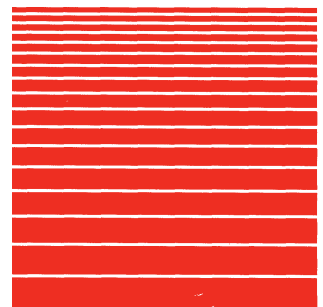
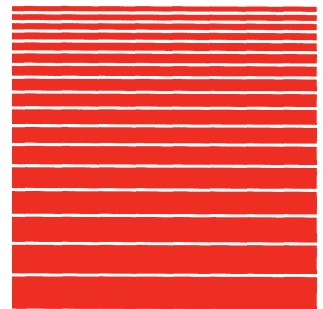
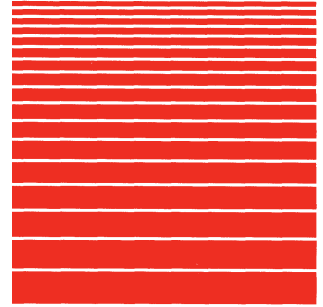
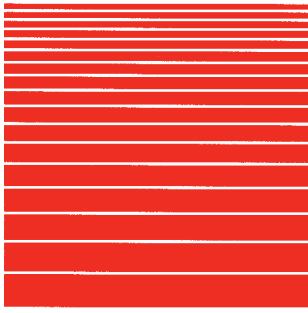


**On the Way to Life:  
Contemporary Culture and Theological  
Development as a Framework for Catholic  
Education, Catechesis and Formation**

**A Study by The Heythrop Institute  
for Religion, Ethics and  
Public Life**



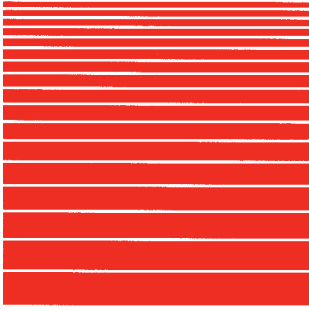




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## Foreword

The landscape of contemporary culture is ever-changing. In response to this, the Department for Education and Formation of the Bishops' Conference commissioned Fr. James Hanvey, SJ and his colleagues at Heythrop Institute for *Religion, Ethics and Public Life* to write a critical analysis of that culture. In particular the research was to focus on those features in contemporary culture which may have a bearing on the context of Catholic religious education and catechesis.

Now they have completed their work and presented it to us all. I am confident that this report will be a vital catalyst for bishops, priests, teachers and all those involved in catechesis to reflect on the Church's mission in education.

This report is I believe of great value. It highlights the ways in which, in this country, we stand at a crossroads. We need to reflect deeply on its contents.

I hope the dissemination of this report will be as wide as possible and allow all to reflect on its implications. The Catholic Education Service will facilitate this and draw together reflections and insights through seminars, conferences and electronically. Information about this will follow.

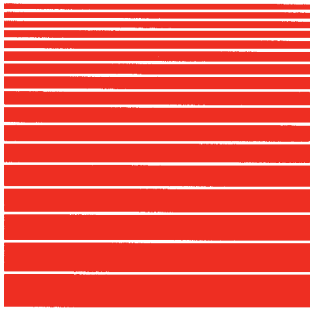
Additional copies can be obtained from the Catholic Education Service.

I am grateful to Fr. James Hanvey, SJ and his colleagues at Heythrop, for their scholarship and insight. They have indeed served God and the Catholic community well.

+ Vincent Nichols

✠ Vincent Nichols  
Chair: Catholic Education Service





## General Introduction

The Catholic Education Service and NBRIA (the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors) have been engaged in a sustained reflection on the content, method and nature of religious education and catechesis over a number of years. This study was commissioned by the Department of Education and Formation of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this process of reflection.

When this work was commissioned, I thought that it would be a small paper; one that would make some useful observations for discussion and analysis. It is evident that, like Topsy, it just 'grew'. I do not think this was because the writers lacked a sense of proportion; rather, I think it has happened because of the nature of the task and the evaluation that the brief required.

Religious education, catechesis and formation are central activities of the whole Catholic community; they touch every aspect of the Church's life but they also represent those 'sites' where the Church is most closely engaged with contemporary culture. It is in these areas that it will experience the tensions and the possibilities that such interaction creates. In other words, religious education, catechesis and formation take place in a context: ecclesial, secular and, above all, personal. The lines of these encounters run through each one of us.

In this work we wanted to give some sense of this context. In addition to a description, which may be helpful, we also wished to offer analysis and evaluation. It is important for the Catholic community to understand the cultures in which it lives but in order to do that well it must also understand its own culture. This is what we attempt in Part I and Part II. We have used some conceptual tools but essentially we have tried to identify the themes: questions of meaning and identity, the emergence of 'the new religious subject' in late/post-modernity, the 'theological subject' that is implicit in the vision of Vatican II. We have argued that the Catholic community is undergoing a transformation as it continues to appropriate the Council (we call this the second phase of reception). This entails a number of struggles or 'epistemological crises' that can be confusing and painful, but the Council also offers new resources. These we have understood in terms of a 'Catholic Modernity' that is something distinct from a 'Protestant Modernity'. At the heart of a 'Catholic Modernity' lies the Catholic sacramental imagination. It is our thesis that it is this that the Catholic community should seek to recover as a resource. We develop the theological basis for this to show that the community has the capacity to resist secularisation and respond with a powerful discourse, both critical and constructive, to the challenges that contemporary culture poses.

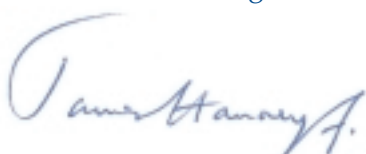
In terms of 'genre', *On the Way to Life* is an interpretative study. It is a contribution to a process; it is not an end product. Its purpose is to offer a reasonably coherent and researched position with a view to stimulating further discussion and richer interpretations. It is our belief that this process will lead to new resources becoming apparent and the development of

effective responses to the questions that emerge. We have seen this process in terms of a conversation in which many people, all with their perspectives and expertise, but especially with their charisms, are involved. Already we have benefited from this and we are grateful to all who responded to our invitation with insight and generosity.

Although Dr. Anthony Carroll and I have been responsible for the work, our other colleagues in the Institute have also contributed. Special mention must be made of Drs. Kathleen O'Connor and James Sweeny C.P., who brought their specialist knowledge and helpful criticisms to the text. Ms Debbie Bhatti was also generous in sharing her insight and research with us. Above all it is thanks to the work of Moyra Turlamain that this part of the project was guided and brought to its completion. The work would not have been possible at all without the encouragement, advice and insight of Oona Stannard, Anne Dixon and Fr. Joseph Quigley at the Catholic Education Service.

It may be useful to conclude with a final word on how to read this document. The realities that we have been trying to capture are subtle, fluid and complex. There are many points of entry and each will reconfigure the 'landscape' accordingly. We have sought to offer not only a cultural critique but also a theological one. While this can provide penetrating connections, it also risks confusing the reader. Moreover, many different fields have had to be covered in a brief and schematic way. Here, there is always the danger of missing the significant nuance or creating a crude generalisation. I hope we have avoided the worst of these risks but inevitably we will not have avoided them completely. The benefit, however, is in gaining some sense of the territory; knowing more completely where we are so that we may better understand from where we have come and, therefore, set out more confidently on the way that lies ahead. In this process, criticism, informed disagreement, the recognition of difference and the variety of experience that informs it are all valuable and enriching. So, I hope that the faults of this study, in so far as they provide an opportunity for a wide range of reactions, will be productive. While each part can be read separately they are interlinked, building on each other. The Supplement, written by Dr. Anthony Carroll, will be particularly useful in helping to gain a sense of how modernity and post-modernity can be understood in terms of the development of discourses.

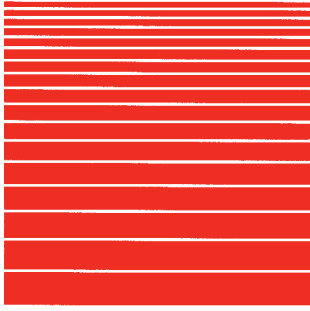
At the centre of this study lies a vision of what it is to be a member of the Catholic Church and the great privilege of participating in her mission. Whatever the questions that face the community and whatever the challenges presented to it by contemporary culture, we know that we stand in a tradition that has faced similar questions and challenges in the past. Yet because of God's faithfulness the essence of the Church remains constant in all time. As the rainbow was the sign of God's new and unalterable covenant after the flood, so the ever present witness of holiness in lives of countless faithful women and men is the daily proof of Christ's fidelity to his people in history. It is here, in this place, that he is always to be found. The psalmist expresses it with a quiet, joyous confidence: *O Lord I love the beauty of your house, the place where your glory dwells. (Psalms 26.8)*. Whatever the statistics show or the theories explain, this is our truth. It is something we all know and experience. This is why we believe and belong.



James Hanvey S.J.

Director, The Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life  
2 February 2005: Feast of the Presentation





## Part I: Significant Elements in Contemporary Culture

*The Faithful should live in the closest contact with others of their time, and should work for a perfect understanding of their modes of thought and feelings as expressed in their culture. They should combine knowledge resulting from the new sciences and teaching, and from recent discoveries, with Christian morality and formation in Christian teaching, so that their religious worship and uprightness go hand in hand with their knowledge of the sciences and increasing technology, and they are thus able to interpret everything with full Christian awareness. (Gaudium et Spes § 62)*



## From the Brief:

*The Institute will present a critical analysis of the significant features in contemporary culture that may have a bearing on the context of Catholic religious education and catechesis.*

### Summary: Part I

Part I is an interpretative essay. It examines significant data in the light of the 'secularisation' thesis that characterises the culture of late-modernity/post-modernity. Two important models of interpretation are discussed:

1. Secularisation as the progressive diminution of religion and its public influence, and its confinement to the private sphere.
2. Modernity as 'the turn to the subject', in which 'religion' is gradually superseded by 'spirituality'.

The adequacy of these interpretations is critically explored. Reservations notwithstanding, they do serve to describe important features in the cultural landscape, as well as the tensions that these generate for the Church regarding, for example, the nature of authority and the sources of validation, and the question of truth and trustworthiness. These are integrally connected with questions of power.

The current situation is marked by 'epistemological crises' and these are to be found in the paradoxes and aporias of late-modernity and post-modernity. The ones explored in this part are: the search for meaning in a fragmented culture, the burden of ordinariness and how this shapes lifestyles and cultural forms, the impact of feminist thought, and the construction of identity.

Given the impact of these forces on cultures that are already multifarious, it is argued that a new 'religious subject' exists in late-modernity. The work of the French sociologist of religion, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, usefully maps this subject in terms of the pilgrim and the convert, although, when viewed theologically, this map is seen to be inadequate. Four main challenges for religious education and the ability of Catholicism to articulate its vision within the culture are identified:

1. Although religion has not been erased from the cultural consciousness, it remains deeply problematic for a secular society. The Church needs to find ways of resisting the secularisation thesis, or it will become a guest at its own wake. At the same time it must engage contemporary culture by finding new ways of entering the discourse.
2. This means developing a vision and a language that have 'interpretative force', which articulate as strongly as possible what is to be human, what it is to have a 'good society', why the Church's ultimate values are an enrichment and liberation not a surrender of autonomy and rationality, etc. Without this, the Church risks becoming just a 'service industry' providing 'spirituality' and self-fulfilment techniques. It loses its social radicalism and is absorbed by the culture.
3. If our culture(s) is characterised by a 'crisis of transmission' generally, that crisis is intensified within the Church.
4. Evangelisation is at the heart of the Church's mission but it is not a one-way process. The Church is also 'evangelised' by the culture; this can become colonisation. The Catholic community needs to harness all its creative resources to confirm its members in the power of the Christian truth, its credibility and beauty.



# 1. Introduction

The brief for this study asks that we place the direction of Catholic religious education, catechesis and formation within the context of contemporary culture. The materials that exist for the task are vast. They range from statistical data that cover practically every aspect of contemporary life to a considerable body of analysis and conceptualisation of the features and trends that constitute the landscape and dynamics of our present culture. Even to speak of 'a culture' is misleading; it presumes something that is stable with features that are recognisable and consistent over time. At one level we have Matthew Arnold's definition of 'high culture': *know the best that has been said and thought in the world.*<sup>1</sup> At another, there is the often quoted definition of the black feminist writer Aime Cesair:

*Culture is everything. Culture is the way we dress, the way we carry our heads, the way we walk, the way we tie our ties – it is not only the fact of writing books or building houses.*<sup>2</sup>

Although elusive of definition, it is possible to identify key elements that run through the literature of major anthropologists. A 'culture' is a system(s) of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours and artefacts that members of a society or group use to interact with each other, and to interpret and shape their environments. These systems are transmitted from one generation to another through processes of learning and adaptation. From this perspective, there can be a number of 'cultures' and 'sub-cultures' within a society. It also means that 'cultures' are not stable but interactive between themselves and with the natural and social environment.<sup>3</sup> Given this understanding, cultures are social phenomena; they are learned not genetically given, and, in some sense, they exist beyond the individuals that carry them: we are born into cultures that shape us as well as helping to shape them and they continue after we die. From the perspective of this study, Clifford Geertz offers a useful point of departure:

*Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of a law but an interpretative one in search of meaning.*<sup>4</sup>

This study is an interpretative exercise. Interpretations can begin from many different perspectives - political, economic, ethnic. Given our brief, we are concerned with those aspects which seem to be of significance for Catholic religious education. However, Catholicism is itself a culture, consisting of 'webs of significance'. This is indicated by the fact that it has a body of doctrines, symbolic actions and patterns of behaviour, a sense of being both local and international, and has always been concerned with 'transmission' or learning. The Catholic community uses all of these to interpret the cultures in which it finds itself and, in turn, it is interpreted by them. This interaction is dynamic, for the points of interaction are always changing and fissiparous. Transmission and formation are essential to the way in which a culture understands itself, engages its environment, and also generates and mobilises the resources it needs to sustain itself and develop.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Arnold, M., preface to *Literature and Dogma: An Essay Towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible* (1873), in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* edited by R.H. Super.

2 Aime Cesair, Martiniquen writer, speaking to the World Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris. Kroeber and Kluckholm published a list of 160 definitions of 'culture' in 1952. Cf. also Kluckholm, C. *Mirror for Man: The Relation of Anthropology to Modern Life*, New York, Whittlesey House, 1949.

3 John Bodley argues that culture involves at least three elements: what people think, what they do, and the material products that they produce, in Bodley, J., *Cultural Anthropology: Tribes, States and Global Systems*, View, CA, Mayfield, 1994. Cf. also Raymond Williams' insistence that culture is ordinary; it consists in the constant interaction of the individual with social structures. For Williams a culture always has two aspects: traditional and creative. Cf. Williams, R., *Culture*, London, Fontana, 1981.

4 Geertz, C., *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books, 1973, pp. 4-5.

5 The Church cannot be reduced to a sociological subject. In this sense, the Church will be susceptible of structural functionalist analysis in that it can display institutes that establish normative beliefs and practices. On the other hand, it can also be seen within a historical-particularist perspective for it is, at least in one sense, a product of historical processes and responses to them. We need both these conceptual tools to begin to understand the complex and subtle forces at work in shaping any culture. However, the Church is an intentional culture and what remains significant are the sources it has for interpreting its existence and mission in any given period. It is the interpretative power of the Church/community that is at stake in any moment of transition.

## 2. Features in a landscape

In recent years a considerable number of surveys and interpretative essays have mapped the landscape of contemporary British and European religious culture, its practice, belief and public role.<sup>6</sup> From our perspective, the most recent survey of European values paints an interesting picture.<sup>7</sup> Although there may be increased participation by those who are active (i.e. attend church more than once a month), the pattern is one of steady decline in religious affiliation. At one level, religion still serves an important function in marking significant occasions: 68.6% attend church for marriage and 78.5% for death. Significantly for the growth of churches and sustained catechesis and formation, only 58.9% felt it was important to mark birth. While there is consensus among analysts that the mainstream churches are in steady decline, 41.6% would still regard themselves as a 'religious person' compared with 53.4% who would not (5% described themselves as atheist). The question 'would you say you are a religious person/not a religious person, etc.' is open to a variety of interpretations, which somewhat weakens its analytic value. Nonetheless, the responses it generated still point to a considerable openness to religion, although it must be qualified by other trends as well.<sup>9</sup> There are, however, two broad dimensions that touch directly upon our theme. The first concerns the content of belief and the second the public role of the churches in society.

### 2.1: Belief and its content

Regarding the content of people's belief, the *The European Values Study (EVS)* reveals a relatively strong generalised belief in 'God' (71.8%). The fact that only 31% understand this to be a 'personal God', while 40.1% believe in a 'spirit or life force', indicates that understanding of 'god' is more a form of Deism or unthematic spiritualism than one shaped by classical Christian creedal formulas.<sup>10</sup> According to Gordon Heald: ...most people are aware of Jesus, but only a minority believe he was the Son of God: instead they think of Jesus as just a man or a story.<sup>11</sup> Given a scale from 1-10, on which 10 corresponded to 'very important', the mean response to the question 'How important is God in your life?' was 4.92. Only 37.4% claimed that they got comfort and strength from religion. Having said that, a surprisingly high percentage - 49.8% - did take some moments for 'prayer, meditation, or contemplation or something like that.'<sup>12</sup> Although no statistics seem to be available for Great Britain, 43.0% in

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- 6 Brierley, P. (ed.), *The Tide is Running Out: What the English Church Attendance Survey Reveals*, London, Christian Research, 2000; and Brierley, P. (ed.), *2001 UK Christian Handbook: Religious Trends 3*, London, Christian Research, 2002-2003. Heald, G., *The Soul of Britain in The Tablet*, 3 June 2000, Vol. CCLIV, pp. 770-771. Useful work focusing on English Catholics in the work of Hornsby-Smith, M., *Where have all the Catholics Gone? 1: Look on the Bright Side*, in *The Tablet*, 10 June 1999, Vol. CCLIII, pp. 953-954; also Hornsby Smith, M., *A Changing Church: Facing the Future in Priests and People*, 2000, Vol. 14, No. 10, pp. 369-373; Hornsby Smith, M., *Roman Catholics in Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; Hornsby-Smith M., *A Transformed Church* in Hornsby Smith, M. (ed.), *Catholics in England, 1950-2000: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, London, Cassell, 1999; Hornsby-Smith, M. (ed.), *Catholics in England, 1900-2000: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, London, Cassell, 1999. But for wider contexts and perspectives cf. Barker, D., Halman, L. and Vloet, A., *The European Values Study 1981-1990. Summary Report*, London/Netherlands, European Values Study Group, 1992.
- 7 The material used here is from *The European Values Study: A Third Wave*, source book of the 1999/2000 European Values Study Surveys. Halman, L., EVS WORC, Tilburg University (hereafter EVS (2000).) Made available by courtesy of Prof. Jan Kerkhofs, University of Leuven. For summary interpretation of the material cf. Lambert, Y., *Religion: L'Europe à un tournant in Futuribles analyse et prospective*, 2002, July-August, Vol. 277, pp. 129-159.
- 8 The EVS 1999 shows that 15.4% of respondents in Great Britain described themselves as Catholic (60.3% Protestant). In terms of frequency 18.9% attend more than once a month, 27.8% on special occasions, 60.4% never, in EVS (1999), pp. 74 ff. For the changes between the surveys, cf. Lambert, Y., *Religion: L'Europe à un tournant*, pp. 150 ff. But compare figures in YouGov poll in *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 December 2004, reported by Prof. Anthony King, according to which 10% (Anglicans) and 14% (Catholics) of the 44% who describe themselves as believers attend church most weeks. 16% of the 44% described themselves as Catholics.
- 9 We will explore this in more detail when we discuss the 'spiritual revolution' outlined by Heelas and Woodhead below.
- 10 EVS (2000), p. 86, p. 94. Compare Heald, G., *The Soul of Britain*, 26% believe in a personal God. Useful comparison on other areas also. Most percentages are within a 5-point range of figures given in EVS (2000). A detailed discussion of methods, samples, formulation of questions, etc., between the different surveys is beyond the scope of this essay.
- 11 Heald, G., *The Soul of Britain*, pp. 770-771.
- 12 EVS (2000), p. 97. Obviously one would expect to see a higher incidence of prayer, etc., in those who are regular attendees and this is confirmed in Lambert, Y., *Religion: L'Europe à un tournant*, p. 140 (table 2), but, interestingly, the figures are also high for those who are not regular attendees (36%) and for agnostics (non athée convaincu – 31%; even 13% for convinced atheists). In terms of Catholics prayer, meditation, etc., is high with 70% and for Protestants, 55%. However, Lambert also speaks of the emergence of a "nébuleuse psycho-mystique" dans la sensibilité au New Age au sens large", p. 146. Cf. also Heelas, P. and Woodhead, L., *The Spiritual Revolution. Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2004.

Germany, 64.7% in Austria and 61.3% in Italy believe that time should be set aside for prayer, meditation and contemplation in schools.<sup>13</sup> In terms of specific beliefs, 58.3% believe in life after death; 35.3% believe in hell while 64.7% do not; yet 55.8% believe in heaven as opposed to 44.2% who do not; 66.9% believe in sin, only 33.1% do not. Vital to the cohesion of a religious community and the effective transmission of its faith and teaching is the family. Yet 58.1% thought that shared religious belief was not very important when identifying the characteristics of a successful marriage as opposed to 13.7% who thought it very important and 28.2% who thought it was rather important.<sup>14</sup>

The questions asked in the *EVS* are frustratingly loose and therefore not easy to interpret with any certainty from a theological and catechetical point of view. However, they indicate that when the doctrinal form of belief is weak or eclectic, then the use of 'god' becomes a way of gesturing to a spiritual need or sense.<sup>15</sup> Although using a religious language, it need not be 'naming' God in any Christian understanding of that term. This further facilitates a decline in traditional doctrinal faith and an opening up of a more eclectic approach to religion/spirituality. In this respect, it is interesting that the level of some personal spiritual activity - prayer, meditation, contemplation, the 'spirituality zone', so to speak - remains high.

However, doctrinal faith does not stand alone. Doctrines bring with them epistemological, moral and metaphysical structures, often only implicit at the general level of practice. These deep 'grammars' help to shape the way in which the believer understands and inhabits his or her world. They are also 'social' structures for they are embedded in the traditions, customs, assumptions, stories and histories that organise the way in which the community understands itself and has access to its truths. Hence, a weakening of these structures will have a very significant impact on the way people understand themselves to be part of a community and the capacity of the community to shape the life of the believer. Davie observes that *belief begins to drift further and further away from Christian orthodoxies as regular practice diminishes; a drifting of belief that is, probably, a greater challenge to the churches of the late twentieth century than the supposedly secular nature of the society in which we are obliged to live.*<sup>16</sup> Recent surveys certainly confirm a slide; Brierley, for example, shows that between 1979-1998 attendance in the Roman Catholic Church in England declined by 42%.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2: The public role of the churches

Given the degree of energy that the churches have put into speaking about public policy and trying to influence the debate, the statistical evidence of how their performances are rated by the public is not encouraging. In terms of the significance of belief in God for the exercise of public office, over 70% do not agree that it is necessary.<sup>18</sup> Again, almost 70% (69.6%) believe that religious leaders should not attempt to influence how they should vote in elections. 54% disagree with the view that it would be better for the country if more people with strong religious beliefs held office. In line with this, 65.2% feel that religious leaders should not influence government decisions. The majority of people, however, uphold the right of people to refuse to act, at least in the case of abortion, against their religious belief.<sup>19</sup> In terms of the

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13 *EVS* (2000), p. 109. 23.1% in the Czech Republic. These figures are interesting in terms of gauging the support for recognition of religion in public life. On the different aspects of religious identity in Europe cf. Lambert, Y., *Religion: L'Europe à un tournant*, pp. 141 ff.

14 *EVS* (2000), p. 115.

15 These are indications of the general population. It would be important to have more precise information about the beliefs of those who regularly attend church, those who only attend occasionally and those who regard themselves as Catholics but rarely, if ever, attend.

16 Davie, G., *Religion in Britain since 1945*, Oxford, Blackwell 1994, p. 76.

17 Brierley, P., *The Tide is Running Out*, p. 34. Cf. YouGov Poll, *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 December 2004, reported by Prof. Anthony King. The poll shows a slippage from the 77% who reported that they believed in God in the Gallup poll taken in 1977 to 44% in 2004.

High percentages of 'don't know's' feature in the 18-34 age range (37%; 39% in 35-44 yrs.) These figures become significant in terms of the effectiveness of transmission, which is seriously weakened as successive generations of parents become more distant from religion, religious practices and knowledge of core beliefs.

18 *EVS* (2000), p. 104.

19 67.9 % in *EVS* (2000), p. 108. It is not clear if this specific question reflects a general support for people acting according to their conscience or not.

responses that the churches offer to social problems, a formidable 73% think that the churches are failing. In the case of answers to moral problems, 67.4% think that the churches' response is not adequate. Perhaps, most significantly, given the priority that the churches have given to family life, 70% think that their answers to it are inadequate. Only 58.1% think that their church gives adequate answers to people's spiritual needs.<sup>20</sup> Finally, in response to the question 'how much confidence do you have in the Church?', 9.7% said they had very much confidence, 24.7% quite a lot, 45.9% not very much, whilst 19.7% had none at all.<sup>21</sup>

Once again, the survey raises more questions than it answers. What, for instance, counts as an 'answer' to family life? However, it is clear that there is some identifiable sense in which the churches are not responding adequately to the demands of national and family life. This, of course, may reflect the very considerable pressures that people experience in all these spheres as the media make the social and ethical questions raised by modern life immediate and personal.

From the *EVS* (2000), it is not clear to what extent attitudes have been influenced by the situation in Northern Ireland and how this may have determined the public perception of the role of religion and the churches in the political and social domains. Nor does the *EVS* take account of the impact of 9/11 and the irruption of radical violent faith-based politics into the public sphere. However, the *EVS* does seem to confirm important trends evident in earlier surveys. Even in Britain, where there is an 'established church', there is a discernible trend for the public to confine the church to the private realm. Here, it is used largely to ritualise significant life events that have a quasi-public dimension. In the YouGov poll featured in *The Daily Telegraph*, Prof. Anthony King noted that a clear majority wanted the Government to encourage parents to send their children to non-confessional schools, while only 5% wished to encourage 'faith schools'.<sup>22</sup> Taken together, these trends raise interesting questions for the Catholic Church whose commitment to education has been central to the Catholic community's success and survival.

The Catholic Church has always claimed a voice on issues of national or international importance, and has developed a substantial body of social teaching and theology, especially since Vatican II. However, the trends indicate that where the Church is involved in the public sphere there is a resistance to any of its activities that are not clearly altruistic and apolitical. This leads to significant problems for the Church and its agencies, committed as they are to social transformation on the basis of the Gospel and Magisterial teaching. If the *EVS* is an accurate indicator of social trends and perceptions of the churches' role in the public sphere, the 'resistance' to their political voice must have an impact upon the ability of practicing members in their own public lives and attitudes. Every member of the Catholic Church stands at the boundary of the secular and ecclesial cultures. If church-goers feel that the resources their churches offer them are not adequate then it leaves Catholics in a weaker position for maintaining their identity and being effective agents of evangelisation.

Interpretations depend on data and data are collected according to the questions that are asked. Michael Hornsby-Smith makes a valid point when he argues that one could collect data which show the Catholic community as thriving in many respects, not simply declining. Yet, he and many other commentators agree that a significant reconfiguration is taking place. Hornsby-Smith describes it as a *transformation of the culture of Catholicism in Britain*.<sup>23</sup> The recent work of Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, suggests that this may also be the case for the whole of religious life in the UK. In his analysis of the *EVS* (2000) results, Yves Lambert gives a European context, arguing that Europe is at a new turning point with regard to religion and spiritual autonomy.<sup>24</sup>

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20 *EVS* (2000), pp. 84-5. Cf. 37% in Heald, G., *The Soul of Britain*, pp. 770-771.

21 *EVS* (2000), p. 185.

