "**by which men and women are helped toward maturity in the faith, and are enabled to see the meaning of their lives and of the world in the light of God's revelation.**"[3] Using the term **"practice"** to describe the basic nature and operation of catechesis may not be the best way of communicating its function and ordinary exercise. While within the new discipline of "Practical Theology" catechesis can be viewed as one "Christian Practice," especially for those studying to be catechists, this has not been its basic function or exercise throughout the Christian ages.

For the great majority of Catholic Christians, catechesis is a distinct discipline of the Ministry of the Word, whose basic goal is to help them toward maturity in the faith. Throughout the Christian ages, catechesis has been understood primarily **not** as the full living out of the Faith itself**,** but rather as the **more limited discipline for educating in the faith,** fostering an **integral Christian initiation.** The **fully mature living out of the Faith** goes beyond "catechesis" taken with evangelization as the basic means toward fostering mature living of the Faith. Viewed precisely as a means of instruction in the Faith, catechesis needs to be continually renewed by broadening its concepts, revising its methods, searching for suitable language, and utilizing new means of transmitting the message.[4] Moreover the relatively recent official emphasis on "adult catechesis" as the primary form of catechesis, does not imply that adult catechesis constitutes either the whole of, nor even the full comprehensive goal of, living Christian faith to the full.

Secondly, throughout the article's critique, the CFC's text is criticized as **Roche's assertions**, etc. This surely does not do justice

[3]Cf. *New National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines,* no. 164.

[4]Drawn from John Paul II's *Catechesi Tradendae* [CT] (Vatican Press, 1979), nos. 17-19, 21.

to the many authors who contributed to composing the CFC, nor especially to the many evaluators from the CBCP and the two Vatican Congregations (of the Clergy and of the Doctrine of the Faith) who were involved in more than two full years of critical dialogue preliminary to the Vatican's official approval of the CFC. Rarely has any Church document been so intensely studied, critically evaluated, and subjected to such a prolonged process of revision. Thus, it is inaccurate to criticize the CFC's text as the private opinions and thinking of "Roche."

But now to move to the text itself of the article's critique of CFC. In addressing the article's two-fold aim, my response offers: (1) critical **support** of the *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* [CFC] against the alleged "weak points", and (2) a critique of the suggested "better direction" of the CFC by offering an improved "better direction."

Thus my response will relate in turn to the two major sections of article's critique: I. The National Catechism and Its Philosophical Assumptions, and II. Reconsideration of Some Points in the National Catechism, with its three sub-sections: A. Catechesis as "Putting On" the Lord Jesus Christ; B. Grace as the Catechetical Vocation; and the final section, C. A Narrative of Grace.

I. The National Catechism and its Philosophical Assumptions

The **first section** begins with a discussion of the meaning of "**Christian existence**" as proposed by St. Paul, who is touted as "the catechist par excellence," and how this vision would bear on Christian catechesis today. **Unfortunately**, this jump from St. Paul to today, ignoring the whole history of catechesis through the centuries, and especially the post-Vatican II efforts to strengthen and improve the catechetical ministry, has radically impaired the accuracy of the proposed critique of the CFC. A necessary source for properly interpreting the text of the CFC is the *National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines* 1985 [NCDP], since the CFC was composed precisely as

its follow-up volume, to exemplify concretely the NCDP's catechetical principles and guidelines.[5] The validity of the critique's rejection of CFC's alleged "philosophical assumptions" could have been checked by referring to the CFC's explicitly proposed nature, method and purpose, as dictated by, and flowing directly from, the NCDP with its own sources.[6]

The **major clarification** to be made in the critique's first section is simply that the CFC is completely **theologically based**, developing a consistent **Christian anthropology** from start to finish in following faithfully the catechetical principles and guidelines of the NCDP' 85. Far from rejecting the critique's "intense" description of the cruciform nature of Christian existence as "message of the cross" (repeated four times, but surprisingly without any explicit mention of the "resurrection"), the CFC provides an even fuller **comprehensive account** of "life in the Spirit," the power of the Cross and Resurrection, etc. Any doubt about the CFC's alleged philosophical assumptions—including both its alleged "putative existential outcomes" and the many alleged implications of these assertions—could easily have been laid to rest by consulting the very detailed exposition of the Holy Spirit's action (chap. 22, especially "The Activity of the Spirit in the Christian," nos. 1307-15), the detailed account of Christ's saving

[5]Cf. Episcopal Commission on Education and Religious Instruction [ECERI], *Maturing in Christian Faith: National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines* [NCDP] (Manila: St. Paul Publications, 1985). The *New NCDP* 2007, published by the Episcopal Commission for Catechesis and Catholic Education, [ECCCE], retains all the essential elements of the original edition while updating its chapter on methodology and relating its treatment of the three essential dimensions of the faith (doctrine, morals and worship) directly to the CFC, published in 1997.

