

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: AMERICAN INITIATIVE IN THE MODERN  
CATECHETICAL MOVEMENT: FROM THE RELEASE  
OF THE *BALTIMORE CATECHISM* IN 1885 TO THE  
PUBLICATION OF THE *GENERAL CATECHETICAL  
DIRECTORY* IN 1971.

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The twentieth century has been a dynamic era for Catholic catechesis in the United States. Since the Protestant Reformation, catechesis had revolved around the Catechism as the primary text and memorization as the fundamental method for imparting Christian doctrine. In the late nineteenth century, progressive American catechists, both lay and religious, endeavored to introduce modern pedagogical standards to the realm of Catholic religious education. Traditional historiography credits this transition to European initiatives. Assessing the evolution of American catechesis through modern catechetical programs and textbooks developed between 1885 and 1971, however, demonstrates that American initiative in modernizing catechesis was ongoing during the twentieth century in the United States. Pedagogical advances in religious education were taking place mainly at the classroom level by the ingenuity of progressive catechists. This thesis endeavors to illustrate the American contribution to the modernization of Catholic religious education in the United States.

AMERICAN INITIATIVE IN THE MODERN CATECHETICAL MOVEMENT:  
FROM THE RELEASE OF THE *BALTIMORE CATECHISM* IN 1885 TO THE  
PUBLICATION OF THE *GENERAL CATECHETICAL DIRECTORY* IN 1971.

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## Introduction

In 1905, Pope Pius X identified a crisis in the Catholic Church. His encyclical, *Acerbo Nimis*, recognized an increasingly apathetic attitude of the laity toward the teachings of the Church. At its center, he pointed the finger of blame at “the [laity’s] ignorance of things divine,” calling this lack of doctrinal knowledge “the chief cause of the present indifference and, as it were, infirmity of soul, and the serious evils that result from it.”<sup>1</sup> Pope Pius X’s words were a clarion call to Catholics around the globe announcing the strategic importance of effectively “depositing the faith,” and the consequences of deficient catechesis.

Pius X’s words were nothing new to American catechists, who were direct witnesses of the growing number of liberal Catholics in their own country.<sup>2</sup> The problem was not a lack of doctrinal source material. At the end of the nineteenth century, catechists in the United States had a plethora of catechisms at their disposal. The compact question and answer manuals of Christian doctrine, the Catechism, and the memorization and regurgitation method of instruction had served the purposes of priests, parents and religious education instructors in effectively imparting the Catholic faith since their incorporation following the Protestant Reformation. Their effectiveness in teaching the Catholic faith, however, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century had begun to dwindle.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Pius X, *Acerbo Nimis*, 1905, [cited on 30 October 2006]; found at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_x/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_15041905\\_acerbo-nimis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_15041905_acerbo-nimis_en.html). INTERNET.

<sup>2</sup> While Church refers to parents as “catechists” by the nature of their Catholic obligation to educate their children in the principles of the Catholic Faith, for the purpose of this thesis, “catechists” will be narrowly defined as formal religious educators, such as clergy, theologians, and Catholic school instructors.

Catechists did not blame the students—they blamed the method. Their response was a motion for a worldwide revolutionary renewal of Catholic catechesis. Through this tactic, the Church hoped to develop more efficient ways of imparting the Catholic faith, as well as adaptive methods to meet the modern demands of religious education. This awakening of catechetical concerns and efforts for improvement at the turn of the twentieth century were the beginning of the modern catechetical movement.

The movement generated countless new studies on method and content, as well as new insights into what the ultimate purpose of catechesis might be. It produced a number of important names in the field: Josef Andreas Jungmann, Johannes Hofinger, Michael Gatterer, Sr. Marie de la Cruz, each generating important intellectual, pedagogical, and psychological contributions to catechesis in the twentieth century. The Popes of the twentieth century, as well, each gave his share of encyclicals and commentaries with an unprecedented focus on the urgent necessity to “*guard the deposit of faith from corruption.*”<sup>3</sup> The majority of such names and materials came to the United States from across the Atlantic; yet, American catechists were not merely recipients of catechetical renewal.

At the heart of the movement in America were the catechists, the people who transferred the complex teachings of the church directly to the unknowing. They were the most intimate actors in religious education, with the task of educating the laity of the divine truths from Christ which the Church claimed to have preserved for the knowledge of future generations. Through their interactions with pupils, some less known progressive American catechists, such as Thomas Edward Shields, Fr. Roderick

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<sup>3</sup> Pope Paul VI, *The Creed of the People of God*, 1968. From *Teaching the Catholic Faith Today: Twentieth Century Catechetical Documents of the Holy See*, (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1982), page #.

MacEachen, and the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, tailored modern religious education programs to meet the needs of their students. Many of the programs, textbooks, methods, and materials that emerged during the movement contained elements of their first-hand teaching experience. Such publications and methodological advancements were characteristic throughout the catechetical movement in America.

The Catholic Church traditionally operated through its hierarchical structure. This arrangement served the Church's mission of homogenizing Catholicism through a centralized authority: the papal hierarchy. In the realm of catechesis, however, the Church met a complicated task in imparting its teaching to a culturally, intellectually, and economically diverse laity. This reality made any notion of a universally standardized catechetical program impractical. The Pope, as a result, tasked the Church's bishops with regulating catechetical programs.

Though presiding as official overseers of catechesis in their dioceses, bishops typically had a limited role in the organization and development of local religious education programs. For the most part, lay and religious catechists initiated work toward new catechetical programs, and introduced progressive pedagogical ideas into catechesis. They adapted traditional teaching methods and doctrinal content to increase understanding of the material and make religious education more purpose-oriented. It is important to note that the goal of the movement was restoration, not innovation, and catechists' adjustments of content were not attempts to *change* the doctrine, but introduced it in a more thematically organized and graduated program. Bishops maintained their role of oversight by revising all texts and instruction manuals before they received their official blessing, *nihil obstat* (without objection) and *impramitur* (let it

be printed), and before permitting their use in their diocese. Even so, Catholic religious education operated largely on the lower levels of the Church.