22 YouGov Poll, *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 December 2004, reported by Prof. Anthony King.

23 Hornsby Smith, M., *Where Have all the Catholics Gone?*, pp. 953-954.

24 Heelas, P. and Woodhead, L., *The Spiritual Revolution. Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2004; Lambert, Y., *Religion: L'Europe à un tournant*, p. 157.



Identifying a 'turning-point' is one thing, understanding it and its implication is quite another. To provide a framework for our thinking, it will be useful next to look in a general fashion at two ways of understanding how the trends we have sketched are indicative of a much more profound cultural process. They are complementary interpretations: the first is the 'secularisation' thesis. The second is the 'subjectivisation' thesis. Both have generated a considerable body of literature, discussion and disagreement so that there are many different versions. Both, however, allow us at least to identify the significant features of modernity and late-modernity or post-modernity.

### 3. Modernity: secularisation<sup>25</sup>

One of the major features of contemporary cultures is the way in which they are self-characterising. This is a complex phenomenon, which is integral to the processes of identity formation and the organisation of values and beliefs. 'Modernity' is itself a narrative that characterises Western European and North American culture. It is the story that the culture tells about itself. In the process of narration it produces that which it narrates. Although there are many 'sub-narratives' and 'counter-narratives', the 'grand narrative' of modernity still serves as a point of reference.

In addition to creating an identity for a particular era, the narrative of modernity also validates key values and beliefs and the actions that express them. Hence, modernity has its own cardinal virtues, including 'freedom', 'objectivity', 'rationality', privacy, the authority of conscience, and freedom of self-expression. These are not just static, abstract concepts but are subtly embedded in our ways of understanding both ourselves and the cultural dynamics in which we are engaged. They are also significant in distinguishing modernity from religion. Modernity seeks to be self-grounding; it rejects the transcendent as a form of validation.

Among the most significant features of modernity for our purposes here is the phenomenon of 'secularisation'.<sup>26</sup> It is marked by differentiation, rationalisation and worldliness.<sup>27</sup> Metaphysically, this is a reconfiguration of the natural and supernatural spheres so that the natural order is understood to be autonomous with its own laws based on reason. The separation is replicated in the personal, social, economic and political spheres so that the 'secular' is the realm in which the validating authorities are 'reason' and the object is 'freedom'. The separation of natural and supernatural orders reinforces and legitimates the separation of religion and civil society in the political and cultural spheres. This is sometimes characterised as a shift from a theocentric to an anthropocentric world.<sup>28</sup> As this separation develops, reason, particularly in the form of scientific rationality, becomes the authoritative form of knowledge and truth. The project of modernity finds expression in the preamble to the European Constitution (2003). The values espoused are explicitly those of *humanism: equality of persons, freedom, respect for reason*, which are also equated with 'civilisation'.<sup>29</sup> Within this general framework, it is possible to identify some key features of modernity.

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25 For useful summary discussions cf. Hervieu-Léger, D., *Le Pèlerin et Converti. La Religion en Mouvement*, Paris, Champs Flammarion, 1999, pp. 29-36.

26 'Secularisation' receives its classic formulation from Max Weber but a modern discussion and analysis of it can be found in Bruce, S., *God is Dead. Secularisation in the West*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002, chapter 1, 'The Secularization Paradigm'. Cf. "I see secularisation as a social condition manifest in (a) the declining importance of religion for the operation of non-religious roles such as those of the state and the economy; (b) a decline in the social standing of religious roles and institutions and; (c) a decline in the extent to which people engage in religious practices, display beliefs of a religious kind and conduct other aspects of their lives in a manner informed by such beliefs." p. 3.

27 Tschannen, O., *The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization in The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1991, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 395-415. Herbert, D., *Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003, chapters 1 and 2 offer a useful analysis and discussion of current theories of modernity and religion and the nature of secularisation.

28 It is important to appreciate the extent to which the Church used this language before Vatican II and used it to claim its own autonomy from the State and argue the supremacy of its 'eternal' Truth. In terms of the education debate, cf. Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1929, esp. § 11-15. For a fuller discussion cf. Evennet, H.O., *The Catholic Schools in England and Wales*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1944.

29 Preamble, *Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe*. The preamble consciously echoes the Preamble to the *Charter of Fundamental Human Rights* (2003).

'Progress' is part of the credo of modernity. The changes within each sphere are legitimated in terms of being necessary for 'progress'. Usually, this is taken to be benign, entailing improvement and therefore an automatic enhancement of personal and collective well-being. Progress is also one of the imperatives of instrumental reason, which shapes the future in all the fields of human thought and action by its laws. Science and technology are also integral to the idea of progress; indeed, they are seen as the engines of its necessity.

Modernity makes demands on its agents at every level and thus people are required to gain competence, especially through education. The material world is dominated and bent to human goals and there is a desire to make economies fit rational structures too. The 'irrational', often that which resists the paradigm of scientific knowledge, has to be tamed. Here, there is an implicit equation between power and freedom that translates into the personal domain especially through money: wealth extends the range of my freedom through the expansion of my choices and the resources I can mobilise to obtain the ends that I desire. Freedom becomes measured by the degree to which it allows for the 'personal expression' considered integral to the pursuit of 'personal fulfilment'.

'Modernity', 'late-modernity' and 'post-modernity' are important cultural periodisations. They allow a culture to define itself in relation to what it believes has gone before. This gives it power over the past. Hence the characterisation of 'the traditional' against 'the modern', for instance, is not just an historical characterisation but carries a polemical purpose as well. For 'the modern', the 'traditional' comes to represent the oppressive nature of an external authority that restricts freedom of thought and action. 'Tradition', as such, is not subject to the scrutiny of personal reason, therefore it can be represented as 'irrational' or at least lacking in the authority of autonomous reason. If autonomous reason is seen to be the foundation of scientific enquiry and the critical thought that underpins democracy, then 'tradition' can also be represented as inhibiting progress. Modernity, on the other hand, confers freedom and liberty upon its subjects. It makes the human person the originator of history and truth and the agent of his or her own actions. Such an individual becomes capable of more varied and flexible social interactions and groupings, therefore more capable of appreciating 'difference' and the 'other'. Modernity presents a vision of 'equality' and 'mutuality'. These values are enshrined in legal codes and catalogues of human rights, themselves the expression of human reason, and serve to demonstrate the universal character of modernity. In short, modernity offers an alternative version of salvation and describes a secular soteriology.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.1: The tensions within modernity

The simple division into traditional and modern is both distorting and difficult to sustain because, in practice, we live within both structures. Both work to our advantage, as well as disadvantage, in different circumstances. The distinction between 'traditional' and 'modern' affects the way in which we come to view the systems of authority and their claims. If we are imbued with the values of modernity, then a tradition of authority that is hierarchical and sacral will become problematic. If a church with a hierarchical-sacral structure cannot find successful ways of mediating between the different understandings of authority and its source, then it places demands upon its members that may not always be sustainable personally or institutionally.<sup>31</sup> Where it is not rejected altogether, it will certainly be suspect. Moreover, the very success of 'modernity' means that it comes to be seen as 'the tradition' in its turn. When this happens, it becomes subject to its own critique of 'tradition', as happens in its relationship

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30 For an interesting discussion of this cf. Midgley, M., *Science and Salvation. A Modern Myth and its Meaning*, London, Routledge, 1992.

31 Members of any community or organisation will constantly be involved in negotiating the borders of the different cultures that they inhabit. However, some resolutions can create either religious ghettos or facilitate absorption by the secular culture. Cf. the discussion of the Church's dialogical/dialectical stances below.

with 'post-modernity'. Self-definition against modernity can also take the form of being 'traditionalist' as a strategy for resisting the totalising claims of modernity.

### 3.2: Truth-trust

At a deeper level, these 'translations' and transactions describe an economy of values in which notions of 'truth' become politicised. The question becomes not what is truth but whose truth is it? The most obvious example of this is in the phenomenon of 'spin' which is the systematic and intentional conversion (exchange) of 'truth' into personal capital. In late-modernity/post-modernity there is always a struggle between the instrumental character of reason with its offer of autonomy and the way in which this generates a politicisation of truth. This touches on both the social and personal values necessary for stable and fluent relationships between persons in their many different roles. It is no surprise that 'trust' becomes problematic and that mechanisms of accountability and transparency have been developed to compensate for its erosion and the problematic question of 'truth' and 'truth-telling'. One consequence, however, is the automatic withholding of trust; sometimes a dispositional 'hermeneutic of suspicion' comes to characterise our lives in the public sphere and, less obviously, in the private sphere.

If modernity is also understood as the democratic form in which and through which reason, autonomy and power are coordinated and channelled towards beneficial ends, then the destabilising of trust in the institutions which contain and order these relations must threaten the cohesion and productivity of the social space. This not only makes rational public discourse more difficult, thereby reducing the ability of the discourse to communicate with citizens and mediate between competing subcultures and groups, but it means that citizens become alienated from the process and discursive structures of democracy. Not only does this lead to a withdrawal of faith in and, therefore, consent to such processes but it actually weakens the power of the structures themselves to achieve their goals. This leads to the fragmentation of the 'polis', which reinforces the negative individualism that modernity can generate. People come to live in society in a purely instrumental way that erodes any possibility of a 'common good'. Politics is forced into the position of inflating the goods that it can offer in order to gain popular support and then generating cynical disengagement from the democratic process when it fails to deliver. These tensions and contradictions within the cultural and political force of modernity touch all institutions, including the Church.<sup>32</sup>

From our point of view, the most distinctive aspect of 'modernity' is the differentiation of institutions and the specialisation of different domains within the social sphere. This can be seen, for example, in the separation of arts and sciences, characterised by C.P. Snow as 'two cultures', or the separation of technology and ethics.<sup>33</sup> How to relate these different fields to one another, since developments in each have consequences for the other, is one of the principal tensions in modern society. The process of separation is expressed most sharply in those societies where there is a constitutional separation of Church and State, as in North America and France. Even where it is not institutionalised, however, the process of separation, particularly with regard to religion, continues. This, it is argued, is secularisation.<sup>34</sup> One school of thought predicts that the process of secularisation will lead to the increasing marginalisation of religion from the public realm. It becomes either a purely private matter or

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32 Against this, however, one could argue that the espousal of democratic processes and ideals in Eastern European countries indicates the vitality of democracy in its ability to overcome tensions and contradictions in a way which totalitarian forms cannot. Democracies possess more adaptive power. However, one would also have to take into account the ability of democracies to sustain the failure to meet expectations, economically and politically. Affluent Western democracies, particularly those in Europe, have generated a high expectation of economic and social security which they can no longer sustain, hence the withholding of trust. The same may also be the case when emerging democracies fail to meet the expectations they generate.

33 Snow, C.P., *The Two Cultures*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1969; and *A Second Look: An Expanded Version of 'The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution'*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1969.

34 For a useful summary and discussion of the different positions, cf. Davie, G., *Religion in Modern Europe: Memory Mutates*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 24-37.

it disappears altogether as beliefs appear implausible in the face of rational (and often reductive) accounts of our material, social and psychological worlds.<sup>35</sup> Frequently this is seen as a necessary process, so that persons may attain full autonomy and exercise uninhibited reason. It is part of a personal and social process of emancipation.

More recently, however, José Casanova has refined the definition of ‘secularisation’ and questioned the predictive nature of the case.<sup>36</sup> While the ‘secularisation thesis’ does entail differentiation, it does not necessarily result in or imply a reduction in religious belief and practice. According to Casanova, religion is not relegated to the private sphere but has a lively public role in many countries, for example, in the USA. Indeed, it is in those countries where churches have resisted structural differentiation that there has been the most noticeable decline.<sup>37</sup> Notwithstanding the patterns described by *EVS* (2000), Peter Berger claims: *...the assumption that we live in a secularised world is false. The world today with some exceptions ... is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever.*<sup>38</sup>

#### 4. Modernity – ‘the subjective turn’: religion or spirituality

If the ‘secularisation thesis’ is one way of trying to understand the place of religion within modernity, an important complementary concept is that of ‘the subjective turn’. We noted earlier that modernity entails a significant shift from a theocentric to an anthropocentric way of understanding the world. But even within the anthropocentric understanding, there is a further movement from what we may call ‘objective’ sources of authority and truth to those that are ‘subjective’. Hence, part of our contemporary culture is the value we give to ‘experience’ and ‘feeling’ as modes of validation. If validation is conferred through these subjectivities then there is no need to defer to an external or ‘higher’ authority. One can be ‘inner-directed’ and self-authenticating, and thus ‘To thine own self be true.’ In a sense there is the exaltation of the ‘inner voice’, which may once have been seen as the voice of conscience or even of God – the Aboriginal Vicar, as Newman calls it. Implicit is the notion of the uniqueness and originality of the self. In the words of Charles Taylor:

*Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potential that is properly my own. This is the background understanding to the modern ideal of authenticity and to the goals of self-fulfilment or self-realization in which it is usually couched. This is the background that gives moral force to the culture of authenticity, including its most degraded, absurd, or trivialized forms. It is what gives sense to ‘doing your own thing’ or ‘finding your own fulfilment’.*<sup>39</sup>

Of course, self-fulfilment need be neither self-indulgence nor emotivism, but it does mean that when making decisions or setting life-shaping goals, subjectivity becomes the primary

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35 Cf. Bruce, S., *From Cathedrals to Cults: Religion in the Modern World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, also Bruce, S., *God is Dead*. Of course, the most articulate exponent of the triumph of Reason and religion as the form of the irrational is Edward Gibbon in Gibbon, E., *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776-1788.

36 Casanova, J., *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1994.

37 There is a ‘European exceptionalism’ for it is clear that the secularisation thesis which is predictive of religious decline holds in Europe, as our preliminary survey seems to confirm. Casanova’s argues this may be explained on the basis of the close connection between churches and political institutions in Europe and the ways in which the churches resisted their apparent loss of power with the process of differentiation. This is also part of R. Gill’s thesis about the decline of religion in certain parts of Great Britain, i.e. that the decline was a consequence of overprovision rather than a cause. Cf. Gill, R., *The Myth of the Empty Church*, London, SPCK, 1993.

38 Berger, P. (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Washington, D.C., Ethics and Public Policy Centre, and Grand Rapids, MI, W.B. Eerdmans, 1999, p. 2. For a critique of modernity’s prejudice against religion in the political sphere cf. Metz, J.B., *A Passion for God. The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, translated by J. Matthew Ashley, New York, Paulist Press, 1998. Note especially the discussion of religion in modernity and the significance of Vatican II for the Church’s engagement with politics. In his essay, *Monotheism and Democracy: Religion and Politics on Modernity’s Ground*, pp. 142-149, Metz exposes the prejudice against religion in the Enlightenment and the inadequate understanding of ‘reason’ that it creates. Metz proposes his own notion of ‘anamnesic reason’ to complement it.

39 Taylor, C., *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 29.

organising and orientating authority.<sup>40</sup> Although there is always the danger of a narcissistic individualism that instrumentalises relationships, emphasis may be placed also on justice: personal self-fulfilment must be legitimately limited in order to ensure that other people's rights to self-fulfilment and flourishing are allowed.

The 'turn to the subject' with its emphasis on autonomy and self-fulfilment, or as the theme song in Chicago has it, 'Live the life you like. Like the life you live', has consequences for the way religion is understood. It need no longer stand for access to the 'The Transcendent' as an other-worldly reality, but to one that is very much 'this worldly' and located in the subject.<sup>41</sup> In this way religion becomes 'commodified'. Writing in *The Guardian*, Madeline Bunting captures the 'subjective turn' in so far as it applies to religious sensibility:

*People are turning inside themselves for answers rather than looking to external religions which people have to fit into rather than finding something that fits them. People are taking more control over aspects of their life, spiritual and health, rather than letting other people tell them what to do or believe.*<sup>42</sup>

## 5. A spiritual revolution?

In their recent study, *The Spiritual Revolution*, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead develop the thesis that: *...traditional forms of religion, particularly Christianity, are giving way to holistic spirituality, sometimes still called 'New Age'*<sup>43</sup> They build their work around the notion of the 'subjective turn' and distinguish between 'religion' and 'spirituality'. The former they understand in terms of 'life-as'. These congregations emphasise the transcendent source of significance – that which comes from beyond us and constitutes the authority to which individuals must conform. 'Life-as' comes in a variety of different 'other-centred' activities, such as charity work or fidelity to the roles of husband, wife or parent. In their survey of congregations in Kendal that fitted their model of 'life-as' communities, 83.5% of respondents indicated that the statement 'the important thing is to do your duty' came closer to their belief than the statement 'the important thing is to fulfil yourself.'<sup>44</sup>

The pattern of belief was also clear. Stress was put on the transcendent character of God in language that was predominantly male.<sup>45</sup> Jesus Christ was the immediate focus of devotion and there was a strong sense of 'finding God's will', 'obeying the Lord', etc.<sup>46</sup> According to Heelas and Woodhead, congregations were characterised by their adherence to a strong ethical and metaphysical dualism, believing, for example, in the difference between Creator and created, natural and supernatural, and an ordered-disordered moral life.<sup>47</sup>

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40 This 'turn' has been identified and traced philosophically and culturally by a number of authors. Cf. Hobsbawm, E., *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century*, London, Abacus, 1995. But Charles Taylor in a number of works, most notably in *The Sources of the Self*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1989, gives the most sustained exploration, especially in Part II, pp. 185 ff, where he traces the development of the culture of 'inwardness'. Cf. also Taylor's succinct discussion in Taylor, C., *The Ethics of Authenticity*, esp. pp. 25-29, and 'The Slide to Subjectivism', pp. 55-69. Taylor is concerned to argue that 'authenticity', though it can be a flawed ideal, does not necessarily lead to a narcissistic instrumentalism in relationships but can be harnessed to a moral purpose.

41 Bauman, Z., *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1997.

42 Bunting, M., *Shopping For God* in *The Guardian*, 16 December 1996.

43 Heelas, P. and Woodhead, L., *The Spiritual Revolution. Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2004 (hereafter Heelas). Lyon, D., *Jesus in Disneyland. Religion in Postmodern Times*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002, also tracks the changing shape of religion in post-modernity. Lyon makes the important point that sociology is not a neutral observer and needs to acknowledge its own secularised perspective. He argues that religion and faith are in a process of transformation and that human beings do not make their meanings only out of what the culture provides. He recognises the other resources, 'the eternity in the heart' or 'the moral demands inscribed within creation itself'.

44 Heelas, p. 14. The research covered the main congregations in Kendal: Catholic, Anglican, Evangelical, non-conformist, and others. For the complete list cf. Appendix 2: The Congregational Domain in Kendal, p. 154.

45 Heelas, p. 15.

46 Heelas, p. 15.

47 Heelas, p. 16. Although Heelas and Woodhead have an interesting and plausible way of categorising the different styles/ theologies of the congregations – congregations of difference, experiential difference, humanity, and experiential humanity (pp. 60-67, N.B. Catholic congregation is classified as 'congregations of humanity') - we do not think that there is sufficient nuance. Evangelicals and Catholics may use the same words, yet these words stand within different and sometimes quite contradictory fields of discourse. A strong sacramental sense produces quite a different way of living in and through the world from one that has no sacramental imagination. Cf. Part III.

In contrast, the 'subjective-life' forms of the sacred produce a spirituality in which a considerable repertoire of individual and group processes is available. The focus is on individual growth and fulfilment and 'well-being', and the sources of authority are interior not transcendent. The language tends away from dualism to stress 'harmony', 'balance', 'flow', 'integration', 'only connect'.<sup>48</sup> The object is to enable the convergence of the spiritual and the personal – to live one's own truth and to 'discover the inner self', and the dominant metaphors are therapeutic, that is the reconciliation of fragmentation or division, the healing of psychic, relational, and physical wounds to facilitate the fullness of life. Relationships are also central in these techniques and processes tend to be mutual and reciprocal rather than hierarchical.<sup>49</sup>

Heelas and Woodhead argue that there has been a growth in the 'subjective-life' spirituality and a decline in the 'life-as' religion. They postulate the 'subjective turn' as an explanation. They explore the reasons for leaving the congregational 'life-as' forms. Following the work of Richter and Francis (1998), they argue that people leave because their values are no longer compatible with the congregational form of religion rather than because of a loss of faith: *commitment to personal autonomy, independence, and freedom play an important role in disaffiliation from the congregational domain.*<sup>50</sup> The sense that attendance was pointless and failed to meet their need to give meaning to their lives also led people to disaffiliate themselves. In the case of young people, a significant factor was that: *few church services offer the strongly affective, intense experience which young people can find elsewhere....*<sup>51</sup> In his recent study, John Fulton also noted that young adults were searching for a sense of the 'extraordinary' in their spiritual experience – not necessarily exotic; it could be Lourdes, for example - and a sense of community.<sup>52</sup> Most parishes would not meet these criteria if their relationships are formal, superficial, confined to Sundays and quasi-anonymous. However, we need also to be cautious about religious 'events', such as the Papal World Youth Days, which risk producing a transitory effervescence, although the effects of stable 'sites of community' such as Taizé can be significant.<sup>53</sup> People, of course, can leave congregational religion for a number of reasons, not least as a result of the breaking of routines through highly mobile life-styles and relocations. However, while Heelas and Woodhead concede that more research is needed, it is clear that commitments to 'subjective-life' as opposed to those of 'life-as' are marked by significant trends. They speculate that the movement to spirituality will increase.

*The Spiritual Revolution* makes a plausible case for the significance of the 'subjective turn' in the movement from 'religion' to 'spirituality' but it is not conclusive. Bruce, for instance, questions the lasting significance of 'New Age':

*The New Age is eclectic to an unprecedented degree and it is so dominated by the principle that the sovereign consumer will decide what to believe that, even if it were the case that we have some innate propensity to spirituality, we will not get from where we are now to any sort of religious revival. The principle of individual choice seems so firmly established in our culture that ... I cannot see how a shared faith can be created from a low-salience world of pick-and-mix religion. Furthermore, I suspect that the New Age, weak as it has always been, will weaken further as the children of the New Age prove indifferent to the spiritual questing of their parents.*<sup>54</sup>

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48 Heelas, p. 26.

49 Heelas, p. 27.

50 Heelas, p. 120. Cf. Richter, P. and Francis, L.J., *Gone but not Forgotten: Church Leaving and Returning*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998.

51 Heelas, p. 121.

52 Fulton, J. et al., *Young Catholics at the New Millennium: The Religion and Morality of Young Adults in Western Countries*, Dublin, UCD Press, 2000.

53 For a useful analysis of these events cf. Hervieu-Léger, D., *Le Pèlerin et Converti*, pp. 83-118.

54 Bruce, S., *God is Dead*, p. 105.

Part of the problem with 'spirituality' is that it lacks definition as such and thus can simply become a way of referring to a constantly shifting group of practices and beliefs to do with 'the soul'. Equally, it could be just as much a reaction to an overly rational, material and 'this worldly' culture as institutional religion. It may also be the case that Heelas and Woodhead have underestimated the power of congregational groups to adapt to the varied needs and expectations of membership. Within the Catholic Church, it is evident that many 'holistic' practices in the spirituality repertoire as well as 'person-centred' formation and development programmes have been well integrated into the life of the community. This can bring benefits and tensions. At one level, discerned adaptation will help people negotiate the tensions between the demands of a 'life-as' community and the needs of 'subjective-life'. In many cases, there is no direct contradiction between their practice and the core beliefs espoused by the Church. Indeed, often one can reinforce and enrich the other. In this way, many people can have the strength of both and show a creative integrity in living a Christian life within the secular cultures. At another level, however, particularly with regard to sources of authority, there can be clashes. The recent tensions regarding homosexuality in the Anglican Communion or the persistent questions regarding the status of women and their eligibility for ordination are obvious examples. Within a hierarchical community, it is often assumed that these are simple matters of 'obedience' and 'fidelity', without appreciating that the legitimacy of such demands has itself become problematic. Tension will, for example, obviously result from an understanding of teaching authority that still operates on the basis of the nineteenth-century division into an 'ecclesia docens' and an 'ecclesia dicens'. This will show itself not only in terms of questions of 'obedience' and adherence to teaching, but in the ability of the teaching to be well-informed and formulated to take account of the experience and needs of the Church's members: teaching needs to be persuasive not just declarative. It also makes demands upon the programmes for education, formation and catechesis. Not only do such programmes have to take account of pedagogical theory and cognitive development, they must also be sensitive to the ways in which the sources of validation and authenticity have been internally located by the 'subjective turn' of contemporary culture. The evidence that we have from the *EVS* (2000) and the other surveys cited indicates a shift away from institutional religion and the traditional sources of authority in doctrinal belief and ethical conduct. We noticed earlier the way in which hierarchical-sacral authority is made problematic by modernity. Religious education, catechesis and formation for the Catholic community will need to discover ways in which the ecclesial sources of authority (Magisterium, liturgy, theology and experience of living faith) can be retrieved in a culture where the sources of authority have shifted.<sup>55</sup>

While acknowledging the thrust of the thesis developed by Heelas and Woodhead, it is clear that they describe the phenomenon of 'spirituality' without engaging in any critique or analysis of the underlying features of modernity which it represents. There are long shadows in modernity's 'subjective turn'. These too need to be appreciated if we are to come to a judgment about its significance for religion. It will be useful, here, to single out some features which we can then explore in terms of their theological importance in Part III.

## 6. Some problematic features

*The great mystery is not that we should have been thrown down here at random between the profusion of matter and that of the stars; it is that from our very prison we should draw, from our own selves, images powerful enough to deny our nothingness. (André Malraux, Man's Fate (1933))*

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<sup>55</sup> A useful discussion of the theological issues at stake for ecclesiology is Daniel Speed Thompson's study of the ecclesiology of Edward Schillebeeckx in *The Language of Dissent*, Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2003, esp. pp. 147 ff. This radical approach should be set along side Hans Urs von Balthasar's typological approach in, *The Office of Peter in the Structures of the Church*, San Francisco, Loyola Press, 1986. Together they suggest the range of the debates about authority within the Church and the vision of the Church that these entail.

## 6.1: Meaning

In a celebrated phrase, Nietzsche declared that *God is Dead*.<sup>56</sup> Although there may be good evidence for assuming that the declaration was premature, it nevertheless captures an underlying mood of modernity. The separation of the sacred and the secular means that the transcendent can no longer bear the weight of meaning that must fall on human shoulders. Moreover, the search for meaning is intensified in modernity as discourses differentiate and multiply. Life is experienced as fragmented, since each sphere takes on its own dynamic and logic. Modernity requires us all to be 'multi-lingual' and that in itself makes the task of finding meaning harder for everyone. Education becomes a question of mastering these different 'languages' but it cannot supply a sense of unity. Nietzsche's claim signals the death of meaning in the sense of a unified vision of the world and our place in it. Although the age of heroes is also dead, if the subject is now to bear the weight he or she must become a sort of 'Übermensch', a super-human, forging meaning through exercise of the will. Such 'webs of significance' are tentative at best and often torn, so that we have all to be spinners and weavers without any guarantee that meaning will be caught.

Already within the Nietzschean world there is the shadow of nihilism. When the 'subject' is read through the Freudian lens of psychoanalysis, the illusion of transparency and the sovereignty of Reason are finally dispelled. With the discovery of the new continent of the unconscious, the 'turn to the subject' cannot be the liberation it was thought to be. Instead, it is an encounter with a self that is unknown and a will whose sources lie in subterranean motivations and experiences. Reason, like Samson, has been blinded and shackled to another god. The subject, then, is not the simple turn to an unproblematic interior. Given the abyss of the unconscious that opens, the search for 'authenticity' can have no end; we can never gain any certainty about the ultimate 'honesty' of our motives. This source of validation that frees and absolves the self becomes inaccessible. The 'turn to the subject' that characterises modernity, when combined with the process of differentiation, produces what McIntyre has described as 'an epistemological crisis'.<sup>57</sup>

## 6.2: The economic and technological dimension

Many of the features of contemporary late-modern/post-modern cultures are shaped and determined by economic forces. Indeed, it could be argued that they result from the unprecedented power that affluence gives to people. Walter Benjamin observed that *a religion may be discerned in capitalism*.<sup>58</sup> As a secular religion, economics is extremely successful. It utilises the techniques of modernity and post-modernity. In its neo-conservative, free-market form it is one of the most significant challenges that theistic religion faces. It characterises the market in a religious way: Capitalism operates within a perception of the market as having the status of an external, independent, transcendental sphere, separate from society but imposing fixed laws on all people, places and times. Its implicit value system is, in essence, another formula for saving the world, this time through economic progress.<sup>59</sup> The aetiology of evil is grasped in economic terms, that is, the struggle for survival forces people to lie, steal, cheat, kill and so on. If scarcity produces these effects then the production of abundance and

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56 F. Nietzsche, *Thus spake Zarathustra*, translated by A. Tille, revised by M.M. Bozman, with an introduction by E. Rhys, London, Dent; New York, Dutton, 1958, p. 2; Williams, B. (ed.), *The Gay Science - With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, § 108.