[6]High on the list of Vatican II catechetical sources of the NCDP '85 would be John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* [CT] (Vatican,1978) which is, in many ways, clearer and more helpful than the more recent official catechetical documents such as the Congregation of the Clergy's *General Directory for Catechesis* [GDC] (Manila: Paulines, 1998).

redemptive mission (Chaps. 10-11-12, with special emphasis on the risen Christ, no. 627), and the incisive description of Faith (chap. 3: "Our Response: We believe.").[7]

Instead the critique spends much time and space on: (1) the necessary "consonance" between message, messenger, and method, (2) CFC 's mode and thrust of thought as lacking in catechesis' transformative power, (3) CFC's presumption that "overall the saving of Christian Faith is about philosophical insight obtained through analysis,"(4) apparently through **integration** which is "supposed to bring home the liberating/saving truth of the Catholic faith in all its fullness and power."[8] Perhaps the clearest way of clarifying these misconceptions is to offer first a brief summary rejection of each of the four misreadings of the CFC, followed by particular, more detailed, clarifying responses to certain specific charges against the CFC. These more detailed responses should provide ample support for rejecting the critique's misreadings.

Brief Clarifying Rejections of the Alleged Philosophical Assumptions

First, contrary to the initial charge, CFC brings together **message, messenger** and **method**—and **receivers** of the message—in a fully

[7]There's no reference in the proposed critique to any of these major CFC's chapters, nor to the multiple places throughout the whole catechism in which Trinity and Grace are intrinsically linked. Cf. e.g. CFC nos. 267-68 Blessed Trinity/Grace; no. 983 on the theological virtues; nos. 951-52 and 1575 on GRACE; and no. 464 on Jesus Christ as center of catechesis, quoting CT 5, and PCP II 7.

For a sharper grasp of the CFC's exposition of Trinity and Grace, see *A Companion to the CFC* (Manila: ECCCE, 1998), 104-11.

[8]For a more accurate notion of integration as used in the NCDP, see "Multiple Integrations in NCDP and CFC," in *A Companion to CFC* by J. Roche and Archbishop L. Legaspi (Manila: ECCCE, 1998), 55.

theological manner, constantly moving from the basic catechetical sources (Scripture; Church teaching and depth human experience), with God's chosen messengers and methods. There is, of course, a perfectly legitimate, even necessary, **role for philosophy** in the total work of theologizing, but the alleged "Philosophical Assumptions" ascribed to the CFC are proposed as negative and impeding authentic catechesis. The clarification here consists in rejecting these alleged assumptions. The CFC is **not** based on any set of alleged philosophical assumptions.

In fact it may come as a surprise to the critic to learn that the proposed "consonance" of message and method **repeats** a major truth stressed by the NCDP'85, the NCDP'07, and the CFC, against all local catechetical 'experts' who were consistently trying to reduce catechesis (described by "content, context and communication") to an inter-disciplinary work on the social science level.[9] Both the NCDP'07 and the CFC do better than the sources quoted in the critique of the CFC, precisely because both works were responding to our local catechetical scene. Any authentic catechesis has to consider the context of communicating the Christian message. Quoting St. Paul and some recent authors like Lull, Fee and Kraftchick et al. may not be the best way to properly focus on our Filipino concrete catechetical context.

Second, the formative and transformative powers of **God's Revelation** and the **missions** of Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Church, are constantly stressed throughout the catechism. CFC's chapter 22, together with its constant linking of Trinity and Grace, go far beyond the critique in developing the inner transforming role of the Holy Spirit.

Third, hence there are absolutely no presumed philosophical insights posing as the saving Christian Faith, but rather a Creedal structured exposition "communicating the essentials [which

[9]Cf. NCDP'85 nos. 68, 408; NCDP'07 no. 340.

constitute] an integral Christian initiation, open to all the other factors of Christian life."[10]

Fourth, integration as a method simply means "pulling things together" The NCDP'85 presented it as the first dimension of "A Pedagogy of Faith," drawn from Scripture and Tradition. The NCDP'07 also confirms this position by presenting integration as exemplifying "Fidelity to God" and summarizing briefly five distinct integrations, each one drawn from Scripture and Church teaching (Tradition) and actualized in the five activities of the Apostolic Church described in Acts 2:42 (*kerygma, didache, leiturgia, koinonia*, and *diakonia)*.[11] Integration's 'alleged' power to "bring home the liberating truth of the Faith" obviously comes completely from what is being integrated, namely divine revelation coming to us through Scripture, Tradition and depth human experience, and our graced faith response's three essential dimensions (doctrine, morals and worship).

Preliminary Conclusion: All four points of criticism represent serious misreadings of the CFC. In each case, the CFC is working completely from revelation and Faith, not from any supposed philosophical assumptions as charged. This judgment can be verified by a careful, more detailed analysis of certain concrete interpretations taken up in the critique of the CFC.

More Detailed Analysis

The **first** more detailed example of misreading the CFC is offered by the critique's criticism of a half-page quotation from an article ("Multiple Integrations") on the integration of the **doctrine of**

[10]Cf. John Paul II, CT no. 21.