Some previous histories of the modern catechetical movement have organized the evolution of religious education into three phases of development: method focus, content refinement, and kerygmatic (Christocentric) renewal.<sup>4</sup> These distinctions are problematic because their proponents tended to base their argument for these historical phases on milestone catechetical publications and conventions and not from the perspective of actual catechetical programs. Furthermore, they generally tend to push European publications and symposiums to the forefront of progressive religious education and depict American contributions as secondary. While certain publications and assemblies served as important benchmarks in the evolution of American catechesis and their release generated increased focus on certain catechetical questions, local religious education programs had, on occasion, already begun implementing the same, yet often unrefined, techniques and philosophies that were better articulated by and credited to big-name authors or landmark symposiums in catechesis. To judge the progress of catechesis in the United States on the basis of such texts and conventions rather than by its domestic religious education programs overlooks the simultaneity of methodological, substantial,

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<sup>4</sup> For arguments containing the three part organization of the catechetical movement, see Raymond A. Lucker, *The Aims of Religious Education in the Early Church and in the American Catechetical Movement*. (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1966), 113-114, and Johannes Hofinger, S.J. and Francis J. Buckley, S.J. *The Good News and Its Proclamation: Post Vatican II Edition of The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968). Christocentric renewal was later represented by the term *Kerygmatic* renewal, which called for a particular emphasis on orienting doctrine toward the Church's central teaching—Salvation—and sought to infuse a general Christian spirit into students. In the 1930s, Austrian catechist and profound voice in Catholic catechesis, Josef Andreas Jungmann, coined the term *Kerygma*, the German word for “sermon,” as the part of Christ's message that needed to be most emphatically preached. My argument poses that catechists were conscious of the *Kerygma* before Jungmann's mention of the term, and it will be denoted as “Christocentric” when discussing the existence of this philosophy prior to his writings.



and kerygmatic developments that occurred throughout the movement. It, furthermore, denies the originality of American programs where it was due and overlooks the parallel progressive catechetical movements of both the United States and European nations in the twentieth century.

To measure the evolution of catechesis in America I will consider religious education programs and textbooks. These sources demonstrated the changing method and content of catechesis in America, and were typically accompanied by teacher's manuals that further enunciated the makeup and aim of the program. The textbook series evaluated in this paper have been described by critics as progressive examples for their period within the catechetical movement in America.

Furthermore, the question of content dealt with throughout the catechetical movement is a subject large enough for a multi-volume study. Hence, as a means to illustrate the changing content focus in catechesis in America between 1885 and 1971, I have chosen to consider how religious education programs presented the doctrine of hell as a specific case study for this paper. Teachings on "Sin and Punishment" were traditionally fearsome and sensitive doctrines of the church, and there were many debates over the age and manner in which to first expose children to such doctrine.

While the catechetical movement developed religious education programs for all ages, this study focuses on elementary school education. The catechetical movement was heavily focused on youth programs, seeing the early stages of childhood as the formative years for developing Christian principles in everyday life. As a result, over the twentieth century, youth programs were a dynamic area in American Catholic catechesis.

Before unpacking the years traditionally reserved to the modern catechetical movement (Around 1900-present, but for the purposes of this study, ending in 1971) it is important to understand the state of American catechesis in the years prior to its commencement. Chapter one will demonstrate how higher-ups in the universal Church and in the America Church argued to preserve the power of local bishops and catechists to develop catechetical programs that best met the needs of their students. The creation of a specific American catechism with the *Baltimore Catechism* contributed to the regional flavor of catechesis in the United States. However, around the time of its release, catechist began to become more critical of Catechism-centered catechesis, religious education that used the Catechism as a primary text and required memorization of doctrine. The secularization of American society, though not as extensive as Europe, was a significant factor in the inadequacy of traditional catechetical methods, and religious education teachers and lower level religious clergy were the first to realize the need to adapt from conventional forms of instruction.

The second chapter will constitute the bulk of the paper and will illustrate how developments in catechetical instruction were visible in American religious education programs and catechetical textbooks from the late nineteenth century to the start of Vatican II. Though prominent names in catechesis, especially Europeans, released numerous publications and philosophies that were important benchmarks in the modern catechetical movement, evidence from American catechetical programs and textbooks suggests that progressive catechesis in the United States was not solely in response to European advancements. Also, they show that developments in method and content were evident throughout the movement rather than in distinct or even overlapping stages, and

elements of Jungmann's kerygmatic focus were evident in American textbooks before his ideas reached the United States. American catechists on their own initiative and through their own experience were revising catechesis on the ground level.

The final chapter will describe how the decrees of the Second Vatican Council echoed much of the advancements of the lower level catechists of the modern catechetical movement. In the years following the Council, the American hierarchy of bishops sought to organize American catechesis and set standards for excellence in religious education textbook programs. The report of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) on *The Evaluative Review of Religious Textbooks* will serve as an important focus in this chapter. In 1971, the *General Catechetical Directory* was the culminating publication from Rome, and the first catechetical text published for the world since *The Roman Catechism* in 1569, that set the expectations for catechetical programs throughout the Church.<sup>5</sup>

The American catechetical movement has grown up in the shadow of European developments in catechesis. By shifting the focus of the catechetical movement in the United States from European philosophies to American religious education programs this study will endeavor to reveal the contributions to American catechesis that originated within the United States. The changing educational and social environment of America demanded new and progressive approaches to religious education in the modern world. Catechists evolved their methods and programs, became more selective of content, and refined the Christocentric aim of catechesis consistently throughout the period from the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1885 to the release of the *General Catechetical*

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<sup>5</sup> Bishop Leonard P. Blair, "Where Are We in Catechesis? Situating the *National Directory for Catechesis*," From the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [cited on 30 October 2006]; found at <http://www.nccbuscc.org/education/ndc/blairng.shtml>. INTERNET.

*Directory* eighty-six years later. In doing so, catechesis in the United States evolved from the memorization and regurgitation methods of Catechism-centered catechesis to a program that was oriented toward developing an understanding of Catholic doctrine, nurtured active learning, and strived toward infusing the heart and mind of the student with the Catholic interpretation of Christ's message of salvation.

## Chapter 1

### **A New Catechism, An Old Method, and the Birth of the American Catechetical Movement**

Before modern textbook programs arrived as new pedagogical aids in American catechesis, catechisms monopolized the content and materials used in Catholic religious education. Though catechisms used the anachronistic pedagogy of old-school Catechism-centered catechesis, writers of a new American catechism formulated a national manual that would serve as an essential doctrinal guide in modern catechetical programs in the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> Even more significant during this late-nineteenth century period was the emergence of progressive catechetical strategies and publications in the United States that endeavored to better reveal the Church's teachings of the Catholic Faith. Many of these developments originated in local catechetical programs, such as the progressive theories of Mother Demetrius and the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart (MHSH). Innovative publications, such as Catechism aids introduced new substantial materials to religious education to help impart an understanding to the dry content of traditional catechisms. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the decentralized nature of catechesis in the Catholic Church, emphasize the progressive contributions of the MHSH and Catechism aids, and show how elements of the modern catechetical movement were at work in America at the end of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>6</sup> The word "Catechism" in this paper refers to the general doctrinal reference source for Catholic catechesis that functioned as the primary catechetical text for Catholic religious education shortly following the Protestant Reformation. There were hundreds of books classified as "catechisms of Christian doctrine." I will use a lower case "c" when describing a generic catechism and an upper case "C" when referring to the official teachings and doctrine of the Church.

## Local Authority of Catechesis and Creating an American Catechism

In the nineteenth century, the population of the American Catholic Church was growing, with an increasing need for centralized national organization. Between 1840 and 1906, European immigrants bolstered the nation's Catholic population by fourteen million people.<sup>7</sup> With the increasing numbers and growing dioceses, the American bishops formulated a national hierarchy for the Church in the United States. In 1852, they met, convening the First Plenary Council of Baltimore. Over the next thirty-five years, they assembled two more times for the Second (1866) and Third (1884) Plenary Councils. On the agenda for each council was the creation of an American catechism.