57 MacIntyre, A., *Epistemological Crises. Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science in Hauerwas, S. and Gregory Jones, L. (eds.), Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1989, pp. 138-157. For MacIntyre the epistemological crisis occurs when a person comes "to recognise the possibility of systematically different possibilities of interpretation, or the existence of alternative and rival schemata which yield mutually incompatible accounts of what is going on around him.", p. 139. Cf. also his discussion on the problem of 'translation' this creates in MacIntyre, A., *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, London, Duckworth, 1988, esp. pp. 385-388.

58 Benjamin, W., *Capitalism as Religion* in Bullock, M. and Jennings, M.W. (eds.), *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1, Cambridge, MA, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 288. ff.

59 For the interpretation of modern economic analysis as a secular religion see Nelson, R. H., *Reaching for Heaven on Earth: Theological Meaning of Economics*, Savage, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 1991. Also the critique of capitalism in the writings of Pope John Paul II, esp. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Vatican, 1987, marking the 20th anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, 1967.



devotion to economic efficiency will have the opposite effect. As a consequence an 'economic soteriology' displaces ethics so that individual responsibility is subordinate to economic forces; the individual can do nothing until the system is perfected.

However, the soteriology of the market is self-serving in the sense that it offers salvation through consumption; buying or possessing X will bring security or happiness or remove the burdens of an existence trapped within the fluctuations and unreliability of the finite. Consumption, as we have suggested, is also tied to freedom, so that the values of autonomy, self-realisation, progress, and liberation from want are all expressed economically and realised through such systems.

This is further reinforced by the enormous and rapid advances in technology, particularly in the field of information technology, which enables access to information in a previously unimaginable way. As every member of society has access to such technology within easy and immediate reach, they also have access to sources of authority beyond the traditional institutional channels. Moreover, the whole notion of 'expert' and 'profession' with its regulation, values, and accountability is transformed and in many ways circumvented. Authority is 'democratised'; today's information technology not only changes the methodologies of transmission and learning but also alters the status of teachers, formators, parents, priests, to name only those offices and roles most pertinent to our study. With such technology comes a new potential for self-expression, definition and public projection. The simple ability to take photographs on a mobile phone and instantly transmit them brings people into a new proximity but it also allows us to 'style' and project ourselves in a new way. As the marketing of technology makes clear, it is not just a product but also a symbol of power and status. It becomes a requisite for social interaction because where 'knowledge is power' to be 'out of the loop' is not only to be powerless but also to be invisible.

Technological development also raises new ethical problems. These can be seen most obviously in the fields of science and medicine. The speed of advance and the complex nature of the questions to which it gives rise place enormous strain on the ethical systems of our cultures, secular as well as religious. In presenting new situations and possibilities, technological advance strains the conceptual tools available in traditional ways of handling moral questions. These can appear inadequate for the new world that is being created. This heightens the tensions within communities, as the power which technological development confers runs ahead of the ability of normal philosophical and theological systems to interpret and assess its consequences and goals. The effect can be to leave people feeling at sea, overwhelmed with questions that touch upon the most basic assumptions they have about human life and identity. In its turn, this can further erode the traditional sources of authority within a culture or a church that appears unable to respond adequately and swiftly to the issues that are raised – particularly when these are made immediate and urgent by the media.

### 6.3: The force of feminism

The struggle of women to gain a voice, recognition and access to the sources of power in society has been one of the great liberating movements of modernity. A major series of critiques has been developed by feminist thinkers and these have very strongly conditioned how we characterise identity and self in modernity. We cannot enter here into all the different 'waves' and debates that mark a rich, profound and revolutionary discourse. We can, however, observe that it cannot be dismissed as being only about 'women' and the construction of gender identities; it also transforms the way we think about 'men' and how masculinity is constructed and enshrined in social structures.<sup>60</sup> Through feminist scholarship,

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60 Useful concise discussion of essentialist and constructivist positions in Farley, W., *Eros for the Other. Retaining Truth in a Pluralist World*, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania University Press, 1996, pp. 147ff. Seminal texts that inform the discussion are Wollstonecraft, M.,

cultural and philosophical critiques of contemporary Western cultures have become aware of the way in which 'women' have hitherto been made invisible. It is one of the achievements of scholarship to recover the voices of women from the past so that they can find their place in the discourse of the present and the future.

The critique of the way in which power in our culture has been enshrined and expressed in the presuppositions we carry about 'men' and 'women' has touched every secular and religious institution as well as the mundane interactions of work and family. These are not simply surface phenomena that are marked in the self-conscious discourse of political correctness. The tensions that surround inclusive or exclusive language, patriarchal or matriarchal configurations of power, the way in which systems enshrine and re-assert gendered world-views, consciously or unconsciously serve the gender interests of those who operate them. They are not just variations on the age-old war of the sexes. They represent very significant shifts in our cognitive and social structures.

Bound up with the way in which we perceive gender and assign it significance within our cultures are epistemological questions as well as political ones. What we know as well as how we know is determined by our location within the political, social and psychological fields that shape our existence and relationships. Moreover, as our identities are also bound up with our embodiment, the question of how our bodies are perceived and what they come to symbolise takes on a critical importance for self-expression, value and knowledge. Whilst these debates can be conducted on a theoretical and critical level, on a practical level they shape our quotidian horizons and reach into all aspects of our institutional and inter-personal activities. They mean that we cannot be naïve about how truth is constructed or power embodied. They act as an immanent critique of social structures and the assumptions on which these are based. All of these debated values and perceptions are present in every classroom, formation programme and congregation. People live within many different cultural horizons; how they negotiate them and the choices they make cannot easily be settled by an appeal to authority. As the recent debates within the Protestant churches show, appeal to 'authority' must now reckon with 'authorities'. Culture clashes do not happen only in a public forum. They are present within each of us for we internalise the values, beliefs, and practices of each culture we inhabit. The subjectivity has to be multi-lingual; that is the gift of late-modernity.

## 6.4: The burden of ordinariness

Cultures, of course, can also provide the resources for meaning in their own 'meta-narratives' and organising principles. Yet, here too we may observe deep tensions. We have spoken about the erosion of trust and the translation of 'truth' into 'power'. While this does not necessarily completely undermine the 'meta-narratives' or those deep structures that seek to give coherence to our account of our selves in a social and historical continuum, it makes them less convincing as bearers of meaning. We recognise that the 'meta-narratives' are how

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*The Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1798), Mills, J.S., *Subjection of Women* (1861), Woolf, V., *Three Guineas* (1938) and *A Room of One's Own* (1928), de Beauvoir, S., *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949). There is obviously a vast amount of literature that deals with the issues condensed here, but useful discussions may be found in Tuna, N. and Morgen, S. (eds.), *Engendering Rationalities*, New York, State University of New York, 2001; Nicholson, L.J., *Feminism/Postmodernism*, London, Routledge, 1990. Particularly significant are Butler, J., *Gender Trouble*, London, Routledge, 1990, and *Bodies that Matter*, London, Routledge, 1993, and the social critique of Susan Bordo in *Unbearable Weight*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993, and *The Male Body*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999. For a Lacanian perspective, cf. Copjec, J., *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2003. For a reflective statement of the Church's Magisterium on the status of women, cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Vatican, Vatican Press, 1988. Daly, M., *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, London, Women's Press, 1973, and Johnson, E.A., *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, New York, Crossroads, 1992, represent important texts in feminist theology, as does the exegetical work of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, which seeks to recover the feminine in scripture and theology. For an introductory survey and discussion of the issues cf. Schüssler Fiorenza, E. and Collins, M., *Women. Invisible in Church and Theology, Concilium 1985*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, and *The Rights of Women, Concilium 2002/5*, London, SCM Press. For a speculative theological approach within a Trinitarian pneumatology, cf. Hanvey SJ, J., *Healing the Wound: Discourses of Redemption in Parsons, S.F. (ed.), Challenging Women's Orthodoxies in the Context of Faith*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, pp. 205-222.

societies and the elites within them organise our understanding of our culture and our selves. One may think of them as 'dominant cultural orthodoxies'; subscribing to them admits us to the culture, refusing them condemns us to being on the outside, which only intensifies the struggle for meaning. The culture of late-modernity, therefore, has an ambivalent attitude to 'meta-narratives' and is much more comfortable with domestic narrative.

This reflects our epistemological agnosticism about the possibility of absolute truth. Truth also becomes domestic and so life – its tragedy and comedy – is lived within the 'ordinary.'<sup>61</sup> Although we retain the words for 'evil' and 'holy', they cease to have any metaphysical depth or touch upon the ontology and purpose of our lives. They no longer have a reference in transcendence.<sup>62</sup> At best they carry only a trace of it; they are words marked 'remaindered', which we use to signal strong approval or disapproval and which have become indicative of our moral and metaphysical inarticulacy. The 'ordinary' confines us to the horizons of the street. We inhabit the 'The Queen Vic' or walk the length of 'Coronation Street'. The 'ordinary' refuses anything but the domestic narrative. Our 'heroes' become celebrities, as ephemeral and flat as their image on the screen. The ordinary is suspicious of the 'extraordinary' because it is too aware of the entrapments of promotion. On a continent that lives with the ghosts of Hitler and Stalin, we are conscious of the dark forces that drive human motivation and the claim to power. It is no surprise, then, that the literature and drama of modernity produce the figure of the anti-hero. The ordinary needs no history. Hence while the 'turn to the subject' allows for time, paradoxically that time is resistant to a sense of history.

## 6.5: Nostalgia

The substitution of nostalgia for a sense of history is a strategy for survival. Nostalgia is symptomatic of exile, especially when the future is no longer a place of refuge. Nostalgia becomes a constructed safe past over which we have control, but it is a past that never exists. It expresses our desire to take refuge from late-modernity itself. The person becomes so burdened with information, so 'knowing' about the social and interpersonal dynamics of power and 'truth' that innocence is lost. Nostalgia is an attempt to reconstruct it but a heavy price is paid in the process. Nostalgia institutionalises exile; it is a form of 'false memory' and so can never become the secure refuge that is sought.

## 6.6: 'Frenetic longueurs'

This directs us to another feature of contemporary cultures: the distortion of time. At one level, this can be seen in the way in which the technology which promised to convert time to leisure produces the sensation of a time-space compression: there seems to be less time than there used to be. To take two ordinary examples: the speed of communication by email and the internet have both transformed our access to information but both have increased the demand upon us to respond. Indeed, it may be that the ubiquity of the humble mobile telephone is the enduring icon of this experience. We cannot believe that it is necessary to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness but advertisers seek to persuade us that, without it, we are non-persons: no telephone, no significance; we are cut off from our network, adrift in the silent cosmos, lost in a black hole of non-identity, no longer able to order our take-away or

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61 Charles Taylor traces the emergence of 'the ordinary' as a 'social reversal' from the heroic/noble ethic that underpins the aristocratic. The ordinary becomes a 'bourgeois ethic' and further mutates into the proletarian. This is also rooted in Judaeo-Christian and Islamic theologies that underpin social revolutions. Taylor, C., *The Sources of the Self*, pp. 211-233. For a different approach which informs our treatment cf. de Certeau, M., *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by S. Rendall, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988. De Certeau argues that we are not just 'passive consumers' of culture and seeks to uncover and analyse the 'practices' by which we are engaged in constructing it, such as the way in which we are 'counter-cultural' i.e. mark our difference and develop ways of operating or practices. All of these entail judgements and implicit value structures.

62 An interesting secular version of the ethics of 'holiness' is given by Wyschogrod, E., *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990. Also, Bauman, Z., *Life in Fragments. Essays in Postmodern Morality*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995.

impose the trivia of our life upon others in the train, underground, or street. The irony is that this very symbol of in-touchness only serves to show the poverty of our communication and loss of our private space. The boundaries between office and home are erased, our public and private selves merge. This can seem exciting; we live in the 'instant moment', which constantly dissolves as we move on to the next event. However, it means that 'our' time is constantly colonised by work so that we become 'willing slaves' as Madeleine Bunting puts it.<sup>63</sup> Her book of that title is an important exploration of a phenomenon that not only imposes demands on individuals but on families and all our social relationships. Leisure is highly structured and marketed. It is possible to argue that poverty in our developed world may be seen not only in terms of an absence of necessities but an absence of opportunities for leisure. In this sense, there is a deeper cultural impoverishment which affects the majority of people. It leaves us in search of strategies for creating 'space' but this too ties us into market forces such as the weekend break or 'tranquillity' CD with a selection of Plain Song. This aspect of the 'theft of time' has significance for the way in which we order our various environments - home, school, church, our public spaces. It is also significant for our relationships for it produces a 'care deficit'.<sup>64</sup>

Given the constant demands upon our time, if we are to live up to the roles of parent, friend, carer, professional and so on, there is an inevitable competition which affects not only our sense of self but also our sense of belonging. Our culture has become 'professionalised' with a high expectation of performance and delivery in every area, even in 'me-time', so that if we fail to deliver our sense of adequacy and belonging is threatened. One can see this already beginning to affect the young. An important longitudinal study of children of school age shows that there has been a marked increase in behavioural disorders, especially since 1986.<sup>65</sup> Although the cause of the increase is not immediately obvious, the authors of the study draw attention to increased pressure for performance at school and the destabilisation of the family/home environment. This is not only due to the increase in single-parent homes but also the result of the changing amount of time that is given to parenting in the face of other demands.<sup>66</sup> These are significant trends for education establishments and churches as they consider the support they can offer, as well as the sorts of demands they too can make on time and involvement.

The other effect is that of living on the surface. With time-space compression there is a loss of depth and reflection, hence the search for ready-made wisdom, the short-cuts to insight that paradoxically dissolve almost as soon as they appear. The evacuation of interiority puts enormous pressure on the sense of self, its rootedness and continuity in the rapid, constant, transitory stimulus of late-modern life. Such a culture requires performance in every sense. We exist only in that moment of performing, but performance is only the projection of an image and the temporary inhabiting of a role that is constructed for us. Not only is the idea of the human person eroded, but the person himself or herself is instrumentalised by the dominant economic, social and cultural forces; those groups who hold power and can choose to make us in their own image, especially for their own gain. Of course, this can be marketed as increased freedom of choice and opportunity. Douglas Coupland's novel, *Miss Wyoming*, captures the problem succinctly:

*You know John, when you grow up these days, you're told you're going to have four or five different careers during which you're going to be four or five different people along the way.*

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63 Bunting, M., *Willing Slaves. How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our Lives*, London, Harper Collins, 2004.

64 Bunting, *Willing Slaves*, esp. pp. 200-207.

65 Colinshaw, S. et al., *Time Trends in Adolescent Mental Health in Journal of Child Psychology*, 2004, Vol. 48, No. 5, pp. 1350-1362, shows a substantial increase in adolescent conduct problems over 25 years across all social classes and family types. There was a marked increase in emotional problems since 1986. The study divided behaviour into three categories, conduct, hyperactive and emotional, with emotional problems ranging from, for example, misery, worry, to fearful of new situations, p. 1352.

66 Colinshaw, *Time Trends*, pp. 1359-1360, also notes the changes in adolescent lifestyles, experiences and expectations caused by, for example, the increased availability of drugs, sexual freedom, and greater emphasis on educational attainment, especially in the case of girls.

*In five years time I won't be me anymore. I'll be some new Ryan.... The current version of me is ebbing away. We're all ebbing away. All of us. I'm already looking backward. I'm already looking back at that Ryan that's saying these words...*<sup>67</sup>

There is a 'flatness' and this generates a sense of banality. Such a culture is susceptible to 'events' constructed by organisations, where everything has to be on a 'mega' scale, especially the hype, to promote the 'event' as 'extraordinary'. Such 'events' cannot be missed without condemning oneself to the endlessness of the ordinary. If events occur in the field of 'entertainment', they are even more significantly generated by the media. This results from the power of technology to make every incident seem personally immediate and larger. In so doing, it draws us into a direct personal relationship, so that we are part of whatever is being reported or portrayed. Everything is capable of being made an 'event', from rainfall and car clamping to natural disasters and wars. But the constant repetition of the subject, while magnifying and intensifying it, prevents its appropriation: 'events' are not meant to be understood but experienced, and so the purpose is to sustain intense emotion. But 'events' cannot be sustained. That is why they need to be constantly created. In a strange way they resist narrativity for they have no time sequences as such; an event is a 'point' not a series. An 'event' is essentially a production depending on technology, therefore the real 'event' is not the purported content or image but the exercise of technology. This can be seen in 'news' items, especially those reported on television and radio. A story is intensified through repetition and its 'event' status is generated through 'saturation' – it becomes all encompassing so that it comes to dominate the horizon. Repetition is not narrativity; it may add to the intensity of our feeling but it does not add much to our understanding. An event is like a supernova, claiming our attention while it lasts, but it resists appropriation for its purpose is to appropriate us. The effectiveness with which an event does this has little to do with its content, but is instead a measure of the success of technology and its power and it is this which we are invited to acknowledge. In this world, 'the subject' is constantly exposed to manipulation and 'reality' is rarely what it seems. The success and cult status of the film *The Matrix* should not surprise us, for it touches upon the problematic nature of freedom, reality and illusion in contemporary culture – our preference for 'seems' rather than 'is'.

## 6.7: Spirituality as play

These features are part of a much more complex and mobile picture of the tensions within late-modernity and 'the turn to the subject'. It places the subject under considerable stress to find coherence, meaning and stability.<sup>68</sup> However, if our analysis is correct, then modernity's emancipation of the subject is fraught with paradoxes that destabilise the demand for meaning.<sup>69</sup> Given that modernity denies a 'flight to the transcendent' as the source of meaning, it must seek a 'this-worldly transcendence'. It is our contention that this is the attraction of 'spirituality'. It is an attempt to imbue the practice of the ordinary with depth in the hope that it can carry the weight of significance. In a sense, within the banality of flattened time the practices of 'spirituality' offer a ceremony through which one can enter into a different moment and space, protected from the voracious demands of modern life. 'Spirituality' ritualises relationships, making them secure (the therapist, the guide, the facilitator, etc.)<sup>70</sup>

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67 For the many ways in which identity is constructed (biographical, moral, religious), cf. Häring, H., Junker-Kenny, M. and Mieth, D. (eds.), *Creating Identity, Concilium 2000/2*, London, SCM Press.

68 Cf. Kegan, R., *In Over Our Heads. The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1994. Analysing the mental structures inherent in 'traditionalism', 'modernism' and 'post-modernism', Keegan draws out the developmental demands, especially the sort of consciousness that each demands of people, and discusses the new consciousness and behavioural structures required by the post-modern.

69 Some of these are very briefly identified by Guerra, F.-X., *The Paradoxes of Modernity*, in McInerney, R. (ed.), *Modernity and Religion*, Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, pp. 19-29.

70 Heelas and Woodhead speak of 'bringing the sacred to life', in Heelas, pp. 76 ff. I think there is some force in this but they are not precise in their understanding of the sacred. From the Christian point of view, sacredness is not something which an object, place, person or time possesses through its own essence or merit. It is something that is conferred either by consecration to God or by God's presence. Sacredness is a property that belongs to God. Thus the sacredness of creation comes through the grace of participation. The ritualising moments, for instance, may make them special or significant; it does not as such make them sacred.

Notwithstanding Bruce's critique, it does not matter that it is eclectic and does not provide an overarching coherence: that is its point.<sup>71</sup> The weakness of the conceptualisation of 'spirituality' by Heelas and Woodhead surfaces at this point. Religion as such is not displaced into spirituality nor is spirituality a new form of religion. 'Spirituality' is a form of 'play', offering a range of symbols that can be used to catch a moment of 'this-worldly transcendence' or 'time out'. It appeals precisely because it comes without the weight of large metaphysical systems, for, as we have seen, it is the subject who is the point of convergence. If the requirement were any other, then it would be seen as restricting the freedom of the subject. Religion and spirituality have, in effect, been deregulated and commodified. Thus the subject becomes a consumer of spiritual wares, making his or her own *'bricolage'* version. The commodification of religion and spirituality only becomes a problem if we believe that they should have a value greater than their usefulness, that is if we are still implicitly wedded to an 'other-worldly transcendence'. This is the weakness in Bruce's critique, which is often echoed by the churches. In order for his thesis on 'secularisation' to have the critical and explanatory power that it claims, it must see 'religion' and 'spirituality' as coherent, identifiable and continuous beliefs, practices and communities. Bruce thinks in 'traditional' and institutional forms; his thesis does not allow for the fact that secularisation may actually produce new forms. It is to these that we now turn.

## 7. The emergence of a new 'religious subject' – the pilgrim and the convert

In a changed and changing religious landscape, the French sociologist of religion, Danièle Hervieu-Léger identifies emerging new religious subjects as 'the pilgrim' and 'the convert'. Central to her thesis is the idea that modern culture has become 'amnesic': The structures of cultural memory (for example, the family, church, and, in the case of France, 'peasant' or rural culture) have become so weakened that society has few resources to call upon to sustain meaning and identity over time. While this allows for a certain freedom and liberating fluidity from oppressive constructions of identity, it raises the question of 'authorisation' and 'validation'. In religious terms, Hervieu-Léger develops the metaphor of the 'pilgrim'. This metaphor represents the fluidity of individual spirituality organised around the search for identity which becomes a form of self-styling. It imposes a 'narrative' on the different elements and connects to a tradition. She contrasts the 'pilgrim' with the 'communicant' or member of the institutional church. For the latter religious practice has an obligatory quality, it is obedience to an institutional norm, that gives it a 'fixed' or 'stable' form. Its practice is communitarian, localised – again giving stability – and routine. It recognises the 'ordinary'. With the pilgrim, however, practice is voluntary, autonomous rather than institutional; the form is flexible and individual and not attached to any one community or place. Rather than being routine, it is exceptional. The key is the degree to which there is institutional control over one's religious life. The pilgrim represents religion that is both personalised and deregulated.

The metaphor of the 'convert' offers another way of understanding how religious identity is constructed in the fluid culture of late-modernity. Hervieu-Léger argues that the convert has deliberately 'chosen' an identity which is sometimes distinct from that offered by the economy, the State, class structure, etc. In this respect, the convert is also exercising autonomy but, she maintains, this autonomy can take one of three different forms: first, it can involve changing religion, thereby taking on a new religion by abandoning or rejecting one that had been assumed or imposed. In a sense, this is the assertion of 'the right to choose'. Then, there is a 'counter-cultural choice', one that deliberately goes against the dynamic of secularisation, in

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71 It is part of the problem with the way in which Heelas and Woodhead have grouped a variety of practices under the category of 'New Age' or 'Spirituality' that it suggests coherence or strong 'family resemblances'. Many in fact do not describe themselves that way; a number advertise as 'techniques'.

which a religious tradition is taken on where there was none previously. The third possibility is the rediscovery of identity, the interior conversion from being 'lapsed' to a return to faith. Whatever the form, the convert is, like the pilgrim, engaged in the construction of the self. However, although it validates individual autonomy, this is also a decision for stability. It is one strategy for resolving the paradoxes of meaning and identity in contemporary culture.

Hervieu-Léger's metaphors plausibly capture and explain the reconfigurations of identity that take place around 'religion' in late-modernity. It is important, however, to read them from a theological perspective in order to see that the 'religious subject' of modernity is not the same as the 'subject' of theology. For theology, 'the pilgrim' and 'the convert' are not metaphors only but contain within them a deeper narrative of identity which is not constructed around an autonomous subject. Rather, they express an inter-personal relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit through whom identity is conferred. Within the Christian tradition, the pilgrim is not someone who is engaged in self-construction, although the pilgrimage is often a journey of transformation. Nor is the pilgrim one who is deracinated. It is precisely because of a stable sense of ultimate value and origin that the pilgrim takes the risk of mobility. Freedom is constructed in a different way; it is an obedience to a call or a charge rather than an act of self-stylisation. Moreover, far from being unstructured it is a disciplined act, though it is no less creative. The pilgrim is one who has re-ordered the intra-personal relationships of value and meaning, and those of the created order as well, according to the ontological stability and absoluteness of God. All Christian pilgrimage is a tracing of the paths of the economy of grace within the world. Likewise, conversion is essentially a response to an encounter with Christ as truth mediated in the community of witness, that is the Church. This encounter is not an act that we, as such, initiate but something to which we respond. Although conversion is a free act, it also entails surrender in which and through which we are 're-narrated' as we take on an identity which is conferred by grace. This will also have an ecclesial character, so that the deeper conversion does not turn upon one's self-understanding but the way in which the community comes to narrate one's identity. Far from being a 'subjection' therefore, it is the reconstitution of a new subjectivity. It does not deny the history which the subject carries but places it within the larger narrative of salvation, so that it gains new potentialities for becoming. The paradigmatic form of this is in baptism and catechesis. Understood from a theological perspective, it is possible to see how easy it is to mistake the form of the religious in modernity with the substance of existence in faith. Moreover, seen in this light, the post-modern religious 'subjects' of Hervieu-Léger remain strangely Cartesian.

Yet, it may well be this very feature that makes them significant. For Descartes the 'turn to the subject' was not just a means to ground knowledge in the indubitability of the self but to find that ground ultimately in God. It is the mark of the modern turn that having excluded that possibility, all that can be discovered is an emptiness which the self is unable to fill. There can be no 'self' without the 'other' and it is the status of the 'other' which is made problematic in late-modernity. There is always the danger that the constant construction of identity only produces instrumental relations. Hervieu-Léger offers an important insight and way of understanding some of the dynamics at work in the new religious subjects. Both pilgrims and converts, in her sense and in the theological sense sketched above, will be part of every religious community. These are now the possibilities afforded by today's culture and it presents a challenge to the community to understand these 'identities', as well as the deeper contradictions and pressures within our cultures that they represent.

## 8. Conclusions

In conclusion to this part, it will be helpful to identify some 'orientations' and questions that we can take with us into Part II and begin to address in Part III.

### 8.1: Method of engagement

It will be clear from the interpretative frames that we have discussed that neither the 'secularisation thesis' nor the 'turn to the subject' is adequate in itself. However, they do provide useful starting points for an examination of the complex, dynamic and multivariant cultural spheres within which religious faith occurs in personal and institutional forms. The purpose of this first part is to provide a 'sketch' and an interpretation of a recognisable landscape. Obviously, each of us will have different elements which we would emphasise on our tour *d' horizon*.

The procedure we have been following has been, in so far as possible, to understand how the culture of late modernity attempts to place and understand religion at a formal conceptual level. How it does so reveals much about its own resources and limitations and these, we believe, become important if religion is to respond. What is clear, especially since 9/11, is that religion continues to be a deeply puzzling reality for late-modernity. It is something that should no longer exist, yet still does. In trying to 'explain' it, late-modernity discloses its own questions, prejudices and conceptual *aporias*.

### 8.2: Developing a language of interpretative force

Karl Marx makes the point that every revolution succeeds when the language of the old order dies.<sup>72</sup> Part of the story we have been tracing is the death of the language of religion. If it chooses to survive as a 'dead language', that is through becoming enclosed in its own grammar and practices which will admit of no innovation and hence no interpretation, then it not only denies the generative nature of the Word on which it rests, but it will become marginal to a culture. By doing so, it only reinforces late-modernity's view of where it should be. The complex culture of late-modernity, with all the 'spiritual' practices discussed above, challenges religion to find a new language capable both of articulating and shaping the culture. If language is also the 'house of being', the challenge is to respond with a deeper and richer account of reality and the subject than modernity itself can offer.