[11]Cf. NCDP'85 nos. 414-18; and esp. NCDP'07 nos. 356-67, at 361-65. A further discussion of integration, "Towards a Review of Integration in Catechesis," was published in the *CBCP Monitor* 11/19: C3.

creation with teachings on morals and worship.[12] Integration here is allegedly "supposed to bring about a set of self-realizations within the believing subject." This criticism incredibly ignores the **grammatical subject** of the quoted text (God creating) expressed in its opening words—"God the Creator," and developed in each follow segment: "present NOW," "no longer in competition with us," "but empowering our freedom," not "filling in our gaps," but rather "sustaining all our powers at every moment of out life." In brief, the text is focused **not** on "our self-realization," but on **God's** creative action in our daily lives.

The critique's complete **misreading** of this quoted material (as well as of the nature of integration, and the alleged CFC's "philosophical assumptions") is developed by relating it to Bultmann's demythologizing biblical faith. Reference to Bultmann is here completely irrelevant—the quoted material grounding CFC's approach portrays no misunderstanding of personal self-understanding. Rather, the quoted material deals precisely with the first objective basis of **Christian Anthropology,** namely **creation.**[13]

Creator's Role in our Daily Life

A **second** example is drawn from the critique's misreading of the same quoted text on the Creator's interior role in our daily living. This time the misreading focuses on the text's exposition of the maxim "**God helps those who help themselves.**" The first step in this misreading was to ignore the introductory statement asserting the aim of "**clarifying the accurate meaning"** of the maxim**.** The second was to misunderstand the clarification itself which asserts that the maxim does **not mean** we first do our thing on our own, and then God rewards us. Just the opposite — God is always first, at the origin of things. Our "helping ourselves" is already using a "gift" from God.

[12]This is a further critique of the same article and page cited in note 8 above.

[13]The specifically theological vision of CFC is stressed in "The Theological Concept of the CFC," *Docete* 25/112: 19-25.

To quote the original: "God is already intimately present and active within us when we 'help ourselves'."

The development of the critique's rejection by denying any valid use of both "grace builds on nature" as well as the "theory of immanent grace" (described inaccurately) completely misses the point. There is absolutely **no** reduction of "the saving experience of life in the Spirit." Rather the direct opposite is being affirmed: God's active creative presence is already in us, inspiring our "helping ourselves"! The entire negative critique attacks the direct opposite of what the CFC is actually asserting. Nor can the critique be "justified" by focusing uniquely on "the experience of" — since the clarification was needed precisely because such experience of the Spirit was being denied in the **misunderstanding** of the maxim (very common among local college students).

God's Role in our Successful Deeds Missed

A **third** example of misunderstanding the same text, apparently caused by the same fixation on the saving experience of the Spirit to the exclusion of everything else, focuses on 'Roche's' assertion that God is "more present when we are most successful, not only when we are forced to call on him for help in desperation." The misunderstanding begins immediately with "[Roche's statement] needs to be measured against the assertions in 2 Co 12:9-11 and 13:4." The presumption that these Pauline texts reject my assertion is the clearest possible indication of a complete misunderstanding of my assertion. The **needed clarification** can be summarized as follows:

Put positively, St. Paul and Roche are paradoxically asserting the **same truth**: namely **God's creative life-giving presence within us**. The difference is:

-St. Paul boasts of his weakness to bring out the power of God present in his weakness;
-Roche asserts God's power within us even when we think it's all our doing!

My assertion in no way contradicts St. Paul, but I would choose to measure it against a superior Scriptural model which combines both negative and positive approaches to the same divine indwelling, namely, the Blessed Virgin Mary's Magnificat:

> "For he has looked upon his handmaid's *lowliness*;
> behold, from now on, will *all ages call me blessed*,
> The *Almighty One has done great things for me*, and holy is his name."
> (Lk.1:48f)

Catechetically, I suggest the advantage of following Mary's prayer here because it responds directly to the apparently universal human temptation to forget about God and the necessity of prayer when things are going well, in contrast to difficult times when we naturally turn to God for help. The critique of this text gives no evidence of grasping this common problem as the context for 'Roche's' assertion.[14]

CCC's Moral Life's Generalization vs. CFC's Description of Moral Agent

A **fourth** example of misunderstanding can be drawn from the alleged contrast with the CCC' s understanding of Christian moral life. The CCC quote asserts that "Life in the Holy Spirit," "made up of divine charity and human solidarity," "is graciously offered as salvation."[15] An inspiring insight, but leaving one to wonder

[14]An actual practical example can concretize the theological reality being stressed here. A college teacher in a special group teaching the social doctrine of the Church began by holding up a large picture showing a flowering bush, a butterfly, a bird, and a man with a shovel, digging a well. She asked the class: in this picture, who is the source of the bush, the butterfly and the bird? Expected answer: God! Who is the source of the well? Reply: the man. But a clarifying question was raised: is God more active creatively in the bush, butterfly, and bird, OR in the man freely digging the well? The teacher in this case had presumed the man was acting 'on his own,' independently of any input by God.

[15]The CCC quote is explained as drawn from CCC's outline of Christian moral life, chapters one, two and three, with a footnote reference to no. 1699. Actually

who precisely is living this "life in the Spirit," and **how**: by doing what? How does this life in the Spirit "fulfill the vocation of the human being"? And since it is "graciously offered as salvation," do humans have anything to do with their salvation? Is divine charity (God's love for humans) everything, or is there also some place for graced human charity, our loving God, a love for which *we* humans are *morally responsible*?