The American bishops in the nineteenth century were concerned over the variety of catechisms being used in the United States. In 1827, the first recorded call for a single catechism in America had come from the letters of Archbishop Ambrose Maréchal, the third Archbishop of Baltimore, in which he expressed concern over the multiplicity of discordant catechisms at use in the United States.<sup>8</sup> While catechists were using approved catechisms, such as the *Roman Catechism* and the *Butler Catechism*, the bishops saw the linguistic disconnect between the sources as a cause for concern.<sup>9</sup> Different answers to the same questions, though still doctrinally approved, risked confusing the laity. There were over a hundred catechisms circulating throughout the United States by the turn of

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<sup>7</sup> Julie Byrne, "Roman Catholics and Immigration in Nineteenth-Century America," Duke University Dept. of Religion, *Teacher Serve*, [cited on 2 November, 2006] found at <http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/nromcath.htm>. INTERNET.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Charles Bryce, *Pride of Place: The Role of the Bishops in the Development of Catechesis in the United States*. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press, 1984, 67.

<sup>9</sup> *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, or, *Roman Catechism*, was created and distributed in 1569 under Pope Pius VI, and Archbishop Butler of Ireland authored the *Butler Catechism* in 1775. There were a variety of other catechisms in use as well, such as those authored by Archbishop Ambrose Maréchal (1826), Bishop Henry Conwell of Philadelphia, Bishop England of Charleston (1821), Bishop Flaget's *Catechism of the Diocese of Bardstown* (1825), and *An Abridgement of Christian Doctrine* originally printed in 1649 was reprinted in New York in 1833.

the twentieth century. For this reason, historian Fr. Raymond Lucker classified the catechetical focus of the nineteenth century as the “search for better catechisms.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1865, efforts to commence the writing of a new American Catechism were delayed by discussions for a universal catechism during Vatican I. The Church considered the multiplicity of catechisms in use throughout the Catholic world, especially during a time when people were migrating to new dioceses and countries, to be detrimental to the Church’s mission of imparting sound doctrine. While many bishops at the council favored a universal catechism, those in opposition argued that imposing a universal catechism would interfere with the rights and responsibilities of bishops to create or implement catechisms that best suited the needs of their dioceses.<sup>11</sup> Though the Council ruled in overwhelming favor of creating a universal catechism, it never assembled a committee to carry out the task. Back in the United States, at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore the American bishops tried to create their own national catechism, which hopefully would achieve greater success and meet less opposition from working within a smaller subculture of the Catholic world. Their ambition was to implement a national catechism that would unite the content of catechesis in the American dioceses and replace the various doctrinal manuals circulating throughout the United States during the nineteenth century.

The way in which the bishops went about writing the new catechism foreshadowed problems later on. Though the object was to create a doctrinal reference that included the input of all the nation’s bishops, the Council assigned the task to a

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<sup>10</sup> As quoted in Marie Elizabeth Spellacy, “The Evolution of the Catechetical Ministry Among The Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart 1890-1980: A Case History,” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1984), 47.

<sup>11</sup> Bryce, 81.

smaller commission of six members. These bishops, pulling much of their content from the *Butler Catechism*, compiled a collection of four-hundred and twenty-one questions and answers. Though all of the American bishops received a rough draft of the new catechism, the Third Plenary Council had already concluded and there was no open dialogue regarding its revisions. Rather than conferring in an atmosphere where bishops could discuss and compromise over revisions, the bishops submitted their proposals by mail to the catechism committee. In 1885, the committee published the first *Catechism of the Council of Baltimore*, more commonly referred to as the *Baltimore Catechism*.<sup>12</sup>

The *Baltimore Catechism* met criticism from the start. First, despite previous alterations, many of the American bishops remained unsatisfied with the publication and declined to endorse it for national use without still further revision. In a letter to James Cardinal Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore and premier see in the United States, a fellow clergyman wrote about the new catechism, saying, “I have never heard anyone express a favorable opinion of our present Catechism, and I hope it is true that in the future the archbishop will provide for its revision.”<sup>13</sup> Bishops at a later meeting discussed the “advisability or necessity of revising the catechism of the Third Plenary Council, inasmuch as in its present form it seems unpopular.”<sup>14</sup> The conflict over the *Baltimore Catechism* began to look familiar to those of the First Vatican Council. To make matters worse, there was now yet another catechetical text that the America bishops could not agree upon.

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<sup>12</sup> For a history of the writing of the Baltimore Catechism, see Bryce, 87-95.

<sup>13</sup> AAB, letter from Hewit, A.F. New York to Gibbons, September 2, 1895, Gibbons collection Box 94-A-1.

<sup>14</sup> AAB, Minutes of Annual Meeting of Most Rev. Archbishops 1895 B-1



Seeing the discord over the new catechism, and not wanting to abandon the project of a national catechism, the American bishops again attempted to revise it, or possibly start anew. Cardinal Gibbons advised his bishops to consult their subordinate clergy “as to whether the present catechism should be revised or another catechism be prepared as a substitute for the one now in use.”<sup>15</sup> The bishops returned with lists of discrepancies, and moved for revision. Gibbons arranged a committee made up of catechists of the American dioceses appointed by their bishops and chaired by Archbishop Kain of St. Louis to revise the catechism according to the suggestions of the American bishops.<sup>16</sup>

Ultimately, despite the extensive efforts to revise the catechism to the liking of the bishops, the undertaking of fulfilling the various expectations of the national hierarchy became too complex a task. The American bishops could not unanimously endorse the text. The revisers had proposed a simpler catechism with fewer questions, the *Baltimore Catechism No. 1*, in the hopes of reaching an agreement amongst the bishops. Still, in their 1902 Meeting of the Archbishops of the United States, they concluded that there was “no existing catechism which they could fully recommend.”<sup>17</sup> Exhausted by the task and upon hearing the promising news from Pope Pius X that a new universal Catholic Catechism was forthcoming, the American bishops decided to conclude their debates over the content of the *Baltimore Catechism*.

Aside from failing to achieve unanimous support amongst the American bishops for the new catechism, the national hierarchy reached another significant conclusion

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<sup>15</sup> AAB, Minutes of Annual Meeting of Most Rev. Archbishops 1895 B-1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> AAB, Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Archbishops of the United States, 1902. Nov. 13, 1902. Gibbons 100-D-4.

regarding American catechesis. They determined that even if they were in full agreement over nationally implementing any catechism, they did not have the authority to enforce its general use.<sup>18</sup> With this, the bishops acknowledged that there were limits in the extent to which they could nationalize catechesis in America without infringing on the duties of individual bishops to tailor or approve catechetical programs that were best suited for their diocese.