### 8.3: The crisis of transmission

Given the process of differentiation, there is already a 'crisis of transmission' within modernity. This is partly due to the cognitive dissolution that we have sketched. It produces a society of multivariant cultures, each with their horizons of understanding and resources for the production of meaning. The paradoxes, resistances, and authorities to which this leads, however, constantly destabilise the capacity for coherence. This, in turn, further reinforces the sense of fragmentation and solipsism, since each discourse can only attain a weak comprehension of the other. While this can create an increased and enhanced repertoire from which the subject can choose, it is at the price of a loss of sustainable interpretative power. Transmission presumes levels of continuity, sustainability, and processes which can mediate over generations and between discourses. This is not possible in a situation where the cognitive structures are no longer stable.

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<sup>72</sup> Marx, K., *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. 1852, in Eugene Kamenka, E. (ed.), *The Portable Karl Marx*, London, Penguin, p. 290.



Transmission requires not only successful discursive and conceptual structures but also social and institutional structures and traditions. As we have seen, in late-modernity these too are weakened. Hervieu-Léger sees this as the broken chain of cultural memory.<sup>73</sup> She argues that religion is central to the transmission of cultural memory, but religion itself also faces a crisis of transmission. Its own cognitive structure, represented in doctrines and the epistemology that underpins them, is also in crisis as it struggles to meet the intellectual, psychological, and affective challenges posed by modernity. Moreover, the vehicle of transmission, namely the continuity of generations represented in the family, is, as we have seen, not a stable reality. This instability is exacerbated in parishes with shifting populations.

Account has to be taken, too, of the fact that faith schools are not immune from culture. They are often under pressure to deliver the programmes of a government which, correctly, is concerned with the needs of a secular society, so that there is a constant struggle to retain the balance between the mediation of the values of the secular culture and those of the religious community. This struggle is made more difficult by the fact that they often operate within different discourses and epistemological systems. To engage in effective transmission, schools, families, parish, and all the formational programme of the faith community must also have a capacity for effective 'translation' between different frameworks. This must be developed in members of the faith community if transmission is to continue.

#### 8.4: Evangelisation and colonisation

These considerations also have a bearing on evangelisation. Whatever the model of evangelisation, it is only possible if the community itself has a coherent, intelligible and communicable cognitive structure (understanding) that sustains the practices of its life. It must be one in which the community has confidence, not only believing it to be true but also persuasive. In other words, the cognitive structure must demonstrate what we have called its interpretative power, that is be able to generate meaning in a richer and deeper way than other systems and be adaptable. By the latter, we mean the capacity to engage with non-religious cultures (beliefs, values, practices) and, without surrendering its own core, absorb what is significant and incorporate it into a greater synthesis. This is also an aspect of 'translation'. It allows members to have a variety of 'complementary discourses' at their disposal which cohere organically not rigidly. This allows members to have confidence in the power of the resources at their disposal and thereby underpins the structures of authority within the community. This, in turn, releases the community from dependence upon those authorities as the source of validation only. Put another way, this is the freedom that Truth brings. It is always a sign of crisis in the community's confidence when it has to rely on its structures of authority for validation. The Truth commends itself, not only because it is demonstrably true but also because of its beauty and goodness. Catholicism has always understood this, hence the authority of Catholicism does not lie primarily in the power of its hierarchy but in the vision of the Truth (the deposit of Faith), which its hierarchy, tradition, liturgy and holiness preserve and faithfully transmit. At the heart of this is the presence of Christ in whom all things 'live and move and have their being'.

However, this is not simply a one-way process. If the religious community seeks to evangelise the culture, it must also be aware that it is being evangelised by the culture. Many aspects of this are positive. Yet when the community's own cognitive culture is weak or fragmented, it will be colonised by secular culture. We can see this when the artefacts of the religious culture are 'translated' into symbols of the secular culture, for example, when rosary beads become fashion artefacts. While they still retain their symbolic value in the religious culture, that value is colonised by the secular culture which revalues them in its own terms. This

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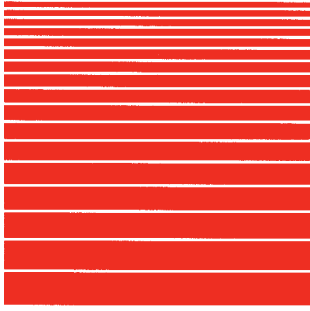
<sup>73</sup> Hervieu-Léger, D., *Religion as the Chain of Memory*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, pp. 127 ff.

happens when a culture has forgotten the original significance of its foundational symbols; they become desacralised and commodified. It happens also with concepts and powerful words that carry the symbolic weight of the system. Thus a secular culture will plunder religions for these powerful cognitive and linguistic artefacts when its own reservoir of symbols is depleted or its symbols impotent. A secular discourse can thus incorporate words like 'grace', 'atonement', 'sacrifice' or 'holy' which have been stripped of their religious power but retain a religious resonance. This can create the illusion of a common discursive memory when in fact it represents the opposite.

As we come to the end of this 'mapping', it will be evident that there are many perspectives and interpretations that can be offered for the shape and place of religion in the cultures of late-modernity. However, all are trying to capture some sense of the dynamic transformation that is taking place. David Lyons captures the issue well: *Religious life in post-modern times demands not only to be understood differently, but also to be lived differently.*<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Lyon D., *Jesus in Disneyland*, p. 142.



## Part II: The Theological Context

*In a unique way the duty of educating belongs to the Church, not only because it is to be acknowledged also as a human society capable of imparting education, but most of all because it has the duty of announcing the way of salvation to all people, of communicating to believers the life of Christ, and of helping them by constant care to arrive at the fullness of life. (Declaration on Christian Education § 3)*



## From the Brief:

*The Institute will offer an evaluative perspective on 'Our Faith Story' and 'On The Threshold' and the relevant developments in theology since their publication in the light of the contemporary situation of faith.*

## Summary: Part II

Part II situates faith within its theological context. Vatican II provided a dynamic and historical vision of the Church rooted in the Christological mystery of the life, death and Resurrection of Christ. This vision emphasised the pilgrim-like nature of the Church on the way to life and provided a theological grammar which would structure its relations with the modern world. We consider this vision in the light of the modern epistemological changes noted by *Our Faith Story* and *On The Threshold* and offer an evaluative perspective on these documents and the theological developments since their publication.

We begin by looking at the adaptive changes within the community of the Church that have been heralded since Vatican II: the inauguration of a Christological orientation, a retrieval of the understanding of tradition as both an anamnesis of the Spirit and a preserving of the openness of the community, and the opening up of the possibility of a Catholic modernity which rejects the non-sacramental conception of human existence and at the same time appropriates the best fruits of modernity. If modernity seeks to be self-grounding, Vatican II seeks to demonstrate how it can be grounded in the transcendent in such a way that its fundamental values are not lost but more completely expressed and secured.

Next we consider the forms that these changes, inaugurated by Vatican II, have taken in the life of the Church. Here we note three such forms: the shift in the understanding of the relationship between grace and nature from an extrinsic model to an intrinsic model (a sacramental conception) in which grace is seen as constitutive of human nature; the reclaiming of a Christological humanism; and, finally, the repositioning of the Church in relation to modernity from a position of outright condemnation to a critical engagement which we conceptualise as a Catholic modernity.

We then note three major challenges to Catholic education, catechesis and formation in the light of this conceptual framework: the finding of a language to speak of sin and salvation, the crisis of transmission, and the communication of faith in a post-ideological context.

We conclude by considering the dialogical and dialectical strategies for survival available to the post-Vatican II Church and the resources that a 'Catholic Modernity' offers.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Our Faith Story* was published twenty years ago. The paradigm used by Patrick Purnell in this work was of passing on the story of faith to a new generation at a time of significant cultural change. It was a question of helping young people to discover the faith of their fathers and mothers. As the document *On The Threshold* indicates, one cannot take for granted that the previous generation have a faith that they want to, or indeed feel able to, transmit. See The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *On The Threshold. The Report of the Bishops' Conference Working Party on Sacramental Initiation*, Chelmsford, Matthew James Publishing Ltd., 2000, p. 11. Another important development since the publication of *Our Faith Story* has been the end of the Cold War. With the end of an era of political polarisation between capitalism and Communism, there has been a cultural shift that has altered the landscape. For some, it has meant that large grand narratives which purport to give global explanations to society have given way to more partial and local narratives. However, for others this political clash of civilisations has given way to a cultural clash of civilisations. The thesis of Samuel Huntington, whether true or false, has certainly crystallised this view for some people. See Huntington, S.P., *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, London, Touchstone, 1998. Whichever thesis eventually best describes our times, the post-Cold War world now has a different geo-political framework. Culture and religious belief inform the geo-political fault lines of this new framework to a much greater extent than pre-1989.



## 1. The Church's internal cultural 'transformation': Vatican II and after<sup>76</sup>

Cardinal Heenan commented: *Without the schools, no Church.*<sup>77</sup> While it is clear that the Church does not depend for its existence on a formal educational system funded in part by the State, his observation was nonetheless correct: without structures of transmission, formal and informal, the inner life of the Church is considerably weakened and the mission impaired.<sup>78</sup>

*Our Faith Story* and *On The Threshold* were, and indeed still are, significant for directing education and formation in the light of the profound epistemological shift generated by Vatican II.<sup>79</sup> They also represent the appropriation and integration of the positive elements in the secular culture, especially in their 'person-centred' approaches and methodologies. If we saw this simply as a good and successful exercise in the application of sound educational experience and professionalism to the Church's particular needs, we would miss the significance of these works and the programmes they initiated. One only has to consider the materials and methods – many excellent and efficient in their own way – that were deployed in the 1940s and 50s, and the experimentation of the 60s and 70s to appreciate that more is happening here than a change of style.

What makes it possible for the community to develop these methods and approaches is the epistemological shift within the Church's own culture and understanding of the nature of faith and the mediation of its Truth. In some respects it is not so much what Vatican II had to say that was transformative but the underlying theological vision that it expressed. At this level, it

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76 In his recent book, *Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004, Andrew Greeley argues the case for the Council to be seen as a 'revolution'.

77 Quoted by Elliott, K., *Between Two Worlds: The Catholic Educational Dilemma in 1944 in History of Education*, 2004, November, Vol. 33, No. 6, pp. 661-682 (p. 673).

78 Throughout this section the preferred term is 'transmission' rather than education. Education, formal and informal, is certainly one of the major elements in transmission but, in the case of Catholicism, there is also the witness of faith in the lives of its members: the implicit formation of understanding that comes through the relationships we have with those who practice Faith, Hope and Love.

79 Purnell SJ, P., *Our Faith Story. Its Telling and Sharing*, London, Harper Collins, 1985. Focusing on the way in which grace is somehow constitutive of human nature, it proposes to make that explicit through the processes of narration. In the telling of the story the person becomes conscious of the graced nature of their life. (Cf. the paradigmatic search, pp. 51-56.) As we move from an implicit awareness to an explicit understanding of grace in our lives, there is a deeper, personal assent to God's gift and gratitude for it. The text is the person's life. Through reading that personal text with the other narratives of scripture and doctrine, a person also inserts himself or herself into the Church's story and the Mystery of Salvation (pp. 89 ff.) The language of *Our Faith Story* also marks a significant and influential shift. It is written in a highly personal way, thus modelling the approach it proposes. This is more than just an engaging, unthreatening style; it represents the 'turn to the subject' discussed in Part I positively used to engage faith. The source of authority here is not a teacher or a Magisterium but one's own experience and narration. It is the subject that controls and shapes the story. The language is significant in other ways: its way of speaking of 'spirituality' and the Kingdom is presented not in terms of an ecclesial vision but as a utopian state which is counter-cultural to 'this worldly reality' (p. 128). Clearly there is the influence of liberation theology; indeed, the whole approach is underpinned by a liberation motif. *Our Faith Story* is conscious of the cultural pressures that people face. Even more importantly, it is explicitly aware that this produces painful situations and responses in us – sense of guilt, failure, etc. – and it seeks to provide some way of handling change positively (pp. 120 ff). In so far as the formal structure of doctrinal catechesis is not explicit in *Our Faith Story*, its ecclesial mediation represents a more explicitly 'person-centred' approach. This allows for very considerable sensitivity to circumstances, allowing people to find their own place and pace. It makes catechesis strongly relational and adaptable, giving the person a sense that their whole history is taken up into the mystery of grace, thereby reinforcing a personal sense of worth and esteem. While acknowledging these very considerable strengths, there is a risk that the doctrinal structure of faith, the grammar of the Church's narrative, can be played down so that the actual incorporation into the 'Church's faith story' is not as effective as it may be. *Our Faith Story* has proved its worth and is a rich, significant work of considerable insight and methodological wisdom which should not be lost. Yet, if it responds to the adaptive movement of the Council and represents the appropriation of its deep grammar into the formational life of the Church, it also represents, in a different way, a positive 'turn to the subject'. As we have seen, the advantages are considerable in facilitating a creative translation between the different cultural worlds of modernity. However, unless the interaction between the cognitive structures of faith and its lived practice remain strong, creative and coherent then there is a danger that values and presuppositions of secular modernity predominate. Added to this, the position of the Church vis à vis the culture of late-modernity is also changing. This requires the community to generate new resources and develop new structures and approaches if it is to resist being 'super-narrated' by the dominant and pervasive secular culture. *On The Threshold* is a very well written document produced by a working party of 11 members for those who work with people being initiated into the Catholic faith. The report is divided into 5 sections, dealing with a particular question concerning initiation: Where do we stand? – investigates the social and cultural situation in which initiation takes place today. How do we belong? – considers how belonging to the Church and initiation are related. What are we looking for? – explores the motives of those requesting initiation and how these motives might best be responded to. When is the right time? – looks at the issues of life stages and when might be the most appropriate moment to celebrate the sacraments in a person's life. What about our catechesis? – examines how catechesis may precede and follow initiation. A number of interesting issues are raised in considering these questions such as: the shift in catechumens from being informed about Catholicism to lacking even a basic knowledge of the faith (p. 11), the need to speak first of the gospel before teaching the sacraments (p. 16), a greater cultural diversity today than in previous generations in those who stand on the threshold of the Church community (p. 20) and the question of how much doctrine to teach (p. 56). The report is a well thought-out document weaving together pastoral and theological issues. In greater part, it will find an echo in our own study particularly in the theological vision that characterises both *On the Threshold* and our own study issuing out of Vatican II (most especially, *Gaudium et Spes*).

inaugurated a profound adaptive movement within the community that is unique. A full analysis of this would take us too far from our immediate concern but we can get some sense of it if we consider:

## 1.1: The orientation of Vatican II

Unlike previous Councils, Vatican II was not called to overcome some threat to the Church's internal culture either from erroneous teaching or schismatic movement. Nor was it called to address some threat from secular culture. At the time, the Church's own internal culture appeared stable and coherent and had survived the devastation of two world wars. Part of the adaptive challenge presented by the Council is that by not addressing any internal or external threat, it did not define a limit to its aim. It did not pronounce anathemas. This leaves us without any gauge for interpretation. In an interesting way, its size and ecumenical composition also meant that it had no strict historical precedent. The effect is disorientating and the temptation is to construct some points of reference, be they to caricature the pre-Vatican II Church; to read the Council as a triumph of certain theological schools; or to see it either as a massive liberation or as an act of intellectual, liturgical and aesthetic vandalism. Whatever the truth in these points, and there is no doubt that even the Council's participants got drawn into these ways of trying to make sense of the new event, the Council rejects them. Rather, it inaugurates an experience and a journey, providing rich resources; it holds before us an extraordinary vision of the *Mysterium Salutis* and of the Church's centrality in it, but it gives us no map. It does not need one because its orientation is deeply Christological: at every point the Council returns to the presence of Christ – His presence in the Church, in the Sacraments, in the offices of its bishops, priests and people, in the hearts of all the faithful, in secular culture, in other faiths, in all humanity and in history itself. Although there is a historical and eschatological consciousness in the documents, by choosing to orientate itself in terms of the abiding presence of Christ, the Council re-orientates our way of being in history and in the world. As Hans Urs von Balthasar observes:

*If one questions the outcome of Vatican Council II (and that depends to a large extent on us), the answer should surely be this. We have said already that it should be the Church's defenceless exposure of herself to the world, the dismantling of all bastions and the levelling of all the bulwarks to boulevards. And it must take place without any mental reservations or secret hopes of a new triumph, since our discovery that the old kind of triumph is no longer practicable or desirable.... Defencelessness in the face of the world means above all the relinquishing of a security system that man imposes and controls between the realms of the natural and the supernatural by means of a metaphysical panoramic view of the universe stretching from Alpha (or, rather, the Atom) to Omega. For it is absolutely certain that in such a system the supernatural will soon be reduced to the function of the natural.<sup>80</sup>*

## 1.2: Retrieval of 'Tradition'

For any organisation the retrieval of tradition is a high-risk operation. It risks weakening the internal culture by failing to establish recognisable boundaries. It risks destabilising the status quo of the internal structure by placing it in a historical perspective. If, however, tradition is appealed to in such a way that it becomes a denial of change, then historical consciousness is converted into a quasi-mystical a-historical immanence. The dangers here are the slide into

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<sup>80</sup> Von Balthasar, H. U., *The Moment of Christian Witness*, translated by R. Breckley, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1969, p. 137.



individualism rather than ecclesial *communio* and the loss of the sense of standing within a tradition. Tradition is not a matter of choice for the Christian community and Catholicism has always understood this.

Tradition is the organic mode of the Church's understanding of its history shaped by Truth. It is not about what is unchanging as such but about the way that in and through change we experience the grace of faithfulness: the unshakeable faithfulness of God through all eternity as 'God for us', of which the cross and resurrection of Christ is the witness and the Spirit the guarantor. Tradition is the way in which we know and experience that the Truth is not our truth, but God's truth. It is, therefore, both gift and responsibility, for as God is faithful to us so we are called to be faithful to Him. The Church's faithfulness is its mission and its gift to history, for it is in history that all can meet the inexhaustible offer of grace. As such, tradition is not orientated to the past but to the future, for it offers both the permanent possibility of encountering the gift and the vision of its fulfilment in the fullness of the Triune Life. In this sense 'tradition' is the anamnesis of the Spirit - who is no curator in a religious museum.<sup>81</sup>

The other aspect of tradition is the way in which it not only orientates the Church to the Mystery of Salvation as the permanent horizon of its understanding in history, but ensures that it remains an open community. Open not only to the world and all who seek God but open to every generation, past and future, so that their witness is never lost. Their voice and their lives remain permanently heard; they never cease to be part of the community's search to articulate the Mystery at its heart. While this is most evident in the lives of the saints and blessed, 'who from their place in heaven' accompany us still, it is true for all those men and women whose lives have carried the light of holiness. In this way the Church realises the fullness of *communio* in time and space but also in the inner union of all its members - 'the mystical body'.<sup>82</sup> Vatican II refuses a notion of tradition that sees it as a purely historical structure and recovers its full theological depth. In this way, it places the adaptive movement within a continuity that is, so to speak, vertical (the abiding presence of Christ) and horizontal (the recognition of the historical form of the Church). It thus makes 'tradition' an experience of God's salvific transcendence and immanence.

The Council refuses to see its work as 'revolutionary' if by that we mean a break or repudiation of the past. Indeed, the whole ideal of *ressourcement* that informs its method is aimed at historical continuity and development; the elucidation of a faith that seeks understanding in history. Even so, it does not allow the past to be a place of false security as that which is unchanging. The Council achieves this balanced sense of the dynamic nature of the Church's historical existence through establishing the source of the community's life. This does not lie primarily in the various evolving forms of its structures but in the abiding Mystery that constitutes its life. Inevitably, unless this is grasped and appropriated, the community will be subject to both reactions - repudiation of the past and resistance to change in the name of it.

### 1.3: A theological/Catholic modernity

The Council's way of doing theology marks a shift in the understanding of Revelation. The roots of this lie in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century debates on the nature of

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81 In *Dei Verbum*, Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation, tradition and scripture are not seen as independent sources of authority but have a common origin in the presence of Christ.

82 Hanvey SJ, J., *Tradition as Subversion in International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 2004, January, Vol. 6, No.1, pp. 50-68; also Hanvey SJ, J., *Continuing the Conversation*, in *Radical Orthodoxy. A Catholic Enquiry* edited by L.P Hemming, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, pp. 129-171.

Revelation and faith, which informed French theology converging in what is known as '*la nouvelle théologie*' complemented by the method and fruits of *ressourcement*.<sup>83</sup> Other sources, particularly the German phenomenological understanding of the historicity of human existence, also contribute to a powerful, creative recovery of the Augustinian-Thomist tradition. The dynamic, personalist and narrative potential of Augustine's thought is retrieved through the 'philosophy of immanence' developed by Blondel.<sup>84</sup> The dynamic reality of the economy of grace is recovered together with Thomas' integration of the searching power of reason with faith's knowledge of God's nature. Together, these sources are directed to the questions that modernity raises for faith and Christian life. The intention is to meet the demands of modernity at every level by producing a new apologetic that discerningly rejects the premises of modernity while appropriating its best fruits.<sup>85</sup>

What emerges is a new understanding of Revelation, in terms of the nature of truth and faith on the one hand, and of a new understanding of human nature grounded in grace on the other. These are brought together through an Augustinian personalism: life is implicitly a search for God because God has placed the desire for union with Him in every human heart. It is this that makes us human. Thus our life will always have a 'dramatic' form, seeking/finding, union/separation, journeying and rest. There is an epistemological and ontological drama within this as well, for our searching is a search for truth and what it is to be complete. Yet, all our searching, our being and becoming takes place within the 'drama' of a God who is also in search of us, whose eternity, Truth and Being grounds all things. Augustine can give a narrative form to human experience because it is not only founded in God's eternal Being but in His Incarnation.

Formally, the Incarnation is the way in which the human and divine are in an actual and real union: the Person of Christ (the *hypostatic union*). Christology becomes the key to understanding the relation of grace and nature and transforms our vision of human existence. Along with this, Revelation becomes an experience not just a proposition: it is the Person of Christ. Faith can no longer be just an assent to formulas, or a poor substitute for reason when reason has reached a dead end. Faith is not the attempt to conjure certitude out of doubt by the assertion of an ecclesial authority; it is an encounter with the Person of Christ mediated in and through the Church. It is not, therefore, an act of assent but also of consent; it must be a movement of the heart and will as well as the intellect. Peter's knowledge of Christ at Caesarea Philippi also needed to become his profession of love on the shores of Galilee (John 21). This was the condition of his discipleship.

This vision represented a significant and hard won movement from scholastic rationalism, which for all its virtues of clarity, precision and structure, was increasingly difficult to translate into the culture of modernity. However, these shifts, which seem so obvious and familiar to us now, required a very considerable cultural change. Moreover, because the vision of Vatican II is by its very nature dynamic and historical, it requires a continual appropriation – it is a vision of a theological way of being and understanding which is always in process (in via) not one that has achieved closure.

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83 The best statement of the programme of *ressourcement* is to be found in Chenu's apologia for La Saulchoir in Alberigo, G., Chenu, M.-D., Fouloux, E., Jossua, J.-P. and Ladrière, J., *Une École de Théologie: La Saulchoir*, Paris, Cerf, 1985, esp. pp. 29-34; Chenu's view of the primacy of the gift of revelation and the relationship of faith and history, pp. 134-144.

84 In his philosophical method of immanence, Blondel holds together both the gratuity of grace and human autonomy. Through his analysis of the dynamics of human action, he uncovers the distance between the end that we will (*la volonté voulante*) and the effective realisations of this will in our concrete actions (*la volonté voulue*). The distance or dialectic inscribed in the dynamics of human action reveals to the subject that action points beyond itself to the transcendent. This dialectical movement thus reveals the trace or hypothetical presence (not the historical fact) of the supernatural immanent in human experience and the fact that human action does not reach its end in the natural order but rather points beyond to the supernatural order. It is this Augustinian restlessness of the human heart searching for someone it knows as both necessary and yet somehow absent which baptises our immanent desire to receive the free gift of God. See Blondel, M., *L'Action*, Paris, PUF, 1973, and his *Lettre sur les Exigences de la Pensée Contemporaine en Matière d'Apologetique et sur la Méthode de la Philosophie dans l'Étude du Problème Religieux*, Paris, PUF, 1956.

85 This was not an easy task given the controversy over 'Modernism' that shaped the parameters of theological thinking in the last century up to Vatican II. See Jodock, D. (ed.), *Catholicism Contending with Modernity. Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

As we have seen modernity is characterised by the differentiation of religious and social spheres that are also marked by cultural pluralism. The Council's understanding of Christian ecclesial existence is conceived as an open dynamic transformative project and this introduces another range of possibilities into an already fluid situation. As argued in *On The Threshold*, the reality of religious pluralism in Britain today requires us to develop a coherent competence in dealing with pluralism. The challenge here is to avoid both a fundamentalist assertion of the Catholic truth and the liberal evacuation of the singular truth of Catholicism through relativism. The key issue is clearly one of maintaining a Catholic ethos and identity. Pluralism is not just a question for secular culture; it is also one for Catholic culture.<sup>86</sup>

At the risk of caricaturing the Church before Vatican II, it must be said that it had a strong sense of the supernatural order and this was tied to a vision of human destiny ordered to the Beatific Vision. Thus, ultimate human reality was essentially located in the sphere of the eternal when being achieves complete actualisation. History was not denied but subordinated and relativised as transitory. While it was acknowledged that the Church lives in history, it was not of it. It therefore had considerable confidence in its own eternal truth mediated through the sacraments. In this sense, the pre-Vatican II Church was able to turn the differentiation of modernity to its advantage and be both counter-cultural and a haven from a culture in which meaning was increasingly elusive and unstable. Vatican II, however, without renouncing the strength of this position, grasped that a Christianity which lives out of the Incarnation cannot have a purely instrumental view of history as something through which we pass.

If the Church commits itself to history and recognises that it too is part of it, then it must rethink its relationship to 'the world'. It requires a hugely creative act to find the concepts, language and structures that give expression to this new relationship without sacrificing the vision of eternity that ensures that history can never complete itself. This is part of the response the Council makes to the great forces of modernity that have shaped the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and which also contain a vision of history. Implicit in the Enlightenment is a vision of history as progress towards a Utopia of Reason. The Hegelian-Marxist understanding builds on this and argues that history is governed by logical processes which lead to social, material and spiritual redemption. For its part, the Council regards reality as transparent to the glory of Christ. Christ is always immanent and active in history so that it becomes the realm of encounter. History, therefore, is not determined by any internal laws governing its progress or decline as such, but is the theatre of human freedom and God's grace. Vatican II is deeply committed to an engagement with modernity; it places the Christian community at the heart of history and its processes. In doing so, it does not give the Church the option of becoming a refuge from modernity.

If these are some of the general re-orientations signalled by Vatican II, the form they take can be seen in the major renewal of the Church's life that it initiated. It is not possible to explore this renewal in depth in this study. For our purpose it will be useful, however, to indicate the principal features that inform all the documents of the Council. We can then see the implications of these features for religious education today.

## **2. Central theological foundations for Vatican II**

### **2.1: Nature and grace: reclaiming reality and history**

Until Vatican II perhaps the most determinative theological discussion of the twentieth century concerned the relationship of nature and grace. It is a complex issue, but the Council

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<sup>86</sup> Cf. *On The Threshold*, p. 11.

represents a shift from understanding the relationship in an 'extrinsic way' to one in which grace becomes 'intrinsic' and 'constitutive' of human nature.<sup>87</sup> The great merit of the extrinsic understanding was its determination to preserve the absolute gratuity of grace, according to which nothing in human nature merits God's gift and therefore God is not compelled logically or morally to bestow his grace. 'Extrinsicism', however, tended to reinforce a dualistic way of thinking that sees nature and supernature in an uneasy complementarity at best and an oppositional dualism at worst.