Hence the CCC quote is not too helpful for connecting this "life in the Holy Spirit" to our daily moral life, to what we are morally called to do freely and for which we are held responsible. In CCC's quoted text, there is no explicit mention of anything we humans do—which, considering the topic is **moral** life, is extraordinary! Nor does the critique help very much by identifying "life in the Spirit" with our participation by grace in the **uncreated reality** of God's inner life—since again, there is absolutely no indication of what this participation means in terms of our free thinking, doing, praying The weakness with the CCC's quoted text, then, is its failure to make explicit the human dimension of our Christian moral life, for which we, not the Holy Spirit, are morally responsible.[16]

In contrast, the CFC quote (no. 682) begins the explanation of "The Moral Agent: The Human Person." That clarification alone destroys the validity of the critique, which simply refuses to address the human subject who is morally responsible for living a Christian moral life. Human persons are those who are called to, and actually live, Christian moral lives, not the Holy Spirit. The critique plays

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it is a direct quote of no. 1699 which is a three-line generalization, printed at the bottom of an otherwise blank page, immediately before the first page of Part Three, Section One, Chapter one.

[16]For an interesting comparison between the CCC and CFC on Faith, Christ Our [Moral] Way, Christ our Life [Worship], and Prayer, with footnote references and summaries to some significant links with other current theological sources, see "Notable Qualities of the Content of the CCC and CFC," *A Companion to CFC*, 94-103.

the same game again in repeating the groundless claim that the CFC reduces Christian living to *philosophical* anthropology, without consulting the detailed exposition of **Christian** living throughout the whole catechism, especially chapters 13-21 on Morality and 22 on the Holy Spirit.

Humanism Misinterpreted Threefold

A further misdirected attack is given in complete misinterpretation of CFC no. 677. The critique **first** begins by claiming: "it is not at all clear that the moral life being proposed is unattainable by powers we already possess simply by virtue of our being human." This completely ignores no. 677's explicit starting point ("Left to ourselves, we have no power to fulfill Christ's command 'Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect'" Mt 5:48), a completely Christian Revelation moral goal.

Second, the critique claims "the Holy Spirit appears only as the means to the end of 'responsible freedom' and conscience. All this amounts to a humanism merely '*adorned with'* Christian doctrines." This statement reveals three major misunderstandings:

– *first*, the presumption that the humanism proposed in CFC is only "a humanism 'adorned with' Christian doctrine" — but that Christian doctrines have no intrinsic connection with Christian moral living — is completely contradictory to CFC's insistence on the unity, coherence and integration among Faith's three essential dimensions (doctrine, morals, and worship), explicitly approved by both the universal and local Catholic Magisteria;

– *second*, the charge that "the Holy Spirit appears only as means to the end of responsible freedom and conscience..." is refuted by CFC text (no. 677) which explicitly speaks of how "God strengthens us by enabling us to **share the life of Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spiri**t received in Baptism (Rom. 6:4) This Spirit, in uniting us to Christ, our Risen Savior, as members of his Body the Church, liberates and empowers us with new life in responding by our daily words and deeds to God's love."

– *third*, *the misinterpretation that* "responsible freedom" and

"conscience" are aspects of a secular humanism, is also explicitly rejected by CFC's description: "Thus, as disciples of Christ, mutually supporting one another through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we come to exercise responsible freedom according to God's loving design, as grasped by our gradually formed Christian conscience." This specifically Christian Revelation vision of moral life is confirmed in CFC's next paragraph (no. 678) in which person, freedom, moral responsibility and conscience are proposed as the constitutive elements of personal **Christian** moral living,—all exercised through the example of Christ, the grace of the Spirit, and the Father's loving mercy."

Conclusion

All these examples of misunderstandings seem to arise from one basic inadequate view: the consistent lack of focus on the actual believing Christian human believers, e.g. Catholic students. In the **second** and **third** examples, there seems little or no **appreciation** of the common lack of awareness, even among Catholic college seniors, of God's creative, graced presence in their daily lives. Nor in the **first** and **fourth** examples is there any sign of CFC's insistence on the intrinsic connection between believing in the truth (doctrine) that God is our Creator **and** acting morally and worshipping in consonance with that belief. What is clearly missed is: the CFC is focusing **not** on any secular, psychological "self-realization," but on "living as a Christian, a child of God." (1 Jn 3:1)

The next section of the critique is an account of the Black Elk of the Lakota Sioux, (pp. 95-96) offering an outlook supposedly in contrast with "Roche's." Since the above paragraphs have presented "clarifications" that radically modify the validity of the critique's grasp of 'Roche's' outlook, there is no legitimate basis for this comparison.