In the discussions for the First Vatican Council's universal Catechism in Rome (1865) and the Third Plenary Council's national catechism in the United States (1885), the participants had similar opinions. Both saw the hazard of discordant doctrinal content and voiced a concern over restricting the authority of local bishops. In a Catholic Church where the traditional mode of operation was working through top-down mandated instructions from the Roman hierarchy to the laity, in the case of catechesis near the turn of the twentieth century, local administrators retained much of the authority. As a result, and with the further delegation of catechetical authority to religious and lay catechists to meet the various catechetical needs of communities within the diocese, religious education in America began to assume a more localized identity and receive numerous new incites from both lay and religious catechists on ways to improve it.

The American bishops may not have named the *Baltimore Catechism* as the official catechetical sourcebook in American religious education, but this did not stop it from becoming the most widely used catechism in the United States. For a long time following, the title of the publication led many to believe that the *Catechism of the Council of Baltimore* had been officially nationalized. As a result, in the twentieth century, it would serve as the de facto Catechism in the United States, and the doctrinal

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

anchor for many modern catechetical programs in America.<sup>19</sup> Over the next few decades, while its question-and-answer structure would remain intact, the appearance and organization of the Catechism through periodic revisions would change repeatedly well into the 1960s.

The *Baltimore Catechism*, while sharing the similar structure and content of its predecessors, was different from those that preceded it. The authors incorporated decrees from Vatican I, such as matters of Church authority, infallibility, the nature of the Church, and indefectibility. They also labored to make the manual more relevant in the United States, particularly in the questions and answers dealing with matrimony and baptism.<sup>20</sup> Authors also sought to make the language of the text better adapted to the capacities of children.<sup>21</sup> In this way, the *Baltimore Catechism* reflected elements of the American catechetical movement. Though later-critics still regarded its language as beyond the understanding of children,<sup>22</sup> its writers made conscious efforts to adapt to both regional cultural climate and childhood capacities.

### **The Catechetical Crisis of Understanding**

While from the position of the American hierarchy the creation of a new catechism may have seemed to be a fulfilling step in meeting the nation's catechetical needs, on the lower levels of the American Church, catechists were beginning to perceive a much larger issue regarding the state of religious education in the United States: rising

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<sup>19</sup> For the influence of the *Baltimore Catechism* on religious education programs of the modern catechetical movement, see Mary Charles Bryce, *The Influence of the Catechism of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in Widely Used Elementary Religion Text Books from Its Composition in 1885 to its 1941 Revision*, Ph.D. diss. The Catholic University of America, 1970.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>21</sup> *Acta et Decreta*, 1884, as cited in *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>22</sup> Hofinger, 4.

secularism and the breakdown of the Christian milieu in society. It was not a uniquely American problem. European catechists, in fact, had already been dealing with similar complications in their catechetical programs. Throughout the Western Catholic world, traditional catechetical methods were no longer effective in proselytizing the faith.

Since the fifteenth century, “Catechism-centered catechesis” had been the general design of religious education programs. This mode of instruction imparted Christian doctrine through rote memorization. Children familiarized themselves with Church doctrine by memorizing and reciting their catechism. Twentieth-century critics have often labeled this method as “slavish.”<sup>23</sup> Yet, for a long time in the Church it served as an effective means in teaching Catholic doctrine. The reason for this was primarily because children were learning and experiencing the doctrine both in and outside of the classroom through life within a Christian milieu. For example, the mass or devotional practices such as the rosary would not be foreign lessons to children’s experience if their parents attended weekly services or taught them to pray the rosary. Because in previous centuries Christian principles were generally more visible in society and at home, catechists did not need to look far beyond their children’s personal experience to illustrate the tenets of the Catechism.<sup>24</sup> In essence, the doctrine needed less explanation because children’s understanding was grounded in daily practices and cultural and social influences.

Catechesis, traditionally, was a task primarily performed by parents and priests. This began to decline after written doctrine in the form of catechisms replaced oral

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<sup>23</sup> Emitt G. Carter, *The Modern Challenge to Religious Education: God’s Message and Our Response*, (New York: W. H. Sadlier, 1961), 4. and Lucker, 114.

<sup>24</sup> Hofinger, 4.

instruction.<sup>25</sup> The American parochial school system sought to fill a void in the Catholic social milieu, and perform the catechetical task that some religious and professional catechists suggested parents “incapable or unwilling to do.”<sup>26</sup> As religious education moved into the classroom and became a separate subject in children’s curriculum in Catholic schools, the onus of educating children in Christian doctrine fell increasingly on classroom instructors.

The catechetical crisis that instructors were dealing with in America was a product of the dissolving Christian milieu in the late nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Secularism was not a new problem in the Church, but at that time its effects on society and the home were beginning to take a toll on children’s comprehension of the Catechism. The industrial revolution pushed large numbers of Catholics into urban environments, where both parents and children often worked outside the house, decreasing the amount of interaction between parent and child. The lessening Christian influence in both society and the home diminished children’s everyday experience of doctrinal principles. In an increasingly secular society, religion was becoming a foreign subject in academic curriculum and was losing its connection with everyday life.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the process of memorizing and regurgitating the questions and answers of the Catechism resulted in the acquiring of doctrinal concepts without understanding. This left children without this foundation on which to build a sound and fulfilling adult faith life in the Catholic Church.

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<sup>25</sup> Bryce, dissertation, 29; and Lucker 111, 127.

<sup>26</sup> Lucker, 127.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Carter, 5.

## **Domestic Seeds of the American Catechetical Movement**

In as early as 1884, progressive catechists in America began to adapt their teaching of the Catechism to the changing Christian environment. While pioneers of new catechetical methods were few, operated on a smaller scale, and preceded the typical start dates of the modern catechetical movement by as much as twenty years, (if you use the development of the Munich Method (1898), a progressive catechetical method that will be further unpacked later in the chapter, as the unofficial starting point) their contributions were important to the heritage of modern catechesis in America. One group in particular, the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart (MHSH), emerged in Baltimore in 1890 as a religious order devoted to catechesis. Members of the American clergy recognized the women of the MHSH as superior instructors in catechesis for their creativity and student receptivity. Though overshadowed by more globally proclaimed catechetical developments at the start of the twentieth century, the MHSH were an important indicator that improvements in catechetical method in America were not solely responsive to European catechetical philosophies.

In as early as 1884, Mary Francis Cunningham, one of the founders of the MHSH and pioneers of the organization's catechetical method, had begun instructing African American children in the catechism in the basement of St. Martin's Church in Baltimore. Her lessons centered on the catechism, yet, she went beyond the old-world method of memorization and regurgitation. Cunningham believed that a more efficient way of learning Christian doctrine was to first understand the material, and then commit it to memory.