This also has implications for the way in which the Church understands human destiny and history. Prior to the Council it was not uncommon for the Church to appeal to the distinction between the natural and supernatural orders to justify its claims to educate and act in certain spheres.<sup>88</sup> Obviously, the distinction had advantages when trying to define the limits of secular power and defend the existence of the Church and the development of its work. Yet there is an easy elision of secular and natural and such a distinction can also serve to reinforce a division that modernity is happy to approve to its own advantage.

Without compromising the gratuity of grace, Vatican II understands it to be constitutive of human nature. In other words, we cannot and should not think of human nature independently of grace. This is grounded in the perception that human nature is intrinsically ordered to God who is our fulfilment. In a sense, even in our fallen state, we never lose the memory of the one by whom and for whom we are made. The effect of this 'intrinsic' reading of the relationship is to recover a perception of the dynamic interaction between grace and nature. Not only does 'grace build upon nature' but this relationship grounds human freedom, and thus the possibilities that nature has for realising itself. Not only is the metaphysical form of the relationship established but its personal covenantal reality, its historical and existential character, are brought to the surface. A richer way of understanding God's salvific economy in relational and historical terms is opened up.

Most importantly, it is a relationship which is now framed within a Christological context rather than drawing on metaphysical categories developed in independent philosophical systems. The whole relationship of nature and grace is seen in terms of the relationship between the human and divine natures in the Person of Christ and therefore governed by the logic of their indwelling as defined by Chalcedon: *no confusion, no change, no division, no separation*.<sup>89</sup> Effectively the Council refuses a dualistic opposition of nature and grace and opens the way for a theological anthropology that is relational, existential and historical. It also denies the separation of the spheres of faith and reason, sacred and secular, which has marked the epistemological and social programme of modernity. It reclaims reality, human existence and history, and opens the way for a different engagement with cultures.<sup>90</sup>

In an important sense, the way in which we understand the relationship of nature and grace also conditions the possibility of a genuinely sacramental vision of reality. If grace is integral to nature then all nature has in some way the capacity to disclose grace and be a vehicle of it. Within this context, the Council is able to recover a 'sacramental' vision. It is a profound Catholic intuition which was in danger of being lost at the Reformation and in the subsequent disputes not only with Protestantism but also with movements within Catholicism itself. It has implications for the Church's own internal life and culture as well: While 'the sacraments', particularly the Eucharist, remain essential to the Church's life, they are not the exclusive

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87 For a comprehensive discussion of the different approaches cf. Duffy, S.J., *The Graced Horizon. Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought in Theology in Life Series*, No. 37 Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 1992.

88 See Elliott, K., *Between Two Worlds*, pp. 674-677.

89 Tanner, Norman P. (ed.) , *Council of Chalcedon, Definitio Fidei.in Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. I, London, Sheed & Ward, 1990, p. 86.

90 For a fuller discussion of the historical and cultural background cf. Dupré, L., *Passage to Modernity. An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1993, esp. section 3.

means of encounter with God's economy. On the one hand, this opens up the possibility of an enriched spirituality and allows people to understand the sacramental nature of their ordinary lives, hence the universal call to holiness. On the other, it produces a subtle change in internal relationships of the community. In a sense, every member of the Church – not just the ordained priesthood and hierarchy – becomes a minister of grace and has the possibility of mediating it in and through their lives. This has, of course, always been the case, but Vatican II gave it a new structural and theological articulation, especially in the theology of the priesthood of all believers.

In Part I we discussed how the 'turn to the subject' also entailed a relocation of the sources of authority. With Vatican II, we have what might be called a turn to the 'theological subject'. The human subject is now no longer confined to moral and juridical categories; a new positive language is developed for that subject's relationship to God and the economy of salvation.

## 2.2: Christ-centred humanism – reclaiming the human

The Council's implicit theology of grace and nature grounds a Christological humanism. Catholic humanism has, of course, a deep and rich history from the Fathers, through the Renaissance into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It finds its expression both theologically and practically in the mystical traditions of the Church and in its works, especially those that draw upon monasticism and great mendicant and apostolic orders. In all of these traditions there is a constant attention to the human as the object of God's gracious and merciful love. In the history of humanity they stand as the constant testimony of the Spirit in the life of the Church. The Church is not only the keeper of the 'memory' of Christ but also of 'the human'.

This fundamental orientation of the Church's life and history becomes central in the Council's thought. However, it is important to appreciate that it is not a secular humanism in religious garb. It is not about the exaltation of humanity in the spirit of the Enlightenment or atheistic humanism. The Church does not have a Utopian vision of humanity for it understands that if grace is excluded all that is left is an illusion. There is a Christian realism about a human nature that is fragile, unstable, and fallen. Yet, the Christian community has consistently refused to endorse any tragic nihilism – theological or secular – because, as we have seen, human nature cannot be viewed apart from God's gracious self-communication.

This produces a 'Christological humanism' that always seeks to understand the human as the *'imago Dei'*, that is the *'image of Christ'*. Humanity must not only be grasped in the fallenness of its history but also in the glory of its future, for Christ is not only crucified but also risen. Thus all human history stands within the Parousia. Living in history has an eschatological character because it is always within the horizon of Christ's coming. This is why human existence is never a trivial matter but always, even in the mundane, a living out of freedom in the presence of Christ and His future. In these terms, the Council develops a powerful discourse on 'the human' to engage with the 'humanism' of modernity and uses it as the meeting ground. 'The human' is reclaimed as an explicitly Christian sphere. Here, therefore, the 'struggle of translation' becomes acute: whilst the use of similar terms suggests there is much in common, the grammar is quite different, since the Church's speech is always Christologically determined. One of the marks of late modernity/post-modernity is the collapse of the humanist consensus. The Council makes the Church one of the most powerful defenders of 'the human', the dignity and destiny of every person irrespective of their birth, nationality, status or abilities.

## 2.3: The Church: problems of a new apologetic

The Second Vatican Council makes the Church its explicit theme. In doing so, it develops a specifically ecclesial apologetics. In a sense, the Council regards its engagement with modernity not purely in terms of an intellectual discourse but in terms of praxis. If the human person is taken up into the mystery of salvation then the Church is the community of salvation. Thus the Church, qua Church, not only in the lives of its members, is part of the response to secular culture and its questions. It is for this reason that the great foundational documents of the Council are ecclesial ones, attending to the quality of the community's life internally so that it may bear a clearer witness externally, in the forum of the peoples. This is marked in many ways, but perhaps the most significant for us are (1) the recovery of the beautiful and rich biblical and patristic metaphors for the Church; (2) the development of the theology of the laity grounded in the three-fold offices of Christ – prophet, priest and king – appropriated in baptism.

(1) The recovery of different metaphors introduces the possibility of different ways of understanding and experiencing the Church.<sup>91</sup> This has the effect of providing new discourses, each with a developmental potential. While this is a considerable advantage, both in the attempt to enlarge the capacity for experience and in the consequent provision for deeper entry into the mystery of the Church, it also introduces 'mini-cultures'. By this we mean that each metaphor carries with it ways of understanding and relating to the institutional structure. As each metaphor is worked out in terms of behaviour and expectations, tensions arise because they are not always perceived to be compatible. Hence, 'People of God' will have a different range of meaning and potential for ecclesial behaviour than 'Bride of Christ' or 'Mystical Body' or an eschatological 'New Israel'.<sup>92</sup>

Metaphor also reconfigures the relationship between the hierarchical orders of the Church and the laity. Combined with the 'turn to the theological subject', it changes the expectations about the nature of authority and the understanding of its sources – now plural not singular. The relations in the community have to be realigned, as do the modes by which authority is claimed and exercised. This is played out in a variety of different ways, sometimes painfully and sometimes creatively. By way of illustration, let us take two examples:

The first is the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. It is a significant moment not just because it comes hot upon the close of the Council, which raised the expectation of 'aggiornamento' particularly in the Church's approach to marriage and married life. 1968 was also a critical year for European culture. The student protests in France and Germany and the deep cultural reverberations which they brought were the irruption into the public sphere of strong movements of liberation and revolution. In her book *On Revolution*, Hannah Arendt, writes:

*...that all authority in the last analysis rests on opinion is never more forcefully demonstrated than when, suddenly and unexpectedly, a universal refusal to obey initiates what then turns into a revolution... Unlike human reason, human power is not only 'timid and cautious when left alone', it is simply non-existent unless it can rely on others; and the most powerful king and the least scrupulous of all tyrants are helpless if no one obeys them, that is supports them through obedience; for, in politics, obedience and support are the same.*<sup>93</sup>

Arendt's analysis cannot be applied completely to the Church, but it eloquently makes the point about the relationship between authority and obedience that surfaces with the Encyclical.

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91 Cf. Dulles, A., *Models of the Church*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1976.

92 Tanner, Norman P. (ed.), *Vatican II, Lumen Gentium*, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* Vol.2, London, Sheed & Ward, 1990, §5-9.

93 Arendt, H., *On Revolution*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, p. 228.

At a deeper level, it illustrates the shift in epistemologies that we have been discussing. The position of the Encyclical was that the Church's teaching was not a matter of 'opinion' but of truth. Yet, rightly or wrongly, for many it felt like a matter of opinion when it ran contrary to their own experience. The sources of authority and the means of validation had shifted. Also at stake were at least two different versions of 'reason' within the community. In a sense, this could be seen as a classic clash of cultures – religious modernity versus a pre-modern one, so to speak. Perhaps the community was still too close to the Council to find a way of negotiating this 'epistemological crisis'. The understanding, exercise and experience of authority in the Church up to Vatican II had been characterised by an Ultramontanist ecclesiology. Ultramontanism emerged in the struggles of the nineteenth century and was, among many other things, an attempt to resolve the question of epistemological authority and the validity of the Church's ability to teach the truth. It was a solution that triumphed at Vatican I and worked, sometimes brutally, until Vatican II.<sup>94</sup> It is clear, however, that after 1968 crises could not be resolved by the assertion of authority in quite the same way as before; not only had the culture changed, but so also had the theological basis for this style of authority. A similar 'revolution' is taking place today, as we noted in Part I, on the question of gender. In particular the 'construct' of 'woman' in the discourse of the Church is disputed philosophically and experientially. The tension between authority and the question of 'whose truth?' is still with us. It affects all levels of the Church's life.<sup>95</sup>

(2) The second example concerns the shifting 'models of priesthood' and the 'crisis in priestly identity' researched by Hoge. In their wide-ranging study of the changes in priesthood since Vatican II, Hoge and Wenger note a shift from 'the servant-leader model' (SM) prevalent after the Council to a 'cultic model' (CM).<sup>96</sup> The trend seems to become noticeable in the 1980s. The characteristics are significant not only for relationships between older and younger generations of clergy but for relationships to laity as well. While recognising the dangers in stereotyping, Hoge and Wenger do detect significant contrasting patterns. For the SM group, the priest is a pastoral leader; for CM 'a man set apart'. Regarding attitudes to authority, SM displayed a values flexibility whereas CM shows a 'values strict hierarchy'. In terms of liturgy one group allowed for creativity, the other followed the rules. In terms of theology, CM tended to defend 'orthodoxy' while the other allowed for theological difference. For SM celibacy was seen as optional for priesthood, while CM saw it as essential. Strong judgemental attitudes were also noted: the young CM priests thought of the older ones as 'a lost generation', secularised and anti-establishment. The younger CM priests thought of themselves as traditional, conservative, 'unapologetically Catholic' and ecclesiology sound.<sup>97</sup> Of course, the differences were not as strongly polarised in practice:

*...all agreed on the love for God's people, desire to serve God's people, love for the Catholic Church, desire for personal fulfilment and acceptance of celibate homosexual priests.... The polarization today concerns ecclesiology, the theology of priesthood, and the liturgy.*<sup>98</sup>

Understandably, such attitudes have an impact on parish congregations, especially as Hoge and Wenger report that they are tending in the opposite direction: in their research, the change in ecclesiology among younger priests had no counterpart among the laity:

*On the contrary, the young priest and young laity are heading in different directions on many issues. This should be a red flag: we are likely to see increasing priest-versus-laity differences in the coming year.*<sup>99</sup>

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94 We should not underestimate the strength of this memory and the fear of weakening the Church through 'accommodation' with the culture that was present at the beginning of Vatican II. Many of its theological experts e.g. De Lubac, Congar, Rahner had been regarded with some suspicion in the papacy of Pius XII.

95 Cf. Hervieu-Léger on the crisis of institutional validation, *Religion as the Chain of Memory*, , pp. 205 ff.

96 Hoge, D.R. and Wenger, J.E., *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood. Changes from Vatican II to the Turn of the New Century*, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 2003 (hereafter Hoge).

97 Hoge, p. 113.

98 Hoge, p.114.

99 Hoge, p.118; cf. also pp. 132-133.

If Vatican II repositions the Church vis à vis modernity, it also offers the possibility of new relations with other Christian denominations and world religions. Obviously this raises considerable questions for the way in which Catholic identity is constructed: it can no longer be only 'over against'.<sup>100</sup> The Council carefully nuanced the relationships with other Christian churches and with world religions. Without compromising the privileged status of Christ, it recognised the way in which all humanity is actively drawn into the circle of God's self-communication. It is clear that this is a profound and true perception of God's infinite love and the sovereignty of His salvific will; it is also an implication of the understanding of grace and nature that we have explored. Yet, in correctly grasping the salvific economy in this way the forms that the religious search manifests in other religions are also validated. Although the Council did not intend the unique position of the Church in the economy to be weakened, this opens the way to the possibility of it being relativised. Without nuance, this potential can play into an indiscriminate secular version of religion, in which all ways to God are essentially valid.<sup>101</sup> This becomes especially significant and sensitive in contemporary cultures where the religious landscape is pluralist and the State has a vested interest in not acknowledging the rights of different religions to 'faith-based' education.

The Council's determination to engage with modernity and contemporary cultures in a transformative way finds its fullest expression in its *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* (1965). This brings together all the themes discussed above. While explicitly making its Christological Humanism the basis of all that it wants to say, it also has an implicit theology of the Spirit.<sup>102</sup>

It is clear that at these levels, and indeed in the thought of the theologians that informed them, Vatican II maps out a Catholic response to modernity. The response does not depend on creating a defensive rebuttal but aims to 'translate' modernity according to the Mystery of Salvation.<sup>103</sup> It offers the possibility of a genuine 'Catholic modernity' (see below) by indicating how the most cherished values of modernity are not compromised by faith but are rooted in God's economy of grace. This provides new resources for modernity itself in confronting the *aporias* and paradoxes which emerge when it seeks a purely secular foundation (see Part I). However, this creative project of 'translation' also produces tensions within the conceptual and experiential realities of the Church's own culture.

### 3. Tensions in Catholic ecclesial culture

#### 3.1: The problem of salvation

Although Vatican II presents a coherent, dynamic, and generative vision of the completeness of the life of faith, especially in its ecclesial and social dimensions, it raises a problem for the way in which we think and speak of sin and salvation. There is a wonderfully positive vision of God and the comprehensive nature of the economy of salvation as the outpouring of the Triune

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100 Erving Goffman makes the important point that in identity construction, the self is constructed in both identification with others but also in resistance to others. See Goffman, E., *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York, Doubleday, 1959.

101 For the tensions that this raises cf. Tracy, D., *Roman Catholic Identity amid the Ecumenical Dialogues in Concilium 1994/5*, London, SCM Press, pp. 109-117.

102 The significance of *Gaudium et Spes* is well discussed and developed by Merkel, J.A., *From the Heart of the Church. The Catholic Social Tradition*, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 2004, esp. Part II. There are also useful discussions on Political and Liberation Theologies, as well as the social teaching of John Paul II.

103 Upon receiving the Marianist Award from the University of Dayton in January 1996, Charles Taylor chose to speak on the topic of a Catholic modernity. This follows on quite naturally from his claims about cultural and a-cultural theories of modernity and implicitly acknowledges the dominant influence of Protestantism on the received narrative of modernity. Taking as his starting point the meaning of the Greek word *katholou* as both universality and wholeness, he outlines how a Catholic model of modernity works towards a universal salvation through bringing many differences into wholeness or oneness. This contrasts with the Enlightenment's model of universality, which sought to eliminate differences and reduce all to the same. Taylor cites the Jesuit missions in China and India at the start of the modern period as examples of a Catholic modernity. In these missions he sees the origins of a Catholic modernity that would propagate an integral humanism that was open to transcendence and which sought to introduce the gospel to cultures very different from that of Europe.



Love in history and creation. The teaching of the Council is clear that there is sin, even understanding it in social and not just personal terms. Its emphasis, however, is on the vision of a redeemed humanity not a fallen one. While this may have been an important corrective to a previous theology, there is a danger that our capacity to speak about the radical nature of sin and the need for salvation becomes problematic. It cannot be recovered by returning to old forms, for neither the internal culture of the Church nor the external cultures of late-modernity will permit the conceptualisation of the past and the anthropology that underpins it. If, however, as we have suggested, however, modernity is itself a secular soteriology, albeit questioned and resisted by the theorists of the post-modern, Catholic modernity needs to distinguish its understanding of salvation from the anthropocentric optimism of modernity. In other words, when we speak of the 'healing of human nature' and have a vision of its fulfilment, these are not predicated on the secular therapeutic pelagianism of contemporary culture. In the same way, we need to develop a discourse that articulates the 'fallenness' of the human condition, which is more than just an expression of moral disapproval or a description of pathologies and dysfunction. Without a vivid sense of the paradox and contradiction that lies at the heart of human existence, the 'radical evil', as Kant expresses it, Christianity will be perceived as just another religious therapy. If we do not have a strong, intelligent discourse about 'sin', it becomes an empty cultural concept, which simply gestures towards a feeling of dissatisfaction with ourselves and 'the state of things'. However it may have been used in the past, the Christian understanding of sin is not a mechanism for oppression or anxiety, neither is it a disguised form of pessimistic misanthropy. It is a theological reality, which is about the human capacity for freedom and relationship with God. Without it, the Cross becomes a powerless symbol of human tragedy and the unfathomable mystery of God's love is reduced to a rhetorical exercise in vacuous self-affirmation.

This is critical to the nature of evangelisation. Evangelisation is not about the selling or marketing of some religious product on the basis that it may be useful to our lives. Christ is not an object to be sampled but the Mystery to be encountered. The Church is not a group to be joined or a lifestyle to be taken up but the 'communion of the Spirit' in which grace is always to be found. As the dialogue with the woman at the well illustrates (Jn. 4.1.), it is the bringing to light of the need for life and the inability of the world, for all its goodness, to satisfy it. Without a conceptually and symbolically well-equipped way of thinking and speaking about sin and salvation, the community will not have a sense of the reason for its existence and its mission. The agents of education and formation will also find it difficult to give a grounded, coherent account of the core symbols of the Catholic faith. The community will always be in a weak position faced with the strong persistent alternative discourses of salvation that secular culture provides. Vatican II provided the resources for developing such a discourse, but it remains an urgent matter.

Our thesis is that the consequences and possibilities of Vatican II are still being worked out within the culture of the Church. However, given that we all inhabit many cultures, they cannot be isolated from the tensions and issues that late-modernity raises, which we sketched in Part I. If anything, they are intensified. These tensions are present for every practising Catholic in one form or another, as we struggle to keep pace and negotiate meaning, which somehow comprehends both our religious and secular cultures. This will be particularly acute in religious education, catechesis and formation. It touches every priest who has to preach to his congregation; it touches every teacher who has to teach her class, and it touches every person involved in religious formation, since all their auditors themselves carry versions of late modernity/post-modernity as well as pre/post-Vatican II Catholicism.

### 3.2: The crisis of transmission - the fading of memory?

In Part I we touched on the problems of mobility and technology for Catholic religious culture. When these 'social' factors are combined with a changing internal culture the normal

structures of transmission will come under particular stress. Traditionally, these factors have been the close connection between family, parish and school. Together they provided a strong experience of a culture that was a coherent and therefore a powerful means of formation during the significant developmental years and beyond. There was no problem about 'believing and belonging' and this sense of belonging could continue even when 'believing' might have ceased. The structural unity of family, parish and school, when combined with the many other associations and activities, devotional, charitable and recreational, produced many points of entry into the culture at different levels. Together, they gave 'space' which was sufficiently varied to meet different needs and reinforced identity rather than fragmented it. As well as being marked with a structural coherence, they were underpinned by a cognitive and spiritual coherence, as witnessed by the catechisms and devotional practices and prayers. It is interesting in this context to examine the pre-Vatican II prayer books, since they give an indication of how the 'subjective life' and therefore the sense of self was shaped. The attention to sin and purity in all its forms is evident but so too is the consciousness of eternity and the rewards of heaven. The community is vividly present, not only in the communal nature of many devotional practices but also in the communion of saints and the faithful departed. If there was a theological division between the natural and supernatural orders, there was an experiential and devotional sense of their union. If there was an anxiety about salvation there was also a palpable sense of being a citizen in both worlds. This 'worldly transcendence' was not the 'turn to the subject' of modernity but represented a familiarity with the angels and saints, helpers and guides, examples and friends, intercessors and consolers. It was an insight that a spirituality that loses its sense of the 'communion of saints' lives in exile from the household of God. All of this was nourished and reinforced by the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. We should not underestimate the aesthetic dimension presented here, if not always in expression, then in the vision that informed it. It understood the transcendent within history as the signature of grace and this also gave a sense of permanence to the institution of the Church within the vicissitudes of human life and national struggles.<sup>104</sup>

There is nothing in Vatican II that rejects this richness; indeed it assumes it. However, when the structures – formal and informal – are fragmented, it will be difficult to sustain at a cognitive and experiential level. Any attempt to recover it through the construction of a community that somehow tries to return to the Church of the pre-Vatican II era is purely an act of nostalgia; itself a symptom of a deracinated post-modern sensibility that condemns the Church to the status of a curiosity to be visited as one visits a living museum. It is a 'false memory', which denies the creative action of the Holy Spirit.

Transmission presupposes that the community has something which it consciously wants to transmit and organises itself to do so. All the dynamics that we have discussed arise because there is a 'memory' within the community. *On The Threshold* correctly identifies the need to communicate as a major task facing the Church today. It speaks clearly of the decline in the 'Home-School-Parish' institutional matrix as the given route of transmission of the faith (a basic starting point for *Our Faith Story*). Today, the school may well be the only place in which faith is discussed as the family may not be able to do this and they may have little contact with the parish. It is in this context that *On The Threshold* speaks of the school as 'the primary faith-educator of their children'.<sup>105</sup> The position of the school is complex, however, not only because it too is at the crossroads of contemporary cultures but also because its teachers are increasingly those who have grown up in a post-Vatican II Church.

### 3.3: The post-ideological generation

Vatican II understood itself in terms of the Church out of which it emerged. Forty years on that Church no longer exists. For most people aged forty or under the only Church they have

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104 Cf. Archer, A., *The Two Catholic Churches: A Study in Oppression*, London, SCM, 1986.

105 *On The Threshold*, p. 57.

known is a Church that is being reshaped in terms of the theological vision of Vatican II. This has also been marked by a crisis of transmission in a secular culture which provides the dominant reading of authority and its sources in the subject. It is therefore not surprising, at least for this generation, that we are clearly in a new situation. It is not so much a loss of memory as a different configuration of memory. It is also a community where the educators have changed in a significant way.

In addition to the family, parish and school, the religious orders were also major agents of transmission in their schools, parishes, confraternities, retreats and missions. Indeed, in many ways, they also played a significant role in the implementation of Catholicism in the life of the community. They and the vision of Christian life, which they incarnated are no longer such visible features of the landscape.<sup>106</sup> This gives a different feel to the Church of the twenty-first century. It also augments the 'crisis of transmission', for if religious are no longer there and parents do not possess the 'memory' then how can it be passed on to the next generation? Over time the memory fades.

There is, however, another aspect to this. Post-Vatican II generations do not raise the same questions and issues as their predecessors. In one sense, they are non-ideological – they carry neither the same memory nor the same baggage as their parents and grandparents. This is as true of priests of that generation as of laypersons. It is also a feature of secular culture.

While a crisis of meaning may still characterise our own situation, with the fall of Communism and the seeming victory of democratic capitalism the ideological period of the 'Age of Extremes', as Eric Hobsbawm called it, has been left behind.<sup>107</sup> In its wake, we are left with a new situation. This situation is post-ideological in the sense that allegiance is no longer constructed on the basis of an oppositional overarching political vision, as was the case during the capitalist-Communist era. Today young people mix and match in ways their elders find quite confusing. Alasdair MacIntyre, the well-known philosopher, tells the story of atheist friends of his who are disappointed that their children no longer disbelieve with the passion that they once did. The children are not serious in their atheism and rather than arguing against Christianity prefer to be open to different ways of belief and unbelief.<sup>108</sup>

The same situation is commonly observed within the culture of the Church. It is often described as 'à la carte' Catholicism. At one level this reflects the 'turn to the subject' of modernity and changing sources of authority. At another, however, it can also be a simple search for what really matters. If one has no sense of a coherent interwoven pattern of belief grounded in a great philosophical and theological tradition that has grappled with these questions for 2000 years, then what alternative is there? Choices and practices do not carry the ideological freight they did for previous generations. Praying the rosary rather than with scripture or art is not the mark of a conservative revisionist; it may instead be the re-appropriation of a traditional mark of Catholic identity which for some reason has not been transmitted as such to the present. In a similar fashion, joining anti-capitalist demonstrations and believing in gay rights does not, these days, make those who go to Mass and communion regularly 'pick-and-mix' liberals. Rather, they have no memory of the 'culture wars' which followed Vatican II. Both phenomena and many more variations may be found at the World Youth Days, at which young people are happy to celebrate their Catholic identity with the Pope. The post-ideological generation is a generation of 'pilgrims' and 'converts'. If the traditional structures of family, parish and school are no longer reliable, then education and formation must find new ways of strengthening and supplementing what already exists. Whatever form it takes, it is clear that the Catholic 'memory' needs to be retrieved.

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106 Sweeney, J., *Religious Life after Vatican II*, in M. Hornsby Smith (ed.), *English Catholics 1950-2000*, pp. 226-287. For the social and political witness of religious life cf. Metz, J.B., *A Passion for God*, pp. 150 ff.

107 Cf. Hobsbawm, E., *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century*, London, Abacus, 1995.

108 This story was told by Alasdair MacIntyre at a lecture at the London School of Economics, 25 May 2004.

## 4. Strategies for survival: dialogical or dialectical?

This raises the question of strategies available for the Church. The classic analysis is that of the Protestant theologian Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture*.<sup>109</sup> He detects five patterns or typologies that have characterised Christian responses to secular culture throughout history: Christ Against Culture (Tertullian); the Christ of Culture (liberal Protestant theologians and some contemporary Catholic ones); Christ Above Culture (Aquinas); Christ and Culture in Paradox (Luther); and Christ the Transformer of Culture.<sup>110</sup> Vatican II moves from a model of 'Christ above Culture' to a new model not envisaged by Niebuhr: Christ within Culture. This is not the liberal Protestant 'Christ of Culture' but it is certainly the Christ who transforms it from within, precisely because the uniqueness of Christ is never compromised; he is always the Mystery in whom and through whom we encounter the salvific Triune Life. This produces a dialogical/ sacramental model of engagement. However, the pressures exerted by contemporary cultures on the core values and beliefs of the Church do not always make this an easy strategy. Especially if the Church feels itself to be in a hostile culture, or one that is deaf to its voice and resistant to its claims, it may feel it has to assert these with greater vigour and clarity. If this is combined with a sense of 'cognitive dissolution' from within, then there will be considerable pressure for an authority to assert itself internally and externally in an attempt to fashion coherence and give clarity of witness. The effect is to produce a dialectical strategy that stresses the drama of Christian witness, martyrdom, and the apocalyptic nature of this moment in history.

These two strategic responses to culture are both in play; they touch on the life of the Church and go to the heart of its self-understanding. They also influence different approaches to the conduct of religious education and formation. On the one hand, the dialectical strategy can produce an energy and confidence that will appeal to those in the Church whose sense of identity is weak or confused. It will, too, strengthen the community's resolve to defend its identity and values, especially when these are seen to challenge those of the secular culture. It will also produce new forms of evangelism and we can see this in the burgeoning 'movements'. These are marked by a strong pattern of direct catechesis, a renewal of the traditional forms of piety, especially Marian and Eucharistic devotion, and veneration for the Papacy. There is a tendency to see questions of truth in terms of authority and vice versa. Hence the dialectical strategy will tend to equate witness with obedience and faithfulness with loyalty.<sup>111</sup> In general, the sort of community favoured will be hierarchical.