Fourfold Attack Against Fire

The critique's next charge is that the CFC never deeply explores the NT theme of consonance, but instead "confounds an account of one's faith with merely intellectual explanation of it." (p. 96). This

misunderstanding grounds a ruthless attack on the Formation Institute for Religion Educators (FIRE). This attack is summarized at some length here in direct quotes in order to generate a certain sensitivity to the nature and quality of the critique. FIRE is described as (1) found to be useless by the FIRE students for their faith life; (2) continually meeting resistance (misjudged as 'difficulty in understanding') by more knowledgeable FIRE students; (3) yielding "school religion programs and courses that rank relatively low in both effectivity and student popularity," and (4) remaining beyond the capability of the vast majority of catechists to execute. All this is supposedly drawn from the initial draft of a cooperative work entitled *The Mystery of Religion Education: Vademecum for Religion Educators,* which was published a year later as *Practical Catechesis: The Christian Faith as a Way of Life* (Phoenix, 2008).[17]

This critique seems to lack any reliable basis—the source cited provides no support whatsoever, but rather describes our present catechetical context which is in clear, urgent need for such a critically formed and tested catechetical approach as FIRE.[18] So perhaps the best way of refuting these charges is to focus on the actual thirty year history of FIRE which offers a sound basis for clarifying such a series of 'out-of-hand, ruthless and wild misinterpretations'. Regarding the **first** charge, FIRE students must actually find FIRE very useful since each year more applicants apply than can be accepted. The **second**

[17]Reference is given to the initial draft of a work entitled *The Mystery of Religious Education: Vademecum for Religion Educators (2007)* which subsequently has been completed and published as *Practical Catechesis: The Christian Faith as a Way of Life* (Phoenix, 2008). Of the three references, the **first** cites the wrong chapter, and then misinterprets the text which is not criticizing FIRE but rather the common lack of a holistic approach to Scripture and to Practical Theology which the FIRE approach is trying to offer. The **second** and **third** references focus not on FIRE but rather on diverse common responses to post-modernism and especially to the uncritical acceptance of the basically social science approach to catechesis.

[18]None of the critique's charges are supported by the *Vademecum* nor its final version, *Practical Catechesis: The Christian Faith as a Way of Life*.

charge about 'resistance' to FIRE flies in the face of the increasing demand by bishops, priests, religious superiors, catechetical leaders, etc. for conferences on FIRE's basic approach and its 'integration' methodology. Moreover, the fact that both the original NCDP (1985) and NCDP'07, as well as the CFC, our national catechism, all propose and exemplify the FIRE approach and methodology, surely offers **strong support** rather than resistance.

The **third** charge regarding school religion programs that rank low in effectivity and popularity is directly contradicted by the many successful religion textbook series that have adapted the FIRE approach. In the past three years, four major new religion textbook series—two by the largest female Religious Congregations in the country and the others by two of the top Catholic Universities—have followed the *National Catechetical Directories*' approach, together with constant use of the CFC. The **fourth** charge of "beyond the capacity of the vast majority of catechists" views this erroneously as a defect in FIRE's intelligibility rather than as proving the totally inadequate formation of most catechists, and thus the urgent need for professional formation like FIRE.

II. Reconsideration of Some Points in the National Catechism (pp. 97-108)

Groundless Charge of Misinterpreting the Spirit

The critique's **first** charge in this second major part of the article, subtitled "Catechesis as 'Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ'" (pp. 97-102), accuses the CFC as "neither exploring nor grasping the centrality of this existential theme for catechesis. Hence CFC fails to understand the locus where faith and gospel meet." Instead, CFC **"**replaces existential self-understanding in faith with general philosophical analysis." The critique then goes on to relate this particular charge against the CFC to 2 Tim.3:5 which speaks of "making a pretense of religion and denying its power," and develops its own charge by claiming CFC promotes "an outward form of godliness," "casting

doubt on the true power of the Spirit," manifesting "fundamental misunderstanding of that Spirit…"

The obvious "**clarification**" urgently needed here is to repeat what has already been clarified, but now apparently needs to be repeated in stronger terms. The critique's consistent charge that CFC fundamentally misunderstands the Spirit cannot be taken seriously, since in the whole critique there is no reference to CFC's chap 22 on the Holy Spirit which completely contradicts the charge, and which follows the numerous explicit expositions of the role of the Holy Spirit throughout the whole catechism, from "God's Call: Revelation (chap. 2) to the "Final Goal: Resurrection of the Body and Life Ever-lasting" (chap. 29) and the "Epilogue: The Lord's Prayer."

Critique's Total Lack of Graced Human Cooperation

Second, the charge that CFC fails to understand the locus where **faith** and **gospel** meet lacks any credible basis. The critique never addresses CFC's sharp exposition of faith in chap. 3 (especially its 'Paradoxical Characteristics'nos. 142-54) nor its account of the actual human living out the Gospel. Instead the critique consistently misinterprets CFC's exposition as a general philosophical analysis, replacing "the existential self-understanding in faith." The contrary is more accurate: the critique's "existential self-understanding" has apparently no human dimension—nowhere in the critique is the concrete human active cooperation, inspired by the Spirit, addressed. The "existential self-understanding in faith" seems to be just words; there is no human embodied reality.