Cunningham proposed to do this by making catechesis a more interactive exchange between student and teacher. The old-world method demanded little of students in regard to participation, aside from passively reading and reciting the words of the catechism. Cunningham, however, employed supplementary resources, such as Bible stories and pictures, to encourage active learning and help children grasp the content of the catechism.<sup>29</sup> By memorizing the catechism after gaining an understanding of its principles, Cunningham's students, she argued, had a better comprehension of the doctrine. By 1890, Cunningham, along with future Mission Helpers Anna Hartwell and Eleanor Treacy, had received permission from Cardinal Gibbons to create the MSHH. Cunningham assumed the name, Sr. Demetrius, and continued to catechize African American children at their mission centers in Maryland and at private homes, and provided industrial classes in sewing and laundry to impart skills for economic sustenance.<sup>30</sup> The MSHH believed that it was the genuine love for their ministry and the people they worked with that made their catechesis effective.<sup>31</sup>

In 1895, local priests began to acknowledge Sr. Demetrius and the MSHH for their excellence in teaching. The realization hit them when they began to notice the difference between their African American and white children's understanding of the catechism. Fr. Joseph Cunnane, pastor of St. Mary's Church, Upper Marlboro, found the

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<sup>29</sup> Archives of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart (hereafter AMHSH) "Brief History of the Development of Our Method and Catechetical Apostolate." This was a short handout provided at the MSHH Motherhouse in Towson, MD that described the development of the organization's catechetical methods. See also AMHSH, Sr. Constance, "Historical Documentation of the Foundation, Spirit, Apostolate, and Growth of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart; Book three," (1978), 276.

<sup>30</sup> AMHSH, Sr. Constance, "Historical Documentation of the Foundation, Spirit, Apostolate, and Growth of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart: Book One," (1978), 42-43.

<sup>31</sup> AMHSH, Sr. Constance, "Historical Documentation of the Foundation, Spirit, Apostolate, and Growth of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart; Book Three," (1978), 275. This was a three-volume history of the organization prepared by one of its members.

black children in his First Communion Classes more proficient in their catechism than the whites.<sup>32</sup> Despite a request to instruct his white children as well, the Mission Helpers declined, not wanting to neglect those minority groups in society for whom they started their organization. Not to be so easily turned away, Fr. Cunnane, as well as Fr. Narcissus Martin of Wolbrook, appealed to the Archbishop, Cardinal Gibbons, to have the Mission Helpers extend their ministry to white races.<sup>33</sup> The Archbishop consented, and in 1895 the MHSB opened their catechetical services to all races.<sup>34</sup>

The Mission Helpers believed that proficient catechists and continued improvement of their catechetical method were essential to properly imparting the doctrine. Their ministry, therefore, also entailed the formation of religious education instructors, both lay and religious, who the sisters trained in their progressive method. Training religious educators was also an effective recruiting tool at bringing new members into their organization.<sup>35</sup> In 1906, Sr. Demetrius requested from her Reverend Mother, “Please give me permission to use my own judgment about having a little singing...The children get worn out by the dry matter of doctrine, and it is really a necessity.”<sup>36</sup> She later remarked that a catechist should “never feel that she can rest on what she has done in the past.”<sup>37</sup> Nearly sixteen years following the commencement of the order, Mother Demetrius and the Mission Helpers were still experimenting with new

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<sup>32</sup> Spellacy, 35.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>34</sup> AMHSH, “Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart Chronology.” This document was a brief chronology of the development years of the MHSB that listed milestone events in the order’s history.

<sup>35</sup> AMHSH, Sr. Constance, “Historical Documentation of the Foundation, Spirit, Apostolate, and Growth of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart; Book three,” (1978), 277.

<sup>36</sup> As quoted from AMHSH, Sr. Constance, “Historical Documentation of the Foundation, Spirit, Apostolate, and Growth of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart; Book three,” (1978), 277.

<sup>37</sup> As quoted from Ibid., 278.



approaches to imparting the content of the Catechism. Her comments reflected the catechetical need for constant renewal of method, the introduction of new content to help enliven students and clarify Church doctrine, and the adaptation of catechetical methods to the capacities of students.

Around this time in America, catechists, like the Mission Helpers, were beginning to acknowledge the limitations of using the Catechism alone as a means of imparting the Catholic faith. The catechism adapted at the Third Plenary Council was not enough without the creative instruction of the catechists and the active participation of students. Catechists bore a much greater burden in modern times as their job demanded more than the former parrot-method techniques which were suitable for previous generations.

To better carry out their growing task, catechists began to generate illustrative materials to help convey an understanding of the Catechism. In 1891, Thomas L. Kinkead released for the use of advanced classes and Sunday-school teachers a publication entitled *An Aid to the Baltimore Catechism*. His book was the first supplementary publication for the *Baltimore Catechism*.<sup>38</sup> Kinkead's publication, also known as *Baltimore Catechism No. 4*, received overwhelming praise from American bishops, as well as the bishops of Dublin Ireland and Siunia, Russia.<sup>39</sup> It filled a need for a more intimate analysis of the Catechism. "Such a work was needed," commented the Bishop Junger of the Diocese Nesqually in Washington, "our *Baltimore Catechism* does not and cannot contain all the necessary explanations."<sup>40</sup> Kinkead's book included the prayers and questions included in the original *Baltimore Catechism*, but fractured them

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<sup>38</sup> Spellacy, 98.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas L. Kinkead, *An Aid to the Baltimore Catechism*, 1891, digitized online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14554/14554.txt>. INTERNET.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

down into smaller parts for explanation. His source was the first of a genre of explanatory sources for the Catechism, which became common by the end of the century,<sup>41</sup> and helped catechists better understand the content they were instructing.

Kinhead's dense analysis was aimed for more mature audiences, and was not a suitable substitute text for children. But, catechism aids were the first publications outside of the catechism to be employed in Catholic religious education in the United States. While they were not classified as catechetical textbooks, and still operated under the old method of rote memorization, in some ways they were the initial steps leading to the modern textbook series. Catechetical textbook series would emerge as staples of the modern catechetical movement in the United States in the following decades. This phenomenon will be further developed in the following chapter.

### **The Munich Method**

In 1898, a German catechist named Dr. A. Weber asserted that an adaptation needed to be made to the traditional system of teaching religious education to children. The alternative he proposed became popularly known as the Munich Method. Weber's method developed from improved study of the psychology of human learning. It broke from traditional pedagogical methods of catechesis by placing explanation and understanding before requiring students to memorize doctrinal truth. Catechists had previously frowned upon such methodology, arguing that it undermined the authoritative

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<sup>41</sup> Lucinda Nolan, *Scaling the Heights of Heaven: Sister M. Rosalia Walsh and the use of Story in the Adaptive Way*, [cited 3 November 2006] found at [http://www.religiouseducation.net/member/06\\_rea\\_papers/Nolan\\_Lucinda.pdf](http://www.religiouseducation.net/member/06_rea_papers/Nolan_Lucinda.pdf). INTERNET.

character of Christian teaching.<sup>42</sup> However, the Munich Method played an important role in twentieth-century catechetical formation, both in Europe and the United States.

The arrival of the Munich Method has traditionally been cited as the initial event of the modern catechetical movement because of its transition away from the old catechetical method of rote memorization. It operated under the principle of “text-development” instead of the previous mode of “text-explanatory.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, the objective of Munich was for catechists to present the doctrine through means other than the Catechism text, such as through stories, pictures, examples, parables, etc. and conclude with the doctrinal instruction in the Catechism, rather than vice versa. It focused on three essential steps in the learning process to maximize the effectiveness of catechesis: Presentation, Explanation, and Application.