On the other hand, opposite trends are developing from insights gained after the Council: a movement to use spirituality to negotiate the complexities and contradictions between the Church and contemporary culture; a tendency to look for 'base communities' rather than formal institutional structures; a political consciousness which is alert to justice, especially the cause of the poor and marginalised. There will also be a concern for third-world and ecological issues and less concern with personal sexual morality. In general, the sort of community favoured will be open and have a 'flat' structure.<sup>112</sup>

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109 Niebuhr, R.H., *Christ and Culture*, New York, Harper, 1956.

110 Cf. also treatment of this question by Tracy, D., *The Analogical Imagination, Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, New York, Crossroads, 1981, paperback reprint 2000, pp. 373 ff. His discussion of theologies of 'manifestation', 'proclamation' and 'liberation' is particularly useful for distinguishing the different styles of discourse within the community. In this respect John O'Malley's historical study, *Four Cultures of the West*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2004, is also illuminating. O'Malley identifies four rhetorical and intellectual styles: Culture 1: Prophecy and Reform; 2: The Academy and the Professions; 3: Poetry, Rhetoric and the Common Good; 4: Art and Performance.

111 This will also be the pattern in Protestant evangelical responses, with the difference that 'authority' will be located in the Bible.

112 An interesting way of 'mapping' is in the changing images of priesthood. In their study, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 2003, Dean Hoge and Jacqueline Wenger trace the shifting image from the shepherd/servant model of Vatican II to a more contemporary cultic emphasis. Of course, this is an attempt to stabilise the identity of priesthood, which is threatened by the stronger theology of the Laity, especially the universal priesthood of all believers, and the major change in the culture, which, prior to the Council, stressed the sacraments as the main source of grace and holiness.

## 5. On the way to the Catholic vision?

The specific brief with which this section is concerned is to 'offer an evaluative perspective on *Our Faith Story* and *On The Threshold* and the relevant developments in theology since their publication....' The reason for paying attention to the themes of the Council and the 'theological grammar' which underpins them is our thesis that the Council is not a past event but a continuing process in the Church's life. This is not just because the teaching of Councils is generally only absorbed slowly but is a direct consequence of the very nature of Vatican II. It is not only a question of receiving its teaching – made more challenging because it is not defined against recognisable positions – but of appropriating its vision and method. It requires an adaptive reception not just a structural one. This also makes it possible to see the various 'theologies' that have emerged since the Council – liberation and political theologies, feminist theologies, *communio* theologies, 'green theologies', post-modern theologies – as being important for the Church. Each has helped in a recognisable fashion to shape our understanding and contributed to the range of theological-spiritual discourse. Each one has, in some respect, relocated the Church with regard to its engagement with contemporary cultures and the issues that they raise. However, it is our understanding that these all take place within that deeper process of the Council which is determinative for the Church and what it is prepared to absorb as a resource for its life and witness.

It is our view that we are now in a new phase of reception, in which the vision of the Council and its ability to provide a resource to meet the challenges of a late-modern secular culture is being re-evaluated. This, in itself, produces new discourses and a degree of dislocation. Just as those who lived through the momentous changes that followed the Council experienced both a 'paradigm shift' and a 'culture shock', so too those who have lived with and been committed to those changes are experiencing a new cultural shift in this new phase of re-evaluation. It is too crude to see it purely in terms of restorationists, revisionists, liberals, and post-modernists. Such categories are not only descriptive but tend also to be political. When seen in this way the internal culture becomes divided and oppositional. When this happens it weakens the community's ability to respond because the conflict between alternatives diminishes confidence. It also distorts the nature of the choices available because in the political dynamic they appear mutually exclusive; each judgement carrying a strong moral commitment: being right or wrong; obedient and faithful or satisfying oneself; betraying a vision or prophetically witnessing to Christ. The rhetoric of either/or is the rhetoric of power that divides and falsifies because it claims authority for only one source and denies the good faith of any opposition. It introduces into Catholicism a 'Protestant dynamic' that only encourages fission. This not only weakens the culture of the community but it alienates it from its own intuitions of wholeness – a wholeness which is not a uniformity but a rich, creative discourse in which many voices can be heard. For Catholicism, truth is not either/or, it is always comprehensive and prismatic or, to use von Balthasar's phrase, 'symphonic'.<sup>113</sup>

## 6. Catholicism: reclaiming modernity

We have argued that the Council not only provides the Church with new resources to meet the challenges of late modernity/post-modernity but it reclaims modernity itself as a Catholic reality. When looking at the origins of modern sociology and the Enlightenment thought upon which it built, one senses that the secular thinking which was propagated fitted more easily with Protestantism than with Catholicism.<sup>114</sup> In many ways, we can consider the model of

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113 Von Balthasar, H.U., *Truth is Symphonic: Aspects of Christian Pluralism*, translated by G. Harrison, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1987.

114 Protestantism had a number of characteristics which favoured this alliance and fostered secularisation: the breaking away from papal authority, the stress on the individual as the appropriate interpreter of scripture, the separation of faith from reason, the move from church to home as the major place for the transmission of the faith, and in the shift from a metaphysical to an ethical theology. It is interesting to note that in his fascinating book, Nicholas Boyle argues that in the post-war economic order Germany has re-found a Catholic culture, which will help it to escape its parochial nationalistic past and thus to contribute its vast intellectual resources to the world today, see Boyle, N., *Who Are We now? Christian Humanism and the Global Market from Hegel to Heaney*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1998, pp. 139-146.

modernity, which we have received from philosophy and the social sciences, to be a Protestant conception of modernity.<sup>115</sup> Vatican II rejects a Protestant reading of the culture of modernity and, in particular, the inevitability of the process of secularisation and the marginalisation of religion that it seems to entail.<sup>116</sup> In its place, it offers a sacramental vision – a ‘Catholic modernity’ – which provides resources for negotiating a number of the tensions we identified in Part I. We explore in Part III what this has to contribute with regard to Catholic religious education, catechesis and formation. It is useful in concluding this part to identify five key elements:<sup>117</sup>

**6.1:** A profound reorientation of our understanding of the relationship of nature and grace. This not only allows us to understand human nature in a richer way, it also allows us to see that the ‘ordinary’ too is consecrated and a means to holiness. This is most evident in *Lumen Gentium* 39-42, as ‘a universal call to holiness’.

**6.2:** A capacity to provide the resources for ‘meaning-making’ or for ‘webs of significance’. In Part I we explored the implications of differentiation in modernity. Each sphere develops its own specific logic and language that lead to a series of irresolvable aporias when we attempt to find meaning. This occurs not just at an intellectual level but is reinforced by the mobility and pace of change driven by the demands of the economy and the new information

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115 Edwin Jones makes a similar point in his study of the English nation. He argues that much of English historiography has also been influenced by anti-Catholicism. As a result, the European and Catholic background of pre-Reformation England was distorted for the sake of the construction of the myth of Protestant English nationalism. See Jones, E., *The English Nation. The Great Myth*, second edition, Phoenix Mill, Sutton Publishing Limited, 2003. Eamon Duffy, in his study of Catholicism in England in the late medieval and early modern period, also shows that anti-Catholicism in Reformation England has created a false image of Catholicism. See Duffy, E., *The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992. For a review of the literature on anti-Catholicism in the modern period, see Drury, M.A., *Anti-Catholicism in Germany, Britain, and the United States: A Review and Critique of Recent Scholarship in The American Society of Church History*, 2001, March, Vol. 70, No. 1, pp. 98-131.

116 The relationship between modernity and Protestantism is a complicated one. The origins of modernity in both the Renaissance and the Reformation have long been the subject of much debate between scholars of various disciplines. Protestantism provided the framework for the development of a certain type of secularisation. In the writings of Max Weber, for example, we can see clearly how his sociology legitimates the Prussian state and consolidates the newly formed German nation, in which cultural Protestantism was seen as providing unity. In a similar fashion, the writings of Emile Durkheim sought to provide a legitimation for the newly formed science of sociology, which had to demonstrate its scientific credentials in the French academy of the late nineteenth century. In his writings, religion as a social entity is considered an ‘object’ in need of explanation by sociology. The fiercely secularist academy thus welcomed a discipline which would provide a scientific explanation of religion and reveal the real meaning and cause of religious behaviour. In the French context, the Catholic Church was seen as the proponent of traditionalism and anti-modernism, a tradition going back to the anti-revolutionary writings of Burke, de Bonald and de Maistre. Clearly, Marx’s reading of religion as a false consciousness based on class interests is also important in the sociological explanation of religion. As the discipline of the sociology of religion developed, it was primarily the theories on religion proposed by Weber, Durkheim and Marx which were developed further, since they seemed to provide sociological explanations for religion. This meant that the vision of religion in modernity was content to regard Catholicism as an archaic form of sacramental magic and to assign Protestantism various roles in the formation of modernity: the motivating force of Western rationalism according to Weber; the religion of an individualistic society for Durkheim; and the ideology of the bourgeoisie for Marx. The resultant image of modernity was thus heavily influenced by their reactions to Protestantism. When we look at the philosophers of modernity, the situation is even more striking. By the second half of the eighteenth century, German philosophy dominated European philosophy. It was this philosophical world-view which provided the intellectual resources for later sociological thinkers to conceive of modern industrialised society as an object of study. Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, Marx, and Nietzsche dominate the philosophical landscape of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since German culture in this period was predominantly Protestant, as David Blackburn, an eminent historian of Germany, has noted, they were by definition products of a Protestant world-view. See Blackburn, D., *The Long Nineteenth Century*, London, Fontana Press, 1997, p. 293. The Prussian bourgeoisie at this time often equated Catholicism with backwardness, authoritarianism and decadence. See Smith, W.H. (ed.), *Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Germany, 1800-1914*, Oxford, Berg, 2001. Cultural Protestantism, a category used to describe the transformation of Christian values into the values of middle-class capitalism in Germany, was closely linked with German nationalism and provided the dominant social values associated with the bourgeoisie in nineteenth-century Germany. Protestant theologians, such as Richard Rothe in Heidelberg, criticised Catholicism for being anti-modern and for blocking the development of the national cultural ideal that would shape discourse about German nationalism. On this point, see Graf, F. W., *Kulturprotestantismus. Zur Begriffsgeschichte einer theologiepolitischen Chiffre* in Müller, H. M. (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus. Beiträge zu einer Gestalt des modernen Christentums*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, 1992, pp. 21-77. This cultural bias of modernity is often overlooked in contemporary accounts of modernity. It is only when one considers the dominant cultural framework within which the social and cultural coordinates of the time were charted by philosophers and sociologists that one comes to see that Catholicism was not taken seriously in accounts of modernity. This should come as no surprise since the exclusion was mutual. At the time of Max Weber’s birth in 1864 and the foundation of the First Communist International by Marx and Engels, Pope Pius IX published his Encyclical *Quanta cura* and the Syllabus condemning the errors of modernity, liberalism and nationalism. The Catholic Church stood outside the world, engaging with it primarily to criticise it. In such a situation, it is not really surprising that models of modernity drew on Protestant inspiration. The Roman Catholic centralising tendency of Ultramontanism clearly contrasted here with a Protestant identification of Church with the nation. Nationalism was a product of modernity in the nineteenth century and was often forged in reaction to Catholicism.

117 See the Supplement for an elaboration of the meaning of a Catholic modernity.

technologies.<sup>118</sup> It becomes difficult to maintain a sense of generational continuity (roots) as well as space (rootedness). This weakens the traditional model of 'Home-School-Parish' as the key agent in the transmission of the faith.<sup>119</sup> The sacramental vision inherent in a Catholic modernity can contribute a way of speaking of the unity of all knowledge and the meaning of knowledge, whilst at the same time reconnecting our knowledge to the service of the common good and the reconstruction of communal and family life.<sup>120</sup>

**6.3:** A capacity to develop a coherent competence with pluralism which avoids both a fundamentalist assertion of the Catholic truth and the liberal evacuation of the singular truth of Catholicism through relativism.

**6.4:** A more nuanced attitude to secularisation. The theory of secularisation is for many contemporary sociologists of religion outdated. We have touched in Part I on how the earlier predictions of the disappearance of religion associated with theories of modernity have, in the face of the persistence of religion, come in for serious criticism. Whilst churches in England and Wales are indeed facing aging congregations, the multi-faith nature of our society and a general resurgence of interest in spiritualities of many different kinds have resulted in a certain sense of religious revival. Moreover, as sociologists, such as Grace Davie, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, and José Casanova, have made clear, secular European societies are the exception rather than the norm on a global level. Even in the case of Britain, Davie argues, and here she is supported by the results of the European Values Survey, that although fewer people go to churches, they still delegate their religious concerns to churches and ministers, something she calls the 'vicarious memory' of religion.<sup>121</sup> The importance of this attitude for the secularisation theory is two-fold. First, a more nuanced understanding of secularisation can help to avoid two perennial Catholic extremes: a certain form of triumphalism and an inferiority complex. On the one hand, the separation of the State from Church control should be considered a gain in modernity. The Catholic Church does not want to be the government of England or Wales. On the other hand, the erosion of the influence of Christian values on society is a real cause for concern. Conscious of the differentiation of modern society into autonomous spheres of competence, which has led to the separation of Church and State, the Catholic contribution to education must form citizens who draw their values of citizenship from the Gospel and see their faith as intimately connected to how they live and treat others in society.

**6.5:** The promotion of tolerance. Here the meaning of the word Catholic should provide the inspiration: universality through wholeness. This wholeness is only achieved through respect for the many differences in the variety of human life and the inherent goodness and beauty in other religious traditions and ways of life, and discernment of the ways in which this goodness and beauty both coincide with and differ from that of the Catholic vision.

It would be a mistake to think that 'Catholic Modernity' is simply a Catholic version of modernity. It is not. Rather, it is the way in which the Church can 'translate' the important advances and insights that inform contemporary cultures into its own vision, and in so doing disclose a new dimension that can be generative for the community of faith and for the secular

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118 This has important implications for the transmission of faith today. If in previous generations this transmission was linear, passing down from one generation to another, today it is often the younger generations who transmit information to the older generations. This has been greatly influenced by the shift from analogue to digital means of communication which changes the very grammar of communication. This shift is what one might call a poly-vocal or holographic model of information exchange in which images, texts and various related branches of information can be accessed simultaneously. See Thompson, J.B., *Ideology and Modern Culture*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990, pp. 163-215.

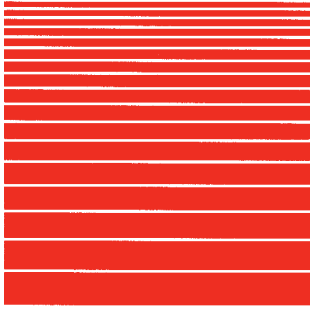
119 For example, the traditional model of the family has been greatly altered by the changing role and status of women in society. Increasing numbers of women are employed outside the home and no longer choose between home or career as was the case in previous generations.

120 This cultural fragmentation has also clearly affected our belief in knowledge. It is worth considering in this context whether this has influenced our catechetical work, especially the decision to downplay the teaching of Catholic doctrine in favour of a more personal and subjective approach, which stresses the experiential more than the cognitive dimension of faith. Clearly, the objective is to find the appropriate balance between these dimensions of faith.

121 Davie, G., *Religion in Modern Europe*, pp. 38-81.

world. The great strength of Catholic culture is its organic capacity to incorporate many different traditions and practices within an essential unity. This unity is not, however, a simple monism but rather a '*communio*' or an image of the Triune life. The task that faces us in this phase of re-evaluation is to resist the temptation to seek an easy resolution of tensions in a dialect of 'either/or' and to be faithful to the challenge of the Catholic *communio*. The essential question, therefore, is not how to educate people in the Catholic faith but how to form people with a Catholic mind and heart. This is a task for families, parishes, schools and all the different agencies of transmission and formation. It is also critical to the mission of evangelisation. The ability to undertake this 'translation' has a theological foundation for the Church constantly reads 'the signs of the times' in the light of the 'Mystery of Salvation'. It is to an exploration of the theological ground of a Catholic Modernity that we now turn in Part III.





## **Part III: Resources and Responses**

***We live in the Church at a privileged moment of the Spirit.***  
(Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* §75)



## **From the Brief:**

*The Institute will identify areas for possible further study and consideration. Propose strategies that the Department of Education and Formation and the wider Catholic Community may consider in the light of the analysis provided.*

## **Summary Part III:**

Part III is concerned first of all to argue that the Catholic Church has considerable resources to meet the challenges identified in Parts I and II. The discussion is not extensive but schematic and for this reason is divided into two sections. The first section holds that it is necessary for education, catechesis and formation to retrieve its own theological rationale. This is grounded in the essential identity between the Church's existence and its mission. Education, catechesis and formation are not therefore just of internal benefit, they are part of what the Church has to offer humanity. In this sense, too, they are integral to the process of evangelisation. We distinguish four elements in the community's educative rationale: (1) transmission; (2) vocation to mission that is every baptised person's vocation – hence the need for the Church to provide the conceptual, experiential/mystical-affective and ethical resources that its members need to realise their vocations; (3) the good of the person, which entails religious formation; and (4) the good of society, for the Christian life is ordered to the lasting common human good. Within this 'rationale', the Church can resist the pressures from society either to become a ghetto or to be absorbed.

The second section addresses the retrieval and development of the Catholic vision essential to overcoming the crisis in transmission. It attempts to sketch a theology that underpins a Catholic modernity, arguing that this is rooted in 'the Catholic sacramental imagination' which takes its form from the Incarnation. This orientates Catholic life creatively to the ways in which grace fills all created reality. The retrieval and development of the sacramental imagination not only brings considerable coherence to the Catholic vision and process of religious education, catechesis and formation but it opens up new generative resources for engagement with contemporary cultures. This is explored through the 'poiesis' of Christian life, its aesthetic and devotional forms. The 'Catholic sacramental imagination' is essentially ecclesial and hence the relational nature of all human existence is recognised. It finds its fullest expression in the reality of 'communio'. Taken together, these are the foundational resources for the 'dialogue of life', which is the discourse within the community and the powerful interpretative language with which it meets the world with the offer of life.



## 1. Introduction

The sociologist Steve Bruce argues that the forces of privatisation, individualism and relativism within secular culture continue to erode religious belief and practice. Yet, he is also prepared to admit that there is *nothing inevitable about secularisation*.<sup>122</sup> Even so, the continuous stream of data can produce a mesmerising fatalism in the community as it watches the dials slowly flicker towards 'empty'. Leaders can feel confused and guilty while laity can live their lives faithfully but with a quiet desolation. There is the temptation to seek signs of recovery in passing movements and fashions or to return to a strong counter-cultural stance, or to seek absolution from history – for there were previous occasions when numbers were low and structures tentative. While historical perspectives are important, seeking absolution from history is not the response of faith.

For the Church, nothing is inevitable. Far from placing religion in an embattled position, late-modernity directs religion to the miracle of its own existence and requires it to reflect more consistently and deeply on its own ground and source rather than simply on strategies for institutional survival. This allows religion to enter into a more searching critique of late-modernity in the light of what is revealed and through this to retrieve its own 'memory' as a new resource; to offer 'life' both to the culture and to the community of the Church. The method for proceeding is already present in Scripture. Christ first asks, 'Who do you say that I am?' The answer comes as a gift but the question opened up the possibility for responding. This is the critical dialogue with the 'modern world' that informs the approach of Vatican II.

Understanding the role of religious education, catechesis and formation in this work is essential. The extraordinary vitality and professionalism that mark the Church's programmes of religious education, catechesis and formation at all levels are already considerable assets. Yet, we have seen how the changing social patterns and life-styles of contemporary cultures serve to weaken their impact and continuity. Often the purpose of religious education, catechesis and formation is understood in terms of social service or cultural defence. Given the pressures we have traced, it is understandable that both arguments will be used depending on the circumstances. They are not without value: clearly good processes of religious education, catechesis and formation will strengthen the culture by bringing social and personal benefits.

The Church's commitment to both formal and informal activities of religious education, catechesis and formation is rooted, however, in a theological imperative from which its purpose and existence derive. If processes of religious education, catechesis and formation are to be effective channels of transmission, it will be important to clarify not only the social nature of their purpose but the theology that underpins them. To help with this, we offer a sketch of that 'theological rationale' with the aim of clarifying what resources the Council and today's theological developments offer for the task ahead.

## 2. The theological rationale

### 2.1: The ecclesial foundation

The Church's existence does not depend upon the fiat of a contemporary culture but upon the will of the Father manifested in the continuous gift of the Holy Spirit who witnesses to the Risen Christ in the lives of its members. The Church is primarily Christ's community of witness written in history through the praxis of worship (sacraments and prayer), the lives of the faithful manifesting Faith, Hope and Love, teaching (Apostolic Magisterium), and reflection (theology).

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<sup>122</sup> Bruce, S., *God is Dead*, p. 34 and p. 227.

The Church's mission is both to 'be' witness and 'to give' witness in word and in action by living its truth in and before the world.

It is common among some sociologists and psychologists of religion, and even among some contemporary theologians, to see Christianity and the Christian community as a resource for giving meaning to life and providing some sort of coherent narrative structure for personal existence. Of course, it does give meaning, but it is not one that is constructed from a series of concepts, stories and narratives, practices and traditions which the 'self' can take on or use to process and interpret experiences. If it were, then Christianity would be just one of many systems on offer. Such an approach fundamentally misunderstands the nature of meaning in Christian existence that discerns the dynamic of grace within our experiences. Grace changes the agent of meaning from 'self' to God; it is in this exchange encountered in the sacramental rhythm and life of the community that meaning is generated. The shape of Christian existence as an act of witness depends on this exchange – this rhythm of conversion that is constantly enacted.<sup>123</sup> As it takes place within a life and throughout a life, in all the circumstances to which a life is subject, it has the form of fidelity. Fidelity or faithfulness is not just a moral quality, it is also an historical one. Indeed, it can only be expressed in and through history. Hence its reciprocal character – our faithfulness to God and God's faithfulness to us – already involves us in history; indeed, it is the basis of the narrative form that faith gives to history and historical existence. At every point it expresses an incarnational dynamic, which changes the basis of the Christian meta-narrative. The Christian narrative is the Person of Christ, it is not an abstract construct but a personal relationship between God and God's people. The Christian meta-narrative therefore has quite a different character from all the meta-narratives of modernity. It is not one that pre-exists the relationship which it grounds. It is, rather 'our story' – the story that God allows and brings into being through God's freedom. Its 'ontological security' does not rest on anything other than God's fidelity to God's self; the one who from eternity has chosen to be God 'for us'. Christ and the Spirit are the guarantors in history (and in the eternal Triune life) so that fidelity is the action of grace in time; it is the presupposition of all witness. The Church's faithfulness, the constant 'anamnesis' of the meta-narrative of God's love, is not something that it invents but something that it knows by experience: something that it lives in its faithfulness to God's faithfulness. It is our knowledge of God; knowledge that cannot be obtained in advance of God's action for Christ is not the end product of an evolutionary dynamic. He is the sheer gift of the Father; longed for, prophetically anticipated but never known in advance of his appearance. For this is knowledge that only the Father can bestow, it cannot come from human speculation. Hence John the Baptist's witness, *I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water said to me....* (John. 1:33). The same pattern is echoed in the synoptics in Peter's profession of faith at Caesarea Philippi, *... it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in Heaven.* (Matthew 16:17). This is why the Church is founded on this knowledge and love of Christ. This is why she is both the one who gives witness before the world in telling the story but is herself, in her very existence, the witness. It is always a personal witness.

In this mission of fidelity, the Church is gift to the world. In the most profound way, it is in it and at its service, but free because its source is not conditional upon the world. This is the paradox which the Incarnation brings to light and is explored in the Gospel of John. In the Johannine view the community is called and set apart (consecrated) only to be sent more completely. The Church always stands at the crossroads of God and the world, making it a point of encounter. When the Church knows herself to be persecuted or rejected, actively or passively, through being ignored and marginalised, then the Church is most fully the out-pouring of love. Such a moment can never be general or abstract; it is always particular and

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<sup>123</sup> Exchange is used here to reflect the Incarnation which the tradition sees as the *admirabile commercium* - the wondrous exchange or indwelling of the human and divine natures in the person of Christ. Understood in this way, we can see the Christological dynamic of grace. Without this, we see it always in terms of 'two' orders and run the risk of thinking of grace in terms of a general anthropology.

concrete because it is always a moment of incarnation. In such an experience the Church is more intensely committed to **this** world, **this** culture, **this** moment in history, and is, in the deepest sense, 'martyred' and therefore shows the glory of Christ because the source of its existence becomes transparent. Martyrdom is always the witness of the Risen and Glorified Lord. For this reason, the Church's life in the world is a continuous 'kenosis' for she cannot live or exist for herself but only in being sent; in being given; in being poured out. Thus her sending is also a Eucharist – a sacrifice and a thanksgiving.<sup>124</sup>

This 'pouring-out' or 'self-emptying' has dimensions that are epistemological as well as existential and historical. It means that the Church does not know at any point in history that she is complete, that her searching for understanding or her struggle to speak the truth of Christ and for Christ has come to an end. Contra all the gnosticisms that claim to know 'the end of history', history itself destroys such 'meta-narratives' for it knows nothing of its own destiny. To live in history is to live in this epistemological agnosticism; it is to experience its radical provisional reality. The Christian lives in this too between the already and 'not yet' – the aporia of Gethsemane. Christian existence in history has the quality of the Easter vigil, recalling the great narrative of salvation in time by the light of Christ, knowing that all time and all the ages belong to Him, waiting for the full glory of the Easter dawn. This faith distinguishes it from the world while placing it at the world's service. In its very distinction from the world, the Church is more deeply inserted into it and only in this way can the Church be an effective mediation of Christ and guarantee that in 'this place' He is to be found. The Church's teaching on Christ's 'real presence' is a doctrine of ecclesiology as well as the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Church's entire mission follows from this.

The task always before the community, therefore, is how to transmit this understanding, how to be a place of encounter, and how to witness effectively in word and in deed to the reality of Christ. This means that every member of the Church must know and experience the Church as a place of encounter, a home, and be enabled to take responsibility for its mission. This is the activity of religious education, catechesis and formation – it is the formation for freedom in the culture that shows itself in witness. But it is also a properly ecclesial action that comes forth from the Church and returns to it. It requires an ecclesial life and faith that is affective and relational as well as cognitive and conceptual. Simply knowing the truth of faith will not sustain witness. The truth must be loved if it is to be fully known for Christian truth is never merely prepositional, it is the Person of Christ, Truth's self. It is this love that is the root of the relational reality of the Church. It is the source of our belonging and our staying and our willingness to be sent.

It is in this context that we come to consider the key dimensions of the Church's task in religious education, catechesis and formation. All of these dimensions are the ways in which the community is a channel of grace, for it is the Holy Spirit who is the agent of Christian formation. Every Christian life is a life lived in the Spirit.

## 2.2 The transmission of faith

This has several aspects: (a) **the content of faith**, both cognitive and conceptual; (b) **the experience of faith** – the life of the community lived in liturgy and prayer. This is an experience of a graced life mediated through the praxis of the community of faith; an experience of belonging, of membership, and the responsibilities that it entails to the generations before and after; (c) **acts of faith** – these are the deeds of compassion, generosity and sacrifice that nourish faith, incarnate it, build up the community and are a service to

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124 Cf. Von Balthasar, H.U., *The Kenosis of the Church, Explorations in Theology. IV Spirit and Institution*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1995, pp. 125-138, although the position we have taken here is somewhat different from that of von Balthasar.

others. All three are integral and together they constitute the transmission of faith in a coherent, narrative form. When they are present they mark the transition of each member to becoming a 'transmitter' of faith, that is, entering the tradition.