Moreover, in the preceding pages our clarifications have shown how the critique's specific charges in its Part I erroneously misinterpreted CFC's explicitly 'theological' expositions of freedom and conscience to philosophy and a secular humanism "adorned with Christian doctrines." These charges can be refuted in concrete fashion by simply consulting CFC's **Subject Index** which provides a full page of explicit references to the Spirit's Activity/Role, Identity, and Titles, as well as the NCDP'07

no. 263 which clearly integrates the role of both divine and human in our graced life.

CCC's Generalities Outline vs. CFC's Graced Human Moral Action

The critique's **next step** is to insist on the catechetical goal of the transformed reader and transformed community by quoting CCC's outline of catechesis: a catechesis of the Holy Spirit, of grace, of the beatitudes, of sin and forgiveness, of human virtues, of Christian virtues, of the two fold commandments of charity, of ecclesial catechesis (pp. 99-100). Amen, alleluia! All this is supposedly working from the inner person to the outer teaching. **First clarification**: in the critique, there is **no inner person**–just a list of generalities which appear in the text of any ordinary catechism, and certainly in CFC. The critique then explains how the consonance between message, messenger and method is not guaranteed by the Spirit, but rather by the ministers of the Spirit who are tasked for this, and thus catechesis itself becomes an act of faith. **Second clarification**: there is no actual achieved **consonance** without the human action of the **catechized**. The focus of the critique is solely on the ministers of the Spirit, ignoring any required action by the catechized. Instead we get a summary of OT salvation history, climaxed with St. Paul's "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom 13:14) Unfortunately, there is no explanation at all of this "putting on." CFC's consistent effort to do just that is rejected as merely philosophy, "adorned with Christian doctrine"!

No Graced Human

The following section of the critique, "**Grace for the Catechetical Vocation**," (pp. 102-104) confirms this startling "gap" that has impaired the critique from the start. There is nothing on the catechists' necessary cooperation with the Spirit. Instead catechesis is described as "not merely instruction…but if it is to bear the power that transforms its hearers" and "the transformed community promised by God, then the way that we approach and teach these things must be of one piece…." **Clarification**: still no actual individual human

receiver nor human community receiving and practicing the Faith. The critique then develops the history of salvation from Lv.19:33-34 to a long quote from 1 Co 1:20-30, together with some quotable insights (e.g."God is not just saving individuals…he is creating *a people*") from Fee's work, **God's Empowering Presence**, but still with absolutely no attempt to explain how the actual receivers of the Gospel message are called to respond. Mention of "finding one's story" surely does not communicate the Gospel narrative of Christ's passionate call to Faith in him and his Word. Everything is still focused on the Spirit and God's creating call: there is no actual human receiver who is morally responsible for freely cooperating with God's grace in receiving the message. The necessary human cooperation with God's prevenient grace (stressed by Trent against the Luther) never appears.[19]

No Free Human Graced Response

The final section of Pt. II of the critique, "**A Narrative of Grace**"(pp. 104-108) begins by stressing that "the ultimate reading of the biblical text is a narrative of grace of which the community is heir and its members are recipients." From "dehumanizing ways which might possess us," "we are freed in the Spirit of Christ, because of our being bearers of God's saving grace." Again, any necessity for a free human response seems to be completely ignored, something utterly lost sight of.

But the critique brings in a new charge, this time rejecting the discussion by Roche, Locker, and Natividad on the historical-critical method [HCM] in biblical studies. Their treatment is dismissed as "generalizations" regarding what one finds inspiring or not, and therefore something that has no real place in an objective discussion. This critique needs serious clarification in a number of ways. **First**, our discussion was not about one's taste for what is inspiring or not,

[19]Cf. Council of Trent, "Decree on Justification," in J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church,* 4th rev. ed. (Bangalore: Theological Publications India, 1982), no. 1929.

but about the nature of the HCM as alone adequate for the religious educator. We (Locker, Natividad, and Roche) have discovered to our dismay that it is impossible in practice to communicate an evaluation of the HCM that recognizes its positive contributions while insisting it is inadequate if taken **alone**. The present critic joins many others in completely ignoring this "alone."

Second, citing authors who use the HCM and yet manage to be "inspiring," has no particular relevance. Like the critic himself, who admits that he holds "the Holy Spirit stands within the text," these authors are not using the HCM alone. By firmly holding that "the Holy Spirit stands within the text," the historical text has now actually become intrinsically "trans-historical." This is confirmed by asserting God is its author together with the human authors.[20]

Exegete's Personal Faith "Saves" HCM

The critique's effort to save the adequacy of the HCM alone is to stress the Christian faith of the exegete interpreting the Scriptures — a personal faith which surely cannot be taken as an intrinsic part of the HCM. The HCM was created as the 'scientific' approach to historical research, formulated in the late19th century to emphasize the genuine objective validity claimed by secular historical works —- a method which claims no methodological means for discerning and evaluating the role of the Holy Spirit.