The “Presentation” phase called for the catechist to introduce the doctrine using the above-mentioned techniques as a means of conveying the spirit of the lesson’s doctrinal truth. The method proposed that catechists should work to inspire children’s imaginations and stimulate their senses. It was necessary for teachers to have an interactive instruction in which students were participants rather than passive recipients.

In the “Explanation” phase, the Munich Method proposed that teachers should then discuss how the events and activities from the presentation connected to the text of the Catechism. This required catechists to break down the doctrinal truths into parts that could individually be better explained through the previous demonstrations. The process of breaking down the subject material into smaller parts was fundamental in allowing a more thorough analysis of the doctrine.

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<sup>42</sup> Joseph J. Baierl et al. *Religious Instruction and Education*, (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1938), 138.

<sup>43</sup> Carter, 81.

The Munich Method next advised catechists to summarize the doctrinal explanations of the lesson, and ingrain it in the minds of students through application. In this phase, teachers wove the doctrine into the fabric of everyday life experiences. The intention was for students to take ownership of the doctrine, and see how they could adapt it to their lives.

It was difficult to determine how the principles of the Munich Method made their way to the United States. It was typical, during that time period, for American educational institutions to build from German pedagogical philosophies. This explanation of the Munich Method emerged in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* in 1908.<sup>44</sup> Prior to that, students studying abroad may have brought the new catechetical method back with them.<sup>45</sup> Authors, such as Michael Gatterer and Peter Bandas released publications that were essential in mainstreaming the Munich Method in the United States, but their contributions did not come about for another decade and a half.

All these possibilities, however, become inconsequential when seen in light of the catechetical methods of Mother Demetrius and the MSHS, and the use of catechism aids in the United States. In these late-nineteenth-century catechetical programs and texts, which emerged prior to Dr. Weber's method, there already existed elements of the modern catechetical movement in the United States. Mother Demetrius and the authors of catechetical aids were already actively working to nurture an understanding of church doctrine, and move away from catechism-centered catechesis.

Nonetheless, Munich received the credit for initiating the movement. Weber constructed his principles in a setting highly visible to the academic world, and based his

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<sup>44</sup> Lucker, 138.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

philosophy on research derived from new advances in psychology. Germany was already established as the Western model for educational supremacy by the turn of the twentieth century. Furthermore, at this point in time, catechesis was a predominantly male discipline.<sup>46</sup> Such prestige and visibility was not attached to American education, let alone a young and struggling female religious order like the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart.

### **Summary**

By the end of the nineteenth century, the American catechetical scene was already being shaken up by progressive pioneers in religious education. The Munich Method would inspire a worldwide renewal in catechetical methodology, and many religious education programs in America would begin to work toward developing children's understanding of the Catechism as Thomas Kinkead and the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart had already begun years before. The rise in secular culture and declining involvement of parents in their children's religious instruction pushed catechesis into the classroom, where Catholic schools nurtured Christian educational environments in attempt to compensate for increased societal secularization. This placed heavier responsibilities on catechists who needed to adapt to these new challenges to effective religious education. Catholic bishops, both on a universal and national scale saw the importance of adapting catechesis to local needs, which nurtured an environment that welcomed innovative techniques and materials for effectively imparting the Catholic faith. In the following decades, progressive catechetical programs emerged in the hope

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<sup>46</sup> Spellacy, 3.

of providing an effective remedy for the crisis of doctrinal ignorance in the Church in America.

## Chapter 2

### Catechists and their Programs Lead the American Movement

At the start of the twentieth century, the modern catechetical movement was in full swing in Europe. The Munich Method was becoming more widespread through the meeting of Catechetical Congresses in Vienna (1903) and Munich (1905). Over the next seventy years, Catechetical Congresses continued to meet periodically, convening in Rome, Milan, Salzburg, Lucerne, and other European venues.<sup>47</sup> In the United States, however, according to histories of the catechetical movement, the Munich Method did not become mainstreamed until a cluster of influential publications relaying its modern catechetical method began circulating among American priests and catechists in the 1920s. One of the first English translations conveying the principles of Munich came in 1914 from catechists Michael Gatterer and Franz Krus, Jesuit professors of the University of Innsbruck, in their catechetical guidebook, *The Theory and Practice of the Catechism*. Their theories aided in the development of similar American publications aimed at the improvement of catechesis.

While Gatterer and Krus's publication exposed catechists in America to new pedagogical methods of the catechetical movement on a wider scale, it, as well as other publications on catechetical theory that followed in the following decades, did not necessarily represent the leading edge of the American catechetical movement. Religious education programs and textbook series were already beginning to reflect new methods of

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<sup>47</sup> Mary Charles Bryce, "Evolution of Catechesis from the Catholic Reformation to the Present," in *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis*, ed. John H. Westerhoff and O.C. Edwards, Jr. (Wilton: Morehouse-Barlow Co., Inc., 1981), 227.

teaching the Catechism and authors of catechetical programs were adjusting the content of their courses to attune subject matter to new modes of catechizing. Method and content needed to be harmonious in order to effectively convey the Gospel message.

It is important, also, to understand the advances that were taking place in secular education during this time. In the decades following the Civil War, American educators had been changing the face of traditional education by applying new pedagogical principles derived from the social sciences and new psychological understanding of child learning. They structured education to improve the quality of life, rather than just develop students' minds, and broadened curricula to include vocational, health and physical education courses. Progressive educators also adapted teaching methods to individual intellectual capacities.<sup>48</sup> The modern catechetical movement describes the efforts of progressive counterparts in Catholic religious education to incorporate such modern pedagogical theories into catechesis.

The following chapter will describe the simultaneous evolution of content and method in modern American catechetical programs between the first American textbook series of Peter Yorke at the turn of the century and the start of the Second Vatican Council in 1960. Much of the controversy of the American catechetical movement was over the question of how to use catechisms in modern catechesis, and this chapter will analyze how each series applied the Catechism to its program. It will also demonstrate the progressive nature and originality of American Catechesis in the twentieth century through modern religious education programs. In each of the series presented I will describe the methods that their programs applied, discuss how the program's textbooks

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<sup>48</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), viii-ix.



were designed, illustrate how the series was progressive, and provide an analysis of its treatment of the doctrine of hell. The purpose of the discussion of eternal punishment is to illustrate how traditional method and content changed in this particular area of catechesis through the American catechetical movement.

### **Yorke, Shields and the Arrival of the American Catechetical Textbook Series**

The arrival of textbook programs into American Catechesis was a progressive step toward modern methods of religious education that no longer relied on the Catechism as the sole means of imparting the Catholic faith. As Thomas Kinkead and the Mission Helper's of the Sacred Heart had realized, the Catechism alone was insufficient in conveying an understanding of Catholic doctrine, and external materials, especially for young people, were necessary for effectively communicating the often complex and theological language of the Catechism. The first authors to develop textbook programs in the United States were educators themselves.