The transmission of faith is not just about the survival of the community, it is the right of every baptised member to receive the faith into which they have been baptised and to have the means whereby they may live and grow in the Mystery that they have received.

If, as we have argued, the nature of Christian truth is relational and personal as well as cognitive, this means that the relationship in which and through which it is mediated and encountered is also vital. This is why the scandals that have marked the life of the community are significant for its life. This is not just a matter of losing credibility (literally) in the world; they weaken the relations of trust within the community itself. Authority loses its 'trustworthiness', even when loyalty and faithfulness continue. It is an urgent task for the community to rebuild these relationships.

### 2.3: Vocation to mission

The Christian community lives in mission and every member participates in it. Formation is concerned to help each one find and understand their vocation and the mission that flows from it, access the resources to develop and sustain it, and shape it to the mission of the Church.

### 2.4: The good of the person

Religious education, catechesis and formation are part of the general good of the person and necessary to the flourishing of their potential at each stage of their life. The Church's task, therefore, embraces all educational activity and endeavour. The fullest realisation of a person's capacity not only allows them a richer life, thus realising the good of their creation, but also creates more possibilities for their service and contribution to society. In this way the common good is furthered. This is why the Catholic Church refuses to accept the secularising dualism which sees 'religion' and 'religious' development as a private activity independent of the formation of the whole person. Indeed, it holds that religious formation is integral to the full development of the person and their self-understanding. It provides the basis on which persons can discriminate and make morally informed choices about the way in which they use the knowledge and skills they acquire.

### 2.5: The good of society

If there is always an ecclesial horizon within which religious education, catechesis and formation take place, there is also a social one. The Church is concerned with religious education, catechesis and formation so that it may contribute to the general good of society and may better undertake its own mission of service in all the different ways in which that service is needed.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> These four elements, which have been dealt with schematically here, are discussed in a more discursive and complete form in GE, Vatican II; *The Catholic School*, The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (henceforth SCCE), Vatican, 1977, esp. §5-15; *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to Faith*, SCCE, Vatican 1982; *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, SCCE, Vatican, 1997.



### 3: Resources: renewing the memory

#### 3.1: The '*poiesis*' of Catholic life

Secularisation is not just a matter of falling numbers of believers; it impacts on the cogency of the Christian account of reality and human existence in cultures where there are other powerful and attractive alternatives. Essentially, that account must be able to 'translate' other discourses without losing its own substance and be translated by them so that it can be a genuine resource in all the many cultural discourses. This process is at the heart of religious education, catechesis and formation. To develop our metaphor of translation: the educative process is not just about a competent mastery of the vocabulary and the grammar but about becoming a fluent speaker.<sup>126</sup> A fluent speaker is not stuck with stock phrases but can adapt and be creative so that he or she is at ease both in the language and with the realities that he or she is trying to express. There is then always a '*poiesis*', both in the sense of a 'making' and in the sense of a linguistic and improvisatory dynamic, a 'poetry'.

At another level, because of the deep interconnection between language and the expression of identity, there is also a process in which expression is also a self-becoming and self-disclosure. This is why, theologically, to be a Christian always entails a '*confessio Christi*' – a witness to Christ. There is an inner 'ratio' or connection between the Word 'spoken' as the Father's complete self-expression and the Word speaking in us as the Word. The Word speaks in us, of course, through the Spirit and is the sign of the life of grace received in baptism, nourished in the sacraments, and distilled as wisdom and discernment through the experiences of our life. In this sense, our speaking or witnessing is also our becoming, for in all the modalities of our confessing Christ we become that which we confess.

All Christian life is a '*poiesis*', the poetry of grace, grounded in the Spirit that discloses an aesthetic. In this way we can also understand the intrinsic unity of education, formation and evangelisation. However, we learn this language in and from the community. Education is an entry into the community's discourse – its '*confessio*' – in all its forms. We learn to speak well from hearing others speak well; our thought, vocabulary, imagination, our sense of what is 'fitting' – aesthetically, grammatically, humanly – grows from experiencing others speak and speaking ourselves and, of course, being corrected as well as inspired. This is why every member of the community has the right of access to all the different modes of the community's discursive life and tradition. The process of education is therefore not just cognitive or experiential but must be historical, aesthetic, liturgical and spiritual.

Once we know how to speak well, we will also speak freely and this is important for acts of cultural translation and witness. The point of grammar is not to limit or restrict but to enable those necessary 'improvisations' with which we meet the fluidity and complexity of our lives. This '**knowing how to**' or praxis has two aspects. The first is a practical know-how. Most of us can do things that require a lot of knowledge and understanding, but we could never articulate this or put it into a theoretical form, we just know and our knowing is expressed in our doing. The life of faith is also like this – there is a true intuition for what is the right way of living and that is expressed in our actual living. The second is the sort of problem-solving skills which we all possess. This is an application of our experience and knowledge to a completely new situation. Sometimes we can use old solutions and, by seeing how they fit, we can make them work. But often what is needed is a new solution and 'insight', and then we have to be creative. When being creative, however, we are always using a large reservoir of 'tacit' knowledge. This is not only drawn from our own experience but also encompasses the

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<sup>126</sup> The metaphor of 'language' is used to encompass all the different forms of expression – actions as well as words – and the many ways in which we signify and communicate.

knowledge that we absorb from the community. Both experience and knowledge require a capacity to learn and learning is never a passive act but an active process; it is a process of being engaged. This is why we can only 'learn' faith from living it and being within a community of faith. In this engagement we are involved in **learning how to** translate.

Every Christian life is a continuous act of translation and that requires a confidence in the language of faith that allows us to speak it freely. But this 'freedom' is not a simple unconstrained self-expression, for we never speak just as ourselves. We speak as members of a community. This is the point of the 'grammar' – the normative sources of our speech – that ensures that our speaking is always ecclesial, i.e. responsible speech, in which the whole community (past, present and future) can recognise the expression of its faith and life. Our speech is our **learning from** others who are experts in, and practitioners of, the Christian life. All these are dimensions of the '*poiesis*' or the living poetry of Christian existence.

### 3.2: The Christian surplus of meaning

Translation is also an act of interpretation, that is, an act of making meaning or making sense. It is a process of recognition whereby we can bring things into relationship in such a way that their uniqueness or distinctiveness is not lost but more fully appreciated. The source of Christian meaning does not lie within the 'web of significance' that our discourse alone creates. The source of all Christian speech lies in Revelation: the Word made flesh that is also a living Word, the Word of Life, through the action of the Spirit.

In a strict sense, the Word is untranslatable and cannot be encompassed in any other word. This very 'untranslatability' is the source of Christian speech, since it means that we are always in the act of trying to speak the Word that remains inexhaustible. It is the Word that ultimately is only grasped in silence, in our 'un-speaking'.<sup>127</sup> Our language always points away from itself towards the Word that is its source; for only in this way can it truly refer to the silent Mystery at its core. This is why the deepest 'grammar' of Christian life is found not in professional theology but in the school of the liturgy, the mystics and the saints, and in the silent eloquence of the language that the Spirit speaks in the lives of the faithful.

Far from producing an inarticulacy or impoverishment of meaning, however, the 'untranslatability' of the Word is a new language that we are always having to learn. For this reason, the life of faith is always a project, never something that is finished or complete in history. That is why all our speech, even those elements which are normative and binding, is in some sense always incomplete. As Aquinas says, we tend towards the truth itself but we do not capture it in all its fullness.<sup>128</sup> When we speak, therefore, of 'Mystery', it is not in the sense of something that is unintelligibly beyond us, and therefore something that we can ignore for the practical purpose of our daily existence, rather it is that which has inexhaustible meaning; a reality which is eternally generative of new possibilities for speech – we experience it always as a 'surplus'.

Christian discourse always enters cultures with this 'surplus'. If it forgets the basis on which it speaks and the reason why it is compelled to speak, then it will always experience itself as weak and impoverished. It will lose the power to 'translate' and hence will be translated. Yet, if it holds to its source, 'cleaves to' and 'inheres in' (*inhaereo*) as Augustine says, then it has an unlimited capacity to enter into all the discourses that are present in the cultures that make up

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127 Augustine DT 7. Cf. "For between creator and creature there can be noted no similarity so great that a greater dissimilarity cannot be seen between them", IV Lateran Council, 1215. Tanner, Norman P. (ed.) *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. I, London, Sheed & Ward, 1990, p. 232.

128 "Perceptio divinae veritatis tendens in ipsam." Thomas Aquinas, *In Sent III.d.25, q.1,a.1. q(a) 1, obj.4*. Also *ST IIa IIae, q1,a.6*. Cf. also Congar, Y., *The Word and the Spirit*, translated by D. Smith, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1986, pp. 1-7. It is also important to recall that Christian Truth is also eschatological in character.

our society, and it can offer a critique which is a liberating ‘un-speaking’ of their grammars, as well as being an affirming and creative engagement. Religious education, catechesis and formation, therefore, must also be attentive to the Mystery at the heart of the world and all human life. This means that that we need to have confidence in our theology of nature and grace. It is essentially a theology that makes explicit the ‘eternity in the heart’ of every human person which is constantly seeking expression and form. The sacramental vision of Catholicism is the sacrament of the heart as well and cannot help but find a deep resonance there.

### 3.3: The Catholic sacramental imagination

We argued that Vatican II opens up the possibility of a ‘Catholic Modernity’. This is not a compromise with a secular view of modernity and the process of differentiation that lead to the marginalisation of religion from the public sphere and its absorption into the private sphere as a lifestyle option. Neither, in rejecting that version, are we simply offering a strategy for survival in the face of the statistics. The ability to construct a Catholic modernity which can incorporate many of the central values of modernity – commitment to rational discourse, freedom, justice and equality, human rights, etc., – without weakening Catholic identity or the structures by which it is transmitted, lies in the strength and coherence of its central vision. A Catholic modernity is only possible because it is predicated on a sacramental vision of reality. As we have seen, this is grounded in the way in which the Incarnation overcomes the primal division of sin, and without compromising the distinctness of Creator and creation, refuses to let them be portrayed as antagonistic opposites. The sacramental vision can allow for plurality, variety, difference and differentiation; it neither requires an ontological monism nor Hegelian logic of reconciliation.<sup>129</sup>

David Tracy speaks of the Christian ‘analogical imagination’, by which he means the ability to grasp ‘similarity-in-difference’ so that things are understood in ordered relationships.<sup>130</sup> We may take Tracy a little further and suggest that this is more completely a sacramental imagination. There is a sense in which the original ‘analogical relationship’ is created by God in the act of creation itself. Its source lies within the Trinitarian life in the union and distinction of persons. It finds its complete expression in the Incarnation and the gift of the Spirit, whereby all things are reconciled in God without ceasing to be themselves. Indeed, we may speak here of the redemption of being in the sense that through participation in the grace of Christ and the Spirit all things are reordered to their own essence: they can genuinely become that which they are created to be by being ordered to that for whom they exist. Insofar as purpose is now realigned with being, history is no longer condemned to meaninglessness like a journey without a goal. We are no longer the self-defined pilgrims described by Hervieu-Léger, but together with all created things, we are on pilgrimage back to ourselves in Christ.

In this sense, too, our freedom is healed for it is no longer the expression of ‘self alone’ or ‘self-over against’ the perceived constraints of other existants. Such ‘freedom’ is, of course, the sovereign freedom of the tyrant realised in the destruction or seduction of all other freedoms that may run contrary to the self. However, when freedom is ‘redeemed’ from the ‘sovereign self’ in Christ, then it becomes a freedom to serve; it can ‘assent’ to other freedoms and facilitate them; it lives in *communio*. At this level, it becomes an exercise of love that is ‘seeking the good of the other’, especially the final good that is God’s self. Here we can see that Christ is inscribed in all freedom both as redeemer, the one who in freedom (the kenosis of the Cross) gives us freedom, and as goal of all freedom in love.<sup>131</sup>

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129 Much of the writing of John Paul II has been devoted to taking the potential for critical dialogue with the contemporary world forward. Cf. *Fides et ratio*, Vatican, 1998; *Evangelium Vitae*, Vatican, 1995; *Veritatis Splendor*, Vatican, 1993; *Centesimus Annus*, Vatican, 1991; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Vatican, 1987.

130 Tracy, D., *The Analogical Imagination*, p. 410.

This life, which Augustine calls *vere esse* or 'true existence', comes to be in history but it will never be completed until we see God 'face to face'. For this reason it always has an eschatological quality – a history which is grounded in God's promise and already has before it the fulfilment of that promise, although it knows itself always to be *in via*, on the way. The same applies to the Christian understanding of Truth which is ultimately not something that can be reduced to propositions because it is God's self and our knowledge of all things in Him. Such knowing is a *Sapientia* which includes all the normal range of human knowledge and truth, but now they are held within the sacramental vision of reality made possible in Christ that is the governing theme of Vatican II and makes a Catholic modernity possible.

The Catholic sacramental vision of reality as a dynamic *communio* is one that has come more to the fore since Vatican II.<sup>132</sup> Its significance for the Church has also come to be emphasised. We have seen how Vatican II placed the mystery of the Church itself at the centre of the process of developing a new way of engaging with secular cultures. In doing so it was developing a new 'ecclesial apologetics', which, unlike the apologetics of the past, did not characterise the Church as a closed, complete world against a secular and atheistic culture, but instead allows the Church to contemplate the miracle of its own existence as the 'first fruits' of Christ's work through the Spirit. The Church now becomes the open community and the visible sign of this redemptive freedom and healing of human existence. It is the sacrament of *communio* and, insofar as all women and men are ordained to communion with God, there is a deep sense in which the Church is the home of all humanity. This vision of the essence of the Church finds a more eloquent expression in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*:

*To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings.*

*But what does this mean in practice? Here too, our thoughts could run immediately to the action to be undertaken, but that would not be the right impulse to follow. Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as 'those who are a part of me'. This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a 'gift for me'. A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to 'make room' for our brothers and sisters, bearing 'each other's burdens' (Gal. 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, 'masks' of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.<sup>133</sup>*

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131 For a discussion of the ways in which transcendence (grace) grounds freedom, cf. Dupré, L., *The Modern Idea of Culture: Its Opposition to its Classical Christian Roots*, in McInerney, R. (ed.), *Modernity and Religion*, Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, pp. 1-17.

132 Useful introductory discussions in Walter, K., *Church as Communio in Communio*, Vol. 13, 1986, pp. 100-117, and Zizioulas, J.D., *Being as Communion*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985.

133 John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Vatican, 2001, § 43.

This, of course, is not only a vision of the Church but also of a redeemed society and therefore it is the context for much of the Church's social teaching and action.

The retrieval of the Catholic sacramental imagination gives a coherent form to all the Church's discourse and it offers a cogent conceptualisation that can ground the educational and formational processes of the community. It is the essential vision of the Tradition and therefore allows a recovery of the community's history, hence its historical imagination. More importantly, its 'retrieval' is not a return to the 'past' but a re-centering on what is essentially a Catholic way of inhabiting all reality as the place where God dwells.<sup>134</sup>

As such, it also has narrative and generative power; it is not a dead language but one that is translatable and interpretative. It is not a vain attempt at the re-enchantment of a disenchanted world and to this extent it is not another 'spiritual technique' or repackaged gnosticism. Rather, it is based on God's act of self-communication; it is the economy of grace not our work. 'The Glory of God is the human being fully alive', the celebrated words of Irenaeus, have become almost a slogan for the legitimation of therapeutic spiritualities and their techniques<sup>135</sup>. When it is read as a version of 'the turn to the subject', it is grossly distorted and the true aesthetic that it expresses is lost. It is not a legitimation for human fulfilment as such. For Irenaeus it is in seeing God's glory, especially in Christ, that we become 'fully alive'. It is the proclamation of a self-fulfilled subject, a person who is filled with God's own life i.e. grace. God is the inexhaustible source of life and it is only in Him that we have life. As Augustine puts it, God is: *the life of lives, living Life itself that does not change, the life of my soul...*<sup>136</sup>

### 3.4: The aesthetic of faith

The Catholic sacramental imagination also makes us conscious of the aesthetic nature of the economy, for love and beauty have the same source in gratuity. It is 'an epiphany of mystery'.<sup>137</sup> It is not only the coherence and cogency of faith that attracts but its beauty. It is a beauty which the community must also express if it is to express itself. In this sense the 'aesthetic of faith' is integral to evangelisation and the Church's mission:

*This world - they said - in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair. Beauty, like truth, brings joy to the human heart and is that precious fruit which resists the erosion of time, which unites generations and enables them to be one in admiration!*<sup>138</sup>

The life of faith is also a '*poiesis*' in the sense that it is fashioned in the image of God and therefore must be touched by the splendour of his glory no matter what the circumstances are. A community which neglects this will be impoverished and will never have an understanding of the power and miracle of its own existence. The effective transmission of the 'memory' must always be the 'memory of its beauty'. The practice of faith in all its forms is the participation in the beauty that God is and it is the constant creative disclosure of that beauty in the world. Thus art, in all its modes, is not something that is a luxury but the very living out of the vision of God. For this reason, the aesthetic of the life of faith is integral to the sacramental vision and it is also integral to religious education, catechesis and formation, but especially to evangelisation. Faith is not only a matter of hearing the Word but also of seeing it:

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134 God is always immanent in the world as the one who is transcendent.

135 "*Gloria Dei, vivens homo; gloria autem hominis visio Dei.*" Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. IV, 20, 7.

136 "*Vita vivarum, vivens te ipsa, et non mutaris, vita animae meae.*" Confes. Bk 3.6. In this very condensed line Augustine is not only expressing the God who is the giver of life (Creator) but also the Redeemer, the one for whom life can never die: echoing Christ that God is the God of the living and also his dialogue with the woman at the well. (Jn.4). There is, too, a sense of our regeneration through the Spirit.

137 Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*, Vatican, 1999, § 10, citing Paul VI in his speech to artists, 17 May 1964, AAS 56 (1964), 438-444.

138 Paul VI, *Message to Artists*, 8 December 1965, Vatican, AAS 58 (1966), 13.

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. (I John.1.1)*<sup>139</sup>

For most, this is primarily accessible in the Church's liturgy. When one understands this in terms of the renewed theology of grace, then it is possible to grasp what an extraordinary response the Church has to one of the major paradoxes of modernity. In Part I we sketched the problem of '*frenetic longueurs*' and their underlying banality and vacuity. We saw how this created the notion of 'the event'. The 'ordinary' is only a problem in a desacralised world in which the secular refuses to be graced. The theology of grace that informs Vatican II recovers 'the ordinary' as the realm of grace, God's 'better beauty'; hence the aesthetic of holiness is not something exceptional but something that is shaped in the realm of the domestic, giving to it the weight of glory; the Alchemist's stone is Christ.<sup>140</sup> The liturgy is the routine inscription of eternity in time, the continual action of Christ who is Lord of Time and the Spirit that moves over the dark aporetic abyss of history to bring forth Life. In the liturgy 'the ordinary' is consecrated and made the place of encounter. This is the democracy of grace for it requires no exceptional gifts of rank, power or ingenuity. It is the event of Christ. The liturgy is not magic or technology, its effects are not under our causal command, but come from the freedom of the Spirit; it is always a gift. By its very 'routine' and 'ordinariness', the liturgy writes us into time; in its rhythms and seasons, it celebrates our finitude and our embodiedness.<sup>141</sup> It is not an escape from the trials and contradictions of our finite temporal existence to eternity but a way of seeing them within the greater horizon of God's eternal life and the continual action of His Love. It is a way of living redemption not out of time but through time in the time that Christ has given.

## 4. Suggestions

At the beginning of this study we stressed that it was commissioned and offered as an interpretation of the present situation in the Church and secular culture and the issues this raised for Catholic religious education, catechesis and formation. The principal intention was not to provide answers in terms of structures and programmes. That would be outside our competence. The Catholic Church in England and Wales has excellent educational and formation structures and an extraordinary wealth of experienced, professional and passionately committed practitioners, generous with their time and courageous in their spirit. All have considerable experience and insight in what we have called 'translation' and that is why the community has been able to mount such a sustained and successful programme in this area. Given this wealth of experience and knowledge, the Church already has the key resource for continuing to develop and strengthen the process of religious education.

As we said at the beginning, the purpose of this study was to offer a perspective that may stimulate further reflection. Within our analysis and the thesis we have developed, however, it may be useful to highlight some areas for further analysis and discussion.

**4.1:** We have identified the 'crisis in transmission' as one of the key factors with which religious education, catechesis and formation has to deal. This has the following principal dimensions among others: conceptual, structural and interpersonal.

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139 Cf. Greeley, A, *Catholic Revolution*, pp. 150 ff.

140 Pope John Paul II, Letter, § 5 indicates the 'beauty' that the Incarnation brings into the world, but it was already present in its Christological form as the *Logos*.

141 Bourdieu, P., *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987, pp. 52-65. Cf. Supplement, which speaks of practices that come from a 'habitus'. While the practices are changeable they are adopted and shaped by the 'habitus', which is the underlying framework of understanding that a person has developed through his or her own experiences and interaction with the culture. In a sense, the liturgy is the action that recalls the 'habitus' of eternity or Christ's abiding presence.

Given the multiple languages that characterise the culture of late-modernity, combined with the transformations in the internal culture of Catholicism engendered by Vatican II, the community experiences both a clash of interpretations about the significance of the Council and its teaching and a variety of strategies about how to deal with the changes that are taking place. This creates a 'cognitive dissolution': the sense that there is no coherence in our conceptual map or our beliefs and the practices that give them expression. Given the organic nature of the Church, this will be experienced in lesser or greater degrees depending on the generational status, the level of commitment, and the resources that are accessible to negotiate the tensions. We have argued that a very considerable resource lies to hand in the vision of a 'Catholic sacramental imagination' which grounds the possibility of a 'Catholic modernity.'

It is our thesis that this vision brings a conceptual coherence and stability that can facilitate the 'translation' in which the community is constantly engaged both internally and with secular culture. Such a vision can also allow for a necessary creative and adaptive absorption of the cultural discourses without destabilising the coherence of Catholic identity. Indeed, it strengthens it. Given that it can offer cogency and coherence, it would seem to be worthwhile developing its potential to ground all the processes of transmission, particularly those of religious education, catechesis and formation.

This would mean developing this sacramental imagination with the theology that underpins it as the core conceptual structure for all the cognitive elements of educational and formational programmes. It would also help to create a structural coherence between family, parish and school. It could also serve as focus for all catechetical work and adult formation. The recent publications of *The Common Good* and *A Place of Redemption* are excellent examples of how the Catholic community can successfully articulate its distinctive vision with intelligence, depth and cogency in the field of social issues. They are good examples of how the community can mobilise its resources to engage secular democratic culture and thus be agents of transmission for the whole community.

The Catholic Church has very considerable resources at its disposal for developing both the theology and materials necessary for such a core vision. It would be good to enlist the expertise of professional Catholic theologians, historians, scholars, educationalists and catechists, together with all the related fields of expertise, to test the feasibility of a Catholic sacramental imagination, and the possibility of a Catholic modernity. Obviously, the fruits of such collaboration would also be of considerable benefit to evangelisation and parish life.

The development of a strong cognitive coherence across the life of the community will only be maximally effective if it is matched by a structural coherence. The various departments that work in all the different fields of the Church's life both at national and diocesan level are an enviable resource for any community. They possess considerable knowledge of Government and local government and are well briefed on how policies impact upon the life of the community at large, as well as the Church. Yet if the struggle of modern life is to 'only connect' this must be true of the ecclesial community as well. This is not to recommend greater centralisation, but it is to recognise that transmission also depends on the coherence of structures, especially in their ability to share ideas, materials, knowledge and insight. It would be important to look at how this could be facilitated and how energies could be concentrated and focused.

**4.2:** In transitional and adaptive situations the community needs leadership. This is exercised at a number of levels. Educationalists, formators, catechists, and artists are all sources of leadership and part of the charismatic patrimony of the People of God. We suggest that there are three principal tasks of leadership in the situation that we have described. The first is 'interpretation', i.e. helping the community understand who it is, where it is and with which sort of culture it is engaging. The second is the creation and validation of resources that the

community can access so that it can experience 'the surplus of meaning' as a positive event in its life. The third important task, which we have already noted, is to rebuild and deepen the trust in, and trustworthiness of, the structures of care and authority within the community. Without this, the community will feel that its responses are inadequate not only to the challenges of secular culture but also to its own spiritual and intellectual needs. If one of the great successes of the community in the last century was the education of its members, well-educated members also need to be nourished. Not only are they a resource for the community, but the social mobility that education affords means that they are more strenuously engaged in 'translation'.

The Catholic Church has always been distinguished by the richness of its artistic heritage at every level – from high to ordinary. This needs to be made available to every generation. Religious education, catechesis and formation should encourage contact with, and access to, this tradition. But more than this, the community should find ways of gathering and supporting Catholic artists in every creative field so that the imagination of the community can be enriched and resourced.

**4.3:** We have spoken briefly about devotional life and practices. With the post-ideological generation, it is important that the devotional life, particularly in its ecclesial dimensions, is recovered. Not everyone approaches their faith in a formally intellectual way or at the same time. We need to enhance the repertoire of the symbolic, non-verbal practices of faith and prayer. These are essential in constructing and maintaining identity; they also allow us to 'speak' when we are 'inarticulate', such as in trauma and illness or just when all the normal resources of language and thought are exhausted. To this extent we need to recover our tradition of popular mysticism.

In this respect much can be done at the national level to retrieve a national communal memory of faith. The recovery of pilgrimages to ancient national sites, for instance, serves to mark a sacred landscape within the secular one; they educate and reconnect us with our communal faith-history.<sup>142</sup> The community that has become embarrassed by these acts or no longer feels them to be valuable is a community in which memory is fading and confidence is diminishing.

**4.4:** The development of resources and strategies, and the reflection that underpins them, needs to be informed. It is therefore important that the community gathers the information it needs and encourages reflection upon it.

It would be important to have information about the coherence of belief among practising Catholics, including an understanding of how they experience parish life; what they would identify as their needs; how they regard the quality of preaching and liturgical celebration.

It would also be interesting to duplicate the study that Hoge et. al. have undertaken with priests in America, so that priestly formation and life can be better supported and resourced.

These suggestions, by no means exhaustive or developed, are intended only to point to areas for reflection. They may be ways of initiating a process and indicating its shape.

## **5. Conclusion: the dialogue of life**

The Church's engagement with contemporary cultures is not optional. It cannot be avoided in practice and it is its mission to enter into dialogue with all whom it encounters. We have

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142 Cf. Elizono, V. and Freyne, S. (eds.), *Pilgrimage, Concilium 1996/4*, London, SCM Press.



indicated how this may be done confidently and with imagination and courage. That requires that the community is also ready to take the risk of 'translation' and to recognise that if we desire to create a living language, then we will also make mistakes. That is in the nature of any educative process. However, this is not a game of survival nor a struggle for power and influence. It is the dialogue of life; the life of grace which we are given for others. It is life which we simultaneously possess and to which we are always on the way.

In his seminal primer for all Christian religious education, catechesis and formation, Augustine reminds us that this dialogue of life is not about us but about God – the God who is love. All our speech, if it is true speech about this God, will be an act of love. This is both the means and the end of all our translation and transmission:

*Take this love, therefore, as the end that is set before you, to which you are to refer all that you say, and, whatever you narrate, narrate it in such a manner that he to whom you are discoursing on hearing may believe, on believing may hope, on hoping may love.<sup>143</sup>*

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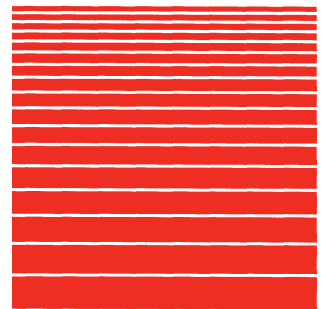
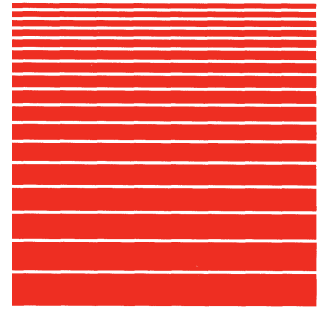
143 *Hac ergo dilectione tibi tamquam fine proposito, quo referas omnia quae dicis, quidquid narras ita narra, ut ille cui loqueris audiendo credat, credendo speret, sperando amet* [I Cor. xiii. 13]. De. Cate. Rud. Chapter 4.8.