In reality, the gradually increasing recognition recently for an explicitly theological and canonical hermeneutics has already become a common theme for many professional Catholic and Protestant exegetes. Moreover with the elevation of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), to the Papacy as Pope Benedict XVI, this call for a new "spiritual hermeneutics" has become one of the strongest and most publicized

[20]Cf. Vatican II, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," no. 11 on Biblical inspiration, inerrancy and canonicity.

new official Papal teachings focusing on sacred Scripture. In his first intervention during the Synod on the Word of God, (Oct. 5-26, 2008) the Pope illustrated the pitfalls of the historical-critical method of interpreting Scripture when it is divorced from a "hermeneutics of faith." The Pope urged the Synod to include two items in their final list of proposals to him: first, to insist that the historical-critical method be balanced by a "hermeneutic of faith," second, that Catholic scripture scholars be educated in this principle.[21]

Finally, the critique's last paragraph once more renews its two basic charges: 1) that CFC is a mere work of "philosophical analysis of the faith," 2) that the CFC never relates to the transforming Spirit's role in empowering us to "put on the Lord Christ." These charges have already been "clarified" a number of times as serious misunderstandings of the CFC's position. But now, at this final stage, perhaps a deeper, more sharply formed 'clarification' may be suggested, to offer some further possible enlightenment. This **new clarification** suggests that the basic source of the critique's consistent misunderstandings of the CFC can be traced to two major weaknesses: 1) lack of any developed contact with the primary sources of Catholic catechesis as a distinct discipline within the Ministry of the Word, explaining the actual nature, purpose and methods of catechesis,[22] and 2) the *complete failure to address the*

[21]Cf. *The [London] Tablet* (18 Oct. 2008): 35. The Pope's detailed evaluation of the HCM is set forth in the first chapter of his best seller entitled *Jesus of Nazareth.*

[22]The critique is full of theological references which have no specific catechetical orientation. In preparing this defense of the CFC, it was soon discovered there was no need to examine the interpretative accuracy of the critique's use of these theological sources since they clearly had no direct relevance to the CFC's position. More significant, perhaps, is the surprising lack of any reference to basic catechetical sources. Neither traditional catechetical sources from the Patristic and Scholastic periods, nor any major 20th century official Vatican catechetical documentation (nor any Philippine ecclesial publications) seem to have been used in the critique. For a professional critique of an officially Vatican approved national catechism, one would expect wide use of works such as Berard Marthaler, *The Creed: The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology,* rev.

constitutive ***subjective*** *dimension of 'Christian existence', i.e., both God's Self-Revelation and the graced human response in Faith (i.e. what God's revelation is calling for, and what the Christian believer is called to do as the morally responsible subject of living the faith.)*

The critique's continuous misunderstandings of the CFC's basic **Christian** vision is not at all by chance, nor is it unique. Many strive today to overcome the unfortunate post-Vatican II catechetical slide into a self-centered, social-science dominated humanism.[23] But the deeper problem to be faced is: How are we to come to an intelligible critically balanced account of the ***actual inter-penetration of the divine and the human in our daily life of faith***. Few experts seem to be aware of the extreme difficulty in articulating with critical accuracy this existential "dialogue." Manifold are the ways of **so stressing either the divine or the human dimension** that its counter-part is ignored. Concrete examples can be given of exaggerated, one-sided presentations of each dimension.

Subjective Dimension of Both God's Gift and Human Response

But the actual problem is still deeper. It is not primarily any one-sided, exaggerated focus on either the divine input or the human

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ed. (Twenty-Third Publications, 1993), and his following work, *The Catechism Yesterday and Today: The Evolution of a Genre* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995); Robert Imbelli, ed., *Handing on the Faith: The Church's Mission and Challenge* (Herder & Herder Book, Crossroad, 2006); Pheme Perkins, *What We Believe: A Biblical Catechism of the Apostles' Creed* (Paulist, 1986); Roger Van Harn, ed., *Exploring and Proclaiming the Apostles' Creed* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), etc.

[23]Cf. for example, the insightful critique of John Cavadini, "Ignorant Catholics," *Commonweal* (Apr 9, 2004): 12-14 in which he accepts partial responsibility for the post-Vatican II "touchy-feely" phase of catechesis which resulted in a vast ignorance of sound Catholic doctrine, morality, and worship. His outline of a renewed catechetical pedagogy of the basics is: catechesis must become more theological, and all theology must become more catechetical.

reception. Most catechetical presentations surely refer to both God's objective Self-revelation in word and deed (DV 2), and to the objective graced human response in Faith. What is *missing is the* ***subjective dimension*** of *both God's Self–Revelation and our graced human Faith response.*[24] Deeper insight into the varieties and levels of human knowledge and action, together with various corresponding ways of human learning—coming to know, understand and 'perform' the truth acquired—have opened up new approaches to critical theological reflection on our traditional ways of educating the faithful in the Faith—and consequently what could improve the effectivity of our catechesis. This common neglect of the subjective dimension of Revelation and Faith has touched all current catechesis and theology.