In 1894, Fr. Peter Yorke of the Archdiocese of San Francisco began construction of textbook series, *Text Books of Religion for Parochial and Sunday Schools*, which emerged as a much-praised compliment to the Catechism. Over the following ten years, Fr. Yorke formulated catechetical texts for the first four years of Catholic elementary school. Fr. Yorke's program sought to combine complimentary content with that of the Catechism, in order to "supply the working tools that all teachers must use," for religious education.<sup>49</sup> His textbooks contained hymns, prayers, passages from Holy Scripture, Church history, stories of saints, pictures, popular devotions, catechism excerpts and

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Yorke, *Text Books of Religion for Parochial and Sunday Schools: Second Grade*, (San Francisco: The Text Book Publishing Company, 1912), 3. This was from the 12<sup>th</sup> edition.

doctrinal formulae, and presented them in a manner designed for the juvenile mind. He also advised catechists to be conscious of local conditions, implying that it was catechists' jobs to maximize the functionality of the series. He claimed that he did not advocate any particular teaching method; rather, he wished to present the material in a graduated form according to age and sophistication.<sup>50</sup>

In 1905, in response to the loss of the original publishing plates in a fire, Yorke took the initiative to revise his series. In the revision, he aimed to perfect the grading of his texts and disrupt the monotony of each page by introducing different styles of text. His later editions utilized different fonts and bolded print to call attention to central themes of his lessons. Yorke based these changes on roughly ten years of experience with the series, and applied lessons from his growing knowledge and understanding of catechesis into the revised editions.

On the question of eternal punishment Yorke's treatment was limited. In discussing sin and punishment in the fourth grade manual, his textbooks included the catechism questions and answers telling that mortal sin led to damnation.<sup>51</sup> It described the possible afterlives of the soul describing hell as a place where there is "no redemption," but it did not go into vivid description. Since Yorke's series functioned as an aid to the *Baltimore Catechism*, his presentation of hell relied mostly on what was said

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>51</sup> The Roman Catholic Church delineates sin into two categories: mortal and venial. Venial sin was sin of a lesser degree. While the Church taught that it was detrimental to the soul, it did not separate a person from the divine grace needed to reach Salvation. Mortal sin, however was a grave matter, and separated the sinner from God's grace. There were three qualifications for a sin to be mortal, 1) It needed to be committed in full knowledge of the sin, 2) there needed to be full consent of the will, 3) it needed to be a grave matter. Those who died in the state of mortal sin, the *Baltimore Catechism* taught, would suffer eternal punishment.

in the catechism, which was still the primary text for his series (see Appendix A for the *Baltimore Catechism's* treatment of mortal sin and damnation).

Yorke's textbooks were especially significant for their organization of the Catechism's content. By breaking down the over two-hundred questions of the *Baltimore Catechism No. 1*, into cogent lessons, each with a central theme, he oriented the many aspects of catechesis into a more common direction. He also went beyond the old method of catechism-centered catechesis by introducing illustrative materials and explanations of doctrine to the lesson. The supportive elements of Yorke's textbook series helped to develop the central doctrinal teachings in his religious education program. His series, however, was still heavily reliant on reading and memorization. While his textbooks sought to help children in their understanding of the Catechism, they did little to coax them out of their passive role in religious education.

Almost simultaneously with Yorke's series, more progressive American educators were working to revolutionize catechesis. In 1903, some of the most important and noteworthy figures in secular and religious education convened in Chicago for the founding meeting of the Religious Education Association (REA). At its commencement, such notables as William Rainey Harper, John Dewey, and George Albert Coe gave opening addresses.<sup>52</sup> At this event, the founders conveyed their ambitions. First, members would work to incorporate the social sciences, especially psychology, into the development of new religious education strategies. Secondly, members acknowledged the growing need in religious education to adapt to societal secularization and religious

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<sup>52</sup> Theodore Brelsford, "Editorial" introduction to the centennial series commemorating the original speeches of the opening of the REA, taken from *Journal of Religious Education Association* vol. 98 (Fall 2003), [cited 15 November 2006]; available at [http://religiouseducation.net/journal/historical/brelsford\\_v\\_98\\_4.pdf](http://religiouseducation.net/journal/historical/brelsford_v_98_4.pdf). INTERNET.

pluralization. Finally, religious education needed to adopt professional academic standards “so as to fulfill its task of contributing to the development of a vibrant and moral democratic society.”<sup>53</sup> While the REA was not just a supporter of Catholic catechesis, the intellectual ambitions of the organization paralleled conferences being held over the Munich Method in Europe. Its establishment demonstrated an American initiative toward seeking modern pedagogical strategies in religious education.

While the contributions of the REA to American Catholic religious instruction are beyond the focus of this study, in the early twentieth century there was a professor, unaffiliated with the REA, at the Catholic University of America (CUA) who developed a catechetical program which mirrored the aspirations of the REA. Rev. Thomas Edward Shields was a product of American education, receiving his doctorate in physiology from John’s Hopkins University in 1895. After teaching for seven years in his home diocese in the St. Paul area, he was released to the Catholic University of America in 1902, where he served as a professor of Psychology and Education until his death in 1921.<sup>54</sup> Following his extensive twenty-five-lesson course published as the *Psychology of Education* (1905), Shields applied his theories of pedagogy to the teaching of religion. In 1907, Shields published his method in his book *Teaching of Religion*, stating that the principles for teaching in any subject were the same ones “underlying Our Lord’s method of teaching and that they are structural in the organic teaching of the Catholic Church.”<sup>55</sup> It was from the example of Jesus that Shields asserted that he developed much of his declarations on catechetical methodology. Given that the goal of catechesis was to

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> John Francis Murphy, “Thomas Edward Shields: Religious Educator,” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1971), see Murphy’s abstract.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Edward Shields, *Teaching of Religion*, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic Correspondence School, 1907), 3.

communicate the same material in the original imparting of the Gospel, Shields believed that there should be very little modification of the original teaching methods of Christ and the Church Fathers.<sup>56</sup>

Shields acknowledged the lack of advance in catechetical methodology in comparison to other areas of academic curriculum, a deficiency that was one of the core issues in the modern catechetical movement. In particular he attacked the passive technique of teaching implied by memorization and recitation. At this point in the American catechetical movement, catechists were still reluctant to discard the four-century-old rote memorization technique of teaching Christian doctrine, let alone jeopardize the future involvement of the Catechism in catechesis. It was possible, as catechetical historian Sr. Mary Charles Bryce noted in her dissertation, that “the question-answer mold of the catechism genre had become so set that any departures from it, if accepted at all, were tolerated as a kind of fad that, if sufficiently disregarded, would surely go away.”<sup>57</sup> Shields’ ideas entered the sphere of catechesis when it was still dominated by the Catechism, and his catechetical philosophies would not receive recognition until much later in the movement.