**Supplement**

**Mapping the Social and Cultural  
Context of Catholic Education  
and Catechetical Formation in  
England and Wales**





## Supplement

*This supplement is intended as an aid to understanding the framework of a Catholic modernity used in this study. This framework both structures our mapping of the social and cultural context and situates it within a sacramental vision inspired by Vatican II.*

## Summary

In order to consider the social and cultural context in which Catholic education, catechesis and formation in England and Wales are and will be taking place, we have used the analogy of cultural and social mapping. Our first objective is to locate ourselves on this map. We then develop the notion of cultural and a-cultural theories of modernity in order to explain the normative framework of a Catholic modernity which, we suggest, is a helpful way for Catholic education, catechesis and formation to position itself on the contemporary cultural and social map and to plot its course to the future.



## 1. Mapping the social and cultural context

Our feeling that we need to situate ourselves today is a sure indication that we are disoriented.<sup>144</sup> It is the purpose of a map to give direction and certitude both about where one is and how to get to where one would like to be. In the case of social and cultural mapping, the objectives are the same but the methods are necessarily different. Whilst a cartographer can obtain a precise picture of a particular land mass or stretch of water, the sociologist or philosopher must rely on informed interpretation. Sociology and philosophy have developed their own conceptual apparatus to provide social and cultural coordinates for mapping the present. In general terms, the social coordinates of a period are the ways in which social relations are organised. This includes how the political system is conceived, how the economic system functions, and how the personal relations between individuals are affected by the values and norms inherent in a given society. When we speak of cultural coordinates, we are referring to the status and structure of human knowledge in a period of history. This includes both cognitive and non-cognitive conceptions of knowledge, whether concerned with truth or not; the ways in which different domains of knowledge relate to one another; whether one particular domain dominates; and how knowledge is distributed between members of a population.

## 2. Four social and cultural projections

In an analogous way to the projections used by cartographers, we can speak of four major projections, which have located the cultural and social coordinates of the Western world. These are: the Greek, the Latin, the modern and the post-modern. What was the basic idea of each of these social and cultural constellations, which gave a sense of unity and coherence to individual events and phenomena?

In the Greek projection unity was given by metaphysics and ontology. The meaning of reality, all reality, social and cultural as well as physical, was to be found in the metaphysical realm. Coherence was to be found in the world beyond appearances. From the birth of philosophical speculation in the speculations of the *physikoi* to the zenith of philosophical thought in the reflections of Plato and Aristotle, the question of metaphysics and ontology guided thought and gave it coherence and unity.

In the Latin projection this Greek thought is brought into contact with the Roman Empire. After the acceptance of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, we enter into a period that has been called by later Renaissance thinkers the Middle Ages. Key to this period was the idea that God was the creator and ruler of the world. Theological thought at this time is the dominant paradigm of rationality.

In the modern projection, also called modernity, dated variously by scholars, the key idea is the emergence of a scientific society and culture in which reason was considered to have come of age. Characteristic of this period was a cultural and social optimism that freedom could be attained through the human use of reason.

With the post-modern projection we enter the contemporary period. This period is ushered in by the realisation that the promises of the modern projection encountered two major setbacks. The scientific promise of liberating humanity from dependence and ignorance brought with it the loss of a sense of overall meaning and new kinds of imprisonment. This period is characterised by a cultural and social pessimism.

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. *On The Threshold*, pp. 9-21.

In this thumbnail sketch of the four major projections of the Western world, the important thing to notice is that each projection has a basic idea or a key metaphor. This is true even in the case of the post-modern period, in which the key idea is to deny the notion of a key idea, reducing all key ideas to the status of one perspective amongst others.

A further complication arises when we try and map the cultural and social coordinates of the present. When looking at the past, we have the advantage of a certain distance from the events, which constitute an era. When considering the present, we are not simply observers but instead active participants in an unfolding period of time. Consequently, there is a greater risk of unconsciously projecting one's own social and cultural biographical coordinates or those of the particular group to which one belongs onto the map than when mapping the past. At the theoretical level, this is most clearly seen in the ongoing debate about how to describe the present. On the one hand, there are those who consider the modern period not to be over but rather unfinished. Thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas consider the project of the Enlightenment (modernity) to be one which needs to be re-launched rather than abandoned.<sup>145</sup> Others, such as Anthony Giddens, consider modernity not to have ended but rather to have intensified or radicalised, as he puts it, in terms of its dynamic sources: the expansion of capitalism, developments in science and technology, and the deepening of mass democracy.<sup>146</sup> Thinkers such as Jean-François Lyotard, however, consider the Enlightenment project to have died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.<sup>147</sup> Zygmunt Bauman accepts that our present age is post-modern but thinks our age is in a crisis, which needs to be overcome. He thus attempts to provide a sociology of post-modernism rather than a post-modern sociology.<sup>148</sup> Given these different interpretations of our present age, it should not surprise us that Ernest Gellner should claim that there are three basic cognitive frameworks facing humanity today as live possibilities:<sup>149</sup>

1. Religious fundamentalism.
2. Relativism (Post-modernism).
3. Enlightened Rationalism.

Clearly, one needs to take into account these debates when mapping the present if one is to avoid a Catholic parochialism, in which Catholic culture listens only to itself or simply projects its theoretically naïve biographical perspective onto the social and cultural map of the present. One needs also, however, to avoid the other extreme, highlighted by thinkers such as John Milbank, of simply acquiescing to the social and cultural mapping of secular thinkers.<sup>150</sup>

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Catholic Church tried to steer a middle path between these two positions in expounding its own position. This document marked a significant shift from the Vatican I proclamations about the world. Whilst critical of tendencies in the modern world that went against the spirit of the Gospel, *Gaudium et Spes* also sought to appreciate the positive aspects of the modern world. Moreover, a spirit of dialogue permeated the document, which was intended to enrich both the Church and the modern world. We should keep this in mind when mapping the cultural and social coordinates of our day in England and Wales.

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145 Habermas, J., *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990.

146 Giddens, A. and Pierson, C., *Conversations with Anthony Giddens. Making Sense of Modernity*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998.

147 Lyotard, J.-F., *The Postmodern Explained to Children. Correspondence 1982-1985*, London, Turnaround, 1992.

148 Bauman, Z., *Intimations of Postmodernity*, London, Routledge, 1992.

149 Gellner, E., *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, London, Routledge, 1992, p. 2.

150 Milbank, J., *Theology and Social Theory. Beyond Secular Reason*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990, p. 1.



### 3. Understanding the social and cultural coordinates of the modern and the post-modern

This section considers in more detail the contours of the debate about mapping the present and their implications for reflection on Catholic education in England and Wales.

#### 3.1: The modern context

The increasing separation of the state and public sphere from religion and indeed of religious values from those of society meant that religion moved more and more into the private sphere. The state took over the roles of caring for and educating its citizens, doing so according to secular principles. This evolution was, of course, a long and varied one.

The Catholic hierarchy was restored in England and Wales in 1850. At their first post-restoration synod at Westminster in 1852, members of the hierarchy clearly saw the education of a poor Catholic community as a top priority.<sup>151</sup> The 1870 Education Act was the start of State involvement in education at a national level. It galvanised the hierarchy of England and Wales to promote an educated Catholic community to serve the needs of many un-educated Catholic immigrants and natives alike. The school system thus became a means for the Church in England and Wales to fulfil its mission of proclaiming the Gospel.<sup>152</sup>

This fitted the place of Catholicism in the modern period. It was separate from the State, and in this sense it was privatised, and hence occupied a position parallel to that of the public state-controlled sector of education. It served both sides well. It allowed the Church to make its contribution to education, and it left the State free to devise its own curriculum. Although religious instruction was to be given in state schools, it was seen as a way of reinforcing moral values rather than as a way to foster an interest in the supernatural order.<sup>153</sup>

The involvement of religious orders in this model was crucial. Catholic schools were a major apostolic priority for many religious orders in England and Wales. They provided a clear apostolate and served as good sources for cultivating vocations to their own congregations. The presence of religious and priests went hand in hand with the clear identity of a Catholic school. Furthermore, it fitted the understanding of religion that had survived through the Enlightenment. Religion for the modern period became morality. Thus for Kant, religion was the motivation for following the universal moral law. The 'spare the rod and spoil the child' adage, adapted from Proverbs 13:24 and made popular by Samuel Butler's poem *Hudibras*, which was a satire on Puritanism, clearly corresponded to the modern framework for the role of religion in society. Education thus became above all moral education and religion was the basis of morality even for a secular world. Indeed, even Karl Marx, who considered religion the *opium of the people*, realised that it was the *heart of a heartless world*.<sup>154</sup>

However, a serious problem for the religious understanding of education itself surfaced in this period. The Latin period had taught that human knowledge was a participation in the divine knowledge and thus brought insight and love of God, the creator of all knowledge. The modern period taught that human knowledge was the way to emancipation from superstition and religious beliefs about the world and God. The reduction of religion to morality left an epistemological void that was never filled. What have physics, chemistry or geography to do with religion? Uncertainty about the epistemic claims of religious knowledge is still with us

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151 Gallagher, J., *Serving the Young – Our Catholic Schools Today*, Bolton, Don Bosco Publications, 2004, p. 23.

152 Also crucially important in the development of Catholic schools was the 1944 Education Act, which was decisive in establishing the legislative context of Catholic schools. See Elliott, K., *Between Two Worlds*, pp. 661-682.

153 On this point, see Elliott, K., *Between Two Worlds*, pp. 674-677.

154 Quoted from McLellan, D. (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 64.

today and is the heritage of this modern period.<sup>155</sup> The central question here, of course, is that of truth. Is truth absolute or relative? Can truth be sacred and secular? How does the autonomy of human reason fit with the divine law imprinted in our hearts? Whilst St. Thomas Aquinas noted the epistemological differences between man-made and natural truths,<sup>156</sup> the problem with the modern period was that it no longer believed in the metaphysical dualisms of the past. Dualisms did not disappear, as the mind-and-body dualism of Descartes and the phenomenon-and-noumenon dualism of Kant showed. There was, however, a naturalisation of these dualisms. In short, the theological presupposition of God no longer governed the metaphysics of modernity.

The modern period effectively pulled the epistemological rug from under the feet of the Church. For a long time, however, perhaps until Vatican II, the strategy of the Church was to continue to assert its claims without taking these opposing claims seriously.

### 3.2: The post-modern context

So much for modernity. What about the cultural context of post-modernity? How does this context affect the claims of the Catholic Church?

First of all let us consider what is meant by the term post-modernity. Critics of post-modernity often suggest that the phrase is empty because it seems to mean whatever a particular author wishes it to mean. This criticism is rather unfair. In *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-François Lyotard claims that science and technology have brought about a revolution in the state of knowledge of our time.<sup>157</sup> Drawing on the work of the philosopher of language Ludwig Wittgenstein, he suggests that modern knowledge works like the rules of a game. Just as each game has rules governing how it is played, our knowledge today incorporates a set of internally governed rules, which regulate its structure and function. However, Lyotard argues that it is no longer possible to claim the existence of a comprehensive set of rules or a meta-narrative for the government of human knowledge in our contemporary world. Knowledge has become fragmented and regionalised, with micro-narratives and local claims to knowledge. The local claims used by one group or 'game-playing' community are incommensurable with the claims of another 'game-playing' community. Behind these critiques of modern epistemology lies a political agenda.<sup>158</sup> The horrors of the Second World War and the systematic annihilation of the Jews and other groups condemned by the National Socialists are considered by thinkers like Lyotard to have brought about the death of the Enlightenment project. The claims of the Enlightenment to universal reason are thus revealed as the masked cry of a barbarous ideology. The desire to dominate and eliminate all other voices, to vilify difference and promote sameness, has shown Enlightenment reason to be nothing more than a blind ideology thirsty for blood.

In this context, Catholic education and catechesis faces a new challenge. Clearly, the singular claim of Christianity to salvation through Christ alone fits uneasily into a culture, which tolerates all claims as merely local claims. In the modern period Catholicism could consider itself to possess the truth, which the world could not understand. In the post-modern period the claim of Catholicism is considered to be just one more fragmented claim to truth like all the others. This is more than a theoretical issue. The presence of pupils from other faiths in

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155 Michael Buckley makes a similar point in his recent book. He argues that as the modern sciences developed, they took over from theological accounts of nature and the universe and gradually pushed religious experience into the non-cognitive sphere. He suggests the present challenge for religious thought is to re-claim a cognitive status for religious experience. See Buckley SJ, M., *Denying and Disclosing God. The Ambiguous Progress of Modern Atheism*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2004.

156 See Honnefelder, L., *Die ethische Rationalität des mittelalterlichen Naturrechts. Max Webers und Ernst Troeltschs Deutung des mittelalterlichen Naturrechts und die Bedeutung der Lehre vom natürlichen Gesetz bei Thomas von Aquin* in Schluchter, W. (ed.), *Max Webers Sicht des okzidalen Christentums*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1988, pp. 254-275.

157 Lyotard, J.-F., *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984.

158 Lyotard, J.-F., *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, pp. 35-47.

Catholic schools makes the cultural question of how to profess the truth of the Gospel into a social one too. How should one relate to members of other faiths in a Catholic school? The option of retreating to moral education and avoiding the cultural question, the claim to truth, can seem attractive again in a post-modern context. Yet, it is becoming clear that in order to foster the Catholic identity of a school, this cultural question cannot be avoided altogether. The challenge is to avoid, on the one hand, a fundamentalism that fails to face up to the modern world and, on the other, a liberalism that effectively denies the specific identity of a Catholic school and leaves in its place an empty secular shell.

The way forward requires both a clear vision of where one wants to go and an awareness of what one should avoid en route to this goal. It is important to have a clearly articulated cognitive scheme. The expression 'A Catholic Modernity' is useful, since it both charts a clear goal for Catholic education and catechesis today and offers a way to engage critically with the social and cultural coordinates of modernity and post-modernity.

In order to understand the notion of a Catholic Modernity it is necessary to take account of how the theory of modernity that we have inherited is itself situated within a particular cultural framework. By revealing the inherited vision of modernity to be situated within its own cognitive-cultural coordinates, we shall open up the possibility of plotting the trajectory of modernity according to the cultural and social coordinates of the Catholic vision of culture and society. We shall thus begin by considering what it means to speak of cultural and a-cultural theories of modernity.

#### **4. Cultural and a-cultural theories of modernity**

In outlining the notion of cultural and a-cultural theories of modernity, we shall draw on the recent work of Charles Taylor on this question. Taylor outlines his position in his article *Two Theories of Modernity*.<sup>159</sup> He suggests that the difference between a cultural and an a-cultural theory of modernity can be explained by asking the question, what is the difference between our society and a pre-modern society, such as Western Christendom? Two types of answer can be given to this question and each type betrays a position on the question of modernity and, more generally, on social and cultural change. The first answer tends to respond by suggesting that the difference lies in the change in the general framework which articulates the basic normative impulses of a given society. This type of response considers the difference, for example, between modern Western Europe and the Christendom from which it emerged, to be based on a change of civilisation. This can be seen clearly in the buildings and artwork produced by each civilisation, which make visible, so to speak, the un-thematised background understandings and values, which provide the horizon of thought and action for a particular period. The horizon within which reason operates is what Taylor understands by the cultural framework of reason. This framework consists of the linguistic network and social practices which define the basic understandings of the person, social relations, and of the good and the bad.<sup>160</sup> Thus, for Taylor, a cultural theory of modernity describes the transformation from one period, such as Christendom, to another, such as modernity, in terms of the rise of a new culture.

An a-cultural theory, on the other hand, tends to describe the transition from one culture or civilisation to another as not changing this basic framework of understandings. The basic framework, the cultural-hermeneutical horizon, is considered to be a constant and not the

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159 Taylor, C., *Two Theories of Modernity* in *Hastings Centre Report*, 1995, March-April, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 24-33.

160 In considering the management of major changes in organisations, Edgar Schein speaks of the "cognitive restructuring" of the basic cultural framework, which occurs when an organisation undergoes such changes. A cultural theory of modernity also uses this notion of fundamental cultural change in moving from one cultural framework to another. See Schein, E.H., *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, third edition, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2004, pp. 325-328.

particular defining quality of a civilisation. Thus a-cultural theories tend to describe the change from one civilisation to another as a culture-neutral operation. That is to say, they describe this change as the result of either an increase in instrumental rationality or the development of a scientific outlook, which any culture could develop whilst still leaving the basic framework in place. Such theories tend to argue that the same type of social change could happen in any cultural framework, since the change is not dependent on the basic values and preferences of a given civilisation. In the a-cultural model of social change, it would be possible to put any civilisation through this process. Taylor believes that the majority of the theories of modernity and social change that have been developed over the last two centuries tend to be of the a-cultural type. The change that occurs is thus not described as a change in the vision of the good or what is considered to be the fundamental moral vision of a society but rather in terms of an increased capacity for instrumental rationality or in a growth of scientific-technical proficiency. Taylor describes this a-cultural point of view, which considers the development from one culture to another to be a movement of progress, as the 'we-have-come-to-see' approach. What is conveniently missing from this conception, he suggests, is the consciousness that this is considered to be progress precisely because it moves in the direction of the basic moral vision articulated in the Western conception of modernity and the good. This is why the a-cultural vision of modernity is ethnocentric: It projects onto other cultures its own conception of the good as if this were the implicit neutral conception of the good in any culture. It consequently also forgets that its own culture is a particular civilisation powered by its own conception of the good; in Taylor's terms, a particular spiritual vision which sustains the moral project of Western modernity.<sup>161</sup> Thus both advocates and critics of Western modernity tend to operate from an a-cultural theory of modernity. They fail to recognise that Western modernity is itself working from a basic spiritual vision which is not simply transposable from one culture to another but rather constitutes the very horizon of what we mean by good and bad or rational and irrational. Why is this the case? Why is it that Western civilisation has considered itself to be culture-neutral?

The notion that one culture or one basic hermeneutical horizon is itself a particular vantage point from which to view things, is rather new. Western civilisation has only recently acknowledged that its colonial past was not separate from its way of thinking.<sup>162</sup> It is thus not surprising that with the rise of modern thinking about society and reason, which began in this colonial period, ways of thought and action should be similar. An a-cultural theory of modernity is another way of continuing this colonial tradition. However, there is also a second reason why Western civilisation should have tended to develop such a-cultural theories of modernity. The origin of the modern vision in the disputes of the seventeenth century explains the continued belief that a cultural theory of modernity would make value judgements impossible. The spectre of relativism, which haunts Western civilisation, is a major motivation behind the development of a-cultural theories of modernity. To see instrumental rationality, individualism, and negative freedom as consequences of increased mobility or industrialisation rather than as social forms produced by a moral vision of the person and the good is a way of avoiding seeing the normative question at the core of the modern vision.

Taylor outlines four negative consequences of this reliance on purely a-cultural conceptions of modernity for the understanding of modernity. First, he suggests that one of the problems encountered when evaluating the ethical issues surrounding contemporary scientific questions arises from our belief in the neutrality of science and failure to recognise that our conception of science is itself embedded in a particular moral vision. Second, change is considered to be purely a social matter and its cultural dimension is often neglected. Third, it fails to realise the novelty of our understanding of modern identity. Finally, it presumes that we have always

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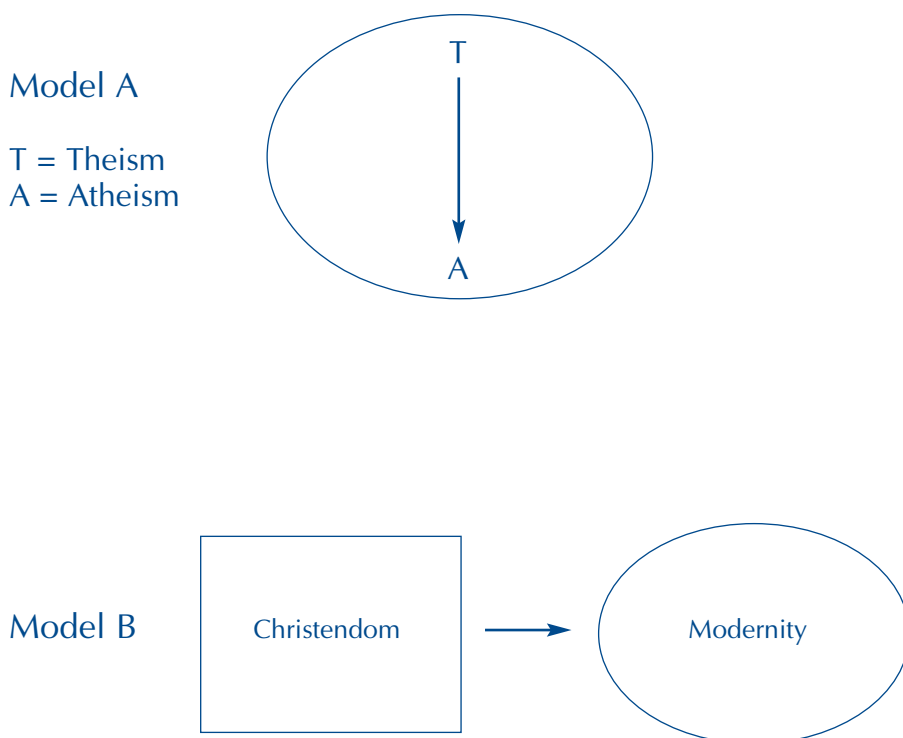
<sup>161</sup> Taylor, C., *The Sources of the Self*, pp. 3-24.

<sup>162</sup> The whole area of 'post-colonial studies' is one of the institutional consequences of this realisation for the social sciences. My point here is that Western thinking about its own culture has been dominated by a sense of superiority that has blinded it to its own specificity and particularity.

been like this and thus projects onto earlier, and other contemporary, cultures the moral vision of Western modernity. Thus we continue to think with a colonial attitude and fail to see that other cultures can integrate the truly universal features of Western modernity into their own forms of social change and into their own modernities.

Taylor is here drawing on the work of a constellation of modern thinkers, especially Ludwig Wittgenstein,<sup>163</sup> Martin Heidegger,<sup>164</sup> Thomas Kuhn,<sup>165</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty<sup>166</sup> and Pierre Bourdieu<sup>167</sup> to make the point that when moving from one culture to another we shift the horizon and not simply our position within the same horizon. A diagram may make this point clearer.

In model A, “T” represents the position of a theist and “A” the position of an atheist. When moving from “T” to “A”, it is clear that the horizon of thought does not shift. Both “A” and “T” make sense within the same horizon represented by model A. Whether we do or do not believe in God does not change the reality of operating within the same horizon. This therefore corresponds to an a-cultural theory of modernity. Taylor, however, suggests that to shift from one culture to another actually changes the parameters within which it is possible to construct basic positions. This is clearly shown in model B.



Here we see that when shifting from Christendom to modernity, for example, not only do the basic positions change but rather the very geography within which positions can be constructed changes. Thus the moral horizon shifts when moving from Christendom to modernity and so the hermeneutical framework is itself altered when moving between civilisations. It is this fundamental change, which is overlooked by the a-cultural theories, according to Taylor. To understand this, he argues, we have to accept that beliefs operate on

163 Wittgenstein, L., *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1958.  
 164 Heidegger, M., *Being and Time*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1962.  
 165 Kuhn, T., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, third edition, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996.  
 166 Merleau-Ponty, M., *La Prose du Monde*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969.  
 167 Bourdieu, P., *La Distinction. Critique Sociale du Jugement*, Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 1979.

three different levels: the explicit, the implicit and the symbolic. The explicit level includes factual or normative dogma, which are clearly held and often formulated in some written documents. The implicit level can be understood in the way that Pierre Bourdieu has spoken about the *habitus*.<sup>168</sup> The *habitus* comprises the embodied forms of understanding which form the background to our explicit beliefs. The *habitus* includes how we understand our roles in society, which, in turn, influences our behaviour. Whether we are a boy or a girl, or in a particular office of responsibility, for example, influences our acceptance of the social rules which accompany membership of a given society. These rules are accepted and followed because they crystallise patterns of behaviour that are considered acceptable and desirable for members of a given society. In between the levels of explicit and implicit beliefs, Taylor suggests, there operates a symbolic level. This often finds expression in works of art or social forms of ritual, which express basic beliefs about ourselves in a form which is cognitively different from that explicitly formulated in factual and normative beliefs. This symbolic area may be considered to be a mediating dimension between the implicit and explicit levels, in which the inarticulate becomes articulate in a symbolic form.

With this three-fold understanding of our belief structure in mind, focusing purely on the explicit level of dogmas, Taylor explains, means forgetting that changing our beliefs about explicit dogmas, such as the belief in God, also changes our basic background framework within which these beliefs and social imagination operate.<sup>169</sup> By focusing exclusively on the explicit beliefs, we tend to make our ancestors resemble us too much because we project on to them our social imagination and our implicit beliefs. This has the consequence of minimising the degree of change that occurs when one moves from one cultural framework to another.<sup>170</sup> The a-cultural theories of modernity thus operate on the false assumption of the homogeneity of the symbolic and implicit levels of belief. This results in an inadequate understanding of the nature of change that has occurred in modernity and prevents us from seeing how radical the shift from the cultural framework of Christendom to the cultural framework of modernity is. Furthermore, it also obscures the cultural vision, which has inspired the narrative of modernity.

## 5. A Catholic modernity

In outlining the notion of cultural and a-cultural theories of modernity we have made the point that the dominant narrative of modernity that we have inherited from philosophy and the social sciences has obscured its own particular cultural vision; that it has been an a-cultural theory of modernity. Moreover, we have noted in Part II of this study that in the transition from medieval Christendom to modernity, the Reformation had enormous influence. In effect, the vision of modernity that we have inherited is one which has been deeply shaped by a Protestant framework. This Protestant framework has to a large extent obscured the alternative conception of modernity that had begun prior to the Protestant Reformation and itself blossomed during the Baroque period. The social scientific and philosophical accounts of modernity have not theorised this historical reality of a Catholic modernity and so have failed to articulate the alternative normative conception of modernity that was born in early modern Europe.

In the so-called Catholic Reformation the seeds of an alternative normative vision of modernity were sown that would bear fruit in as diverse a range of activities as the reductions in Latin America, Baroque art, music and architecture, and new forms of Spirituality and religious life

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<sup>168</sup> Bourdieu, P., *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 52-65.

<sup>169</sup> For a development of this idea, see Taylor, C., *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2004.

<sup>170</sup> See Model A.

in the Church.<sup>171</sup> This alternative conception of modernity, a Catholic modernity, has been submerged in the historiographical background of our social scientific and philosophical accounts of modernity.<sup>172</sup>

In this study we have attempted to sketch an alternative to these received accounts of modernity. This alternative tradition which has flowered in the sacramental vision of Vatican II offers the Catholic imagination an alternative way of positioning itself on the map of late modernity/post-modernity. It reclaims the Catholic voice in late modernity/post-modernity and thus provides a basis for leadership in Catholic education, formation and catechesis (see Part III).

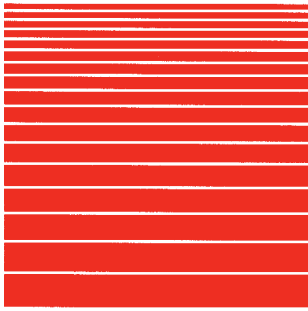
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171 We prefer to use the title 'Catholic Reformation' rather than 'Counter-Reformation' as this better describes the adaptive and not simply reactive nature of renewal in the Catholic Church that in fact had begun prior to the Protestant Reformation. For a discussion of the history of the Catholic Reformation and these diverse aspects of it, see Mullet, M.A., *The Catholic Reformation*, London, Routledge, 1999.

172 This point is well made by Eamon Duffy in *The Stripping of the Altars*, by Edwin Jones in *The English Nation*, and by Nicholas Boyle in *Who Are We Now?.* For a discussion of these works see Part II of our study.







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