The 'turn to the subject" which has so dominated philosophy in recent past centuries, has not as yet exercised the same radical revisions in theology and catechesis. Most seminary courses in theology are still commonly focused on an **objective, academic account** of all the varied individual theological disciplines engaged in communicating the Good News. The same is true for most catechist formation programs which concentrate on the catechists' accurate objective doctrinal

[24]**Two unfortunate slips** in official Church catechetical documents exemplify this tendency of missing the subjective dimension. The **first** is CFC no. 1527 which originally corrected the common subjective misunderstanding that sacraments produce grace automatically. Now the imposed text completely ignores the faithful as subjects celebrating the Mass while focusing completely on three objective aspects: 1) grace given *ex opera operato* (from the work having been worked); 2) grace given even if the priest celebrating the Mass is in mortal sin (the grace comes from Christ, not the priest); and 3) grace from sacraments celebrated properly, i.e. according to prescriptions of what the Church intends to do. Three strikes, all completely missing the lay persons celebrating the Eucharist. The **second** example is our NCDP'07, no. 201 which affirms that faith as content is totally from God, maturity in the Faith is totally grace from the Holy Spirit -- as if **the infinite living Triune God** is reciting some divinely composed and memorized Creed, and is in the process of maturing in the Faith! One wonders ….

presentation. What is often missing is any serious study of the faithful's actual living out of these objective realities of the Faith.[25]

Sources for Recognizing the Subjective [not subjectivistic] Dimension

Recognizing this radical neglect of the **subjective** dimension of both God's personal Self-Revelation and of Christian existence has gradually arisen from various starting points. **One** clear source has been the criticism of the 'scientific' historical-critical method that claims to be completely adequate, in itself, as the only hermeneutic needed in Scripture studies. In addition to the HCM, most Scripture experts are coming to accept the definite need for developing the "spiritual senses" of Scripture in a theological hermeneutics of faith.[26] A **second** source has been some post-Vatican II renewal studies in liturgical theology which recognized different possible 'theologies' of even the same sacrament (cf. note 27 below), as well as the need to correct traditional sacramental theology's exaggerated focus on the ontological, ideal image of the sacraments to the almost complete neglect of their subjective existential, experiential dimensions in the faithful's celebrating the sacraments.[27]

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[25]Cf. Avery Dulles' brief article on six "Models of Evangelization," *Origins* 37 (May 17, 2007) for a simple example which recognizes the "subjective dimension" of both God's Gift and our human response.

[26]Cf. Lucia Natividad, Markus Locker and Joseph Roche, "The Use of Scripture in Theology and Religious Education," *Loyola Schools Review [Humanities]* 3 (2003): 9-23. What started out as an insight into a weakness in much current study and use of Scripture, especially in catechesis, was soon recognized as a weakness in communicating all three essential dimensions of the Faith, namely doctrine, morals and worship. Cf. for one example, "The Nature and Role of Doctrine in Catholic Faith," *Loyola Schools Review* [Humanities] 6 (2007): 137-70.

[27]Thomas O'Loughlin sketches three different "theologies"—three different objective dimensions of the Eucharist upon which theological reflection can

A **third** source of this new awareness of the subjective dimension is the recently newly developed discipline called "Practical Theology," with its emphasis on "Christian Practices," and direct focus on the faithful's actual daily living out of the Christian Faith.[28] It shows how recognizing the constitutive subjective dimension of both Revelation and Faith grounds an alternate approach that differs substantially from the traditional objective-focused approach to teaching theology.[29]

Hence the "better direction" proposed by this defense of the CFC consists in:

1) approaching the CFC within the genre of Catholic adult national catechisms;
2) with careful, accurate reading of its text, guided by its own general directives flowing from its own catechetical methodological basis (the NCDP's), and
3) ever mindful of the essential qualities of all authentic catechesis, namely, not improvised but systematic, dealing with essentials, yet sufficiently complete, to offer an

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focus—in his "The Liturgical Vessels of the Latin Eucharistic Liturgy: A Case of an Embedded Theology," *Worship* 82 (2008): 482-504. Cf. also Joseph Martos, "Twenty Years Later," *Ministry and Liturgy* 29/2 (2003): 9-11, in which he warns against traditional Catholic sacramental theology's one-sided stress on the ontological, ideal dimensions of liturgy and the sacraments, to the almost complete neglect of any critical theological reflection on their subjective dimension — the faithful's actual celebration of the Eucharist or reconciliation.

[28]Cf. Markus Locker, Lucia Natividad, and Joseph Roche, "Grounding A Holistc Approach to Scripture in 'Practical Theology'," *Loyola Schools Review* [Humanities] 5 (2006): 57-72. See also *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), and Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999).

[29]Cf. Craig Dykstra, "Alternate Understanding of 'Practice'," in *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition*, ed. N. Murphy (Trinity Press, 1997) See also his most recent co-edited work with Dorothy Bass, *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

> integral Christian initiation, open to all the other factors of Christian life. (CT 21)

Conclusion

With this final 'clarification' the defense of the CFC, our national catechism, rests. Hopefully these pages will confirm the significant value of the CFC in catechesis, taken as an exercise of the ministry of the Word in the local Catholic Church in the Philippines. Our hope is that this article may encourage and help toward the deeper study and more creative and effective use of the CFC, in catechizing Filipino Catholics of all ages and life-styles, toward a fuller, deeper, more joyous inculturated Catholic Faith, in loving Christian service of all, throughout length and breadth of our beautiful land.

Soli Deo Gloria

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