Shields described a change in the attitude of American Catholics toward the reception of Church teaching, much like what Pius X had universally acknowledged in *Acerbo Nimis* (1905). He discussed how the evolutionary view of nature had disrupted people’s prior perception of the world as existing in an unchanged state from the time of

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<sup>56</sup> Shields, *Teaching of Religion*, 17.

<sup>57</sup> Bryce, dissertation, 1970, 143.

its creation by God.<sup>58</sup> He commented, “The most significant change manifesting itself in the modern world is, perhaps, the shifting of man’s interest in all things from the static to the dynamic.”<sup>59</sup> In Shields understanding, an evolving social environment, similarly, demanded either an adaptive education that was reactive to its milieu, or one that sought to recreate environmental conditions conducive to effectively imparting the faith. Shields program endeavored to do both.

Thomas Shields was the first to apply psychological principles to a catechetical textbook program in the United States. His concentration on the psychological aspects of teaching introduced a new aspect of education to be aware of, and stressed the imperative of teaching to the level of the student’s capacity.<sup>60</sup> He asserted that education had to be geared toward future conditions, so children would be able to make the necessary adjustments to their knowledge in order to compensate for the dynamics of their environment. Hence, catechesis needed to be directed toward establishing an understanding of the faith in a way that allowed Christians to react confidently in their faith to the changing world around them. Without this, education would fail to “develop power of will and action, intelligent insight, and self-reliance so that the pupil may be enabled to cope effectively in the outside world.”<sup>61</sup> This fell under Shields’ directive that education should focus on character development as well as imparting knowledge.

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<sup>58</sup> John L. Elias, “Thomas E. Shields: A Progressive Catholic Religious Educator (1862-1921),” 2004, [cited on 15 November 2006], found at [http://www.religiouseducation.net/member/04\\_papers/Elias.pdf](http://www.religiouseducation.net/member/04_papers/Elias.pdf). INTERNET.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Edward Shields, *Philosophy of Education*, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic Education Press, 1917), 48.

<sup>60</sup> Shields, *Teaching of Religion*, 14.

<sup>61</sup> Unknown Author, Dissertation on Thomas Shields, dated 1933 or slightly later, p. 3 chapter 2, Dr. Thomas Shields Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington D.C.

Furthermore, Shields asserted that imparting faith and understanding alone were not enough. Christ spent a great deal of time proclaiming the significance of works, and living out faith through actions. Shields criticized science for reducing man to the level of animals. Imparting knowledge only nurtured the “flesh” of man, where true education needed to “aim at bringing the flesh in subjugation to the spirit.”<sup>62</sup> Knowledge, therefore, was not the ultimate goal of catechesis, but an essential step in “putting the pupil into possession of a body of truth derived from nature and from divine revelation...in order to bring his conduct into conformity with Christian ideals and with the standards of the civilization of his day.”<sup>63</sup> Effective catechesis, according to Shields, nurtured both the biological and spiritual aspects of humanity, which developed a lifestyle infused with Christian principles.

Shields’ program employed textbooks for the first six years of elementary school. His course included four textbooks for grades one through four and three “Readers” for grades three through six (the fifth reader was used for both grades five and six). The Readers contained various stories of both secular and sacred literature, such as the Ugly Duckling and stories of the saints. These were uncommon in Catholic religious textbook series at the time, which Shields looked on disapprovingly, stating that “The Construction of a text-book for the use of little children appears to be a simple matter and the thoughtless have so regarded it.”<sup>64</sup> The primary purpose of textbooks, Shields asserted, was to “lay down the lines along which the process of mental development should be

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<sup>62</sup> Shields, *Philosophy of Education*, 165.

<sup>63</sup> Shields, *Philosophy of Education*, 171.

<sup>64</sup> Shields, Shields, *Teachers Manual of Primary Methods*, 80.

conducted.”<sup>65</sup> Textbooks should be used as maps to guide the thought process of its users in a way that would maximize child learning and comprehension. Furthermore, they should be open to criticism by peers and clergy of all levels, therefore expressing the ‘wisdom of the many rather than the intelligence of the one.’<sup>66</sup>

Textbooks carried a greater importance in the younger grades than older courses, since students should naturally grow “increasingly independent” from both the catechist and the text as they matured in faith.<sup>67</sup> Shields, however, described the importance of the catechist to properly know and use the text so students would perceive it as a viable resource, stating, “Good results cannot be achieved when there is a conflict in aim or method between the teacher and the text-book which is placed in the pupils’ hands.”<sup>68</sup> Should a teacher communicate church teaching in a divergent way from the message in students’ textbooks, children would not know whom to believe. Instructors risked undermining the credibility of one or the other if the content of their presentation was not in conjunction with the text.

Shields’ textbook series emerged around the same time as Yorke’s. The First book of his series, *Religion—First Book*, contained the basic content for first year elementary school students that would lay the foundations for more developed concepts in later years. It conveyed the material in language aimed at six-year-old comprehension using oversized font and pictures, both black and white and colored, to illustrate the stories in the text and inspire imagination. The color scheme served a purpose. Shields colored all pictures that referenced Christ and the New Testament and left Old Testament

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<sup>65</sup> Thomas Shields, *Teachers Manual of Primary Methods*, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic Education Press, 1912), 199.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>68</sup> Shields, *Catholic Education Series, First Book*, 99.



and other spiritual illustrations in black and white. The purpose of this was to “arouse and to center the child’s pleasurable emotions on the pictures in which Our Lord is the central figure.”<sup>69</sup> The book further aimed to persuade children to depend on God by relating that relationship to children’s paternal dependence. It hoped to teach children to shift from a selfish to selfless way of living.

Shield’s primary means of conveying Christian teaching was the parable<sup>70</sup> In essence, his whole text was a compilation of stories containing the Christian message. There was no specific mention of “doctrine” anywhere, though the fundamental principles of church teaching were observable throughout the text. Shields incorporated stories of science and nature as illustrative mechanisms of Church teaching. He used the story of a mother and father bird throughout his series, and his description of their interactions and care for their chicks provided an example of Christian family life. He also recommended the use of arts and crafts to enforce lessons of the series. The culmination of his first course was for children to learn two songs in the back of the book; the first conveyed the story of baby Jesus, and the other reflected on the example of Christ as a good child who loved his parents.<sup>71</sup>

Shields’ *Second Book* built upon the lessons of the previous text and was designed to “develop in the child’s mind the idea of a divine law which may be obeyed or violated according to the determination of the human free will.”<sup>72</sup> The text layout was more advanced, containing smaller print and more writing. Unlike the *First Book*, the second

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas Edward Shields, *Catholic Education Series, First Book*, (Washington D.C.: Catholic Education Press, 1908, 1917), 4.

<sup>70</sup> Shields, *Philosophy of Education*, 173.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-97.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Edward Shields, *Catholic Education Series, Second Book*, (Washington D.C.: Catholic Education Press, 1909), 5.

grade text had “reflection questions” for each lesson, a device that Shields used in Books three, four, and five as well. In the presentation of doctrine, Shields tried to avoid a legalistic presentation of rules of conduct, focusing instead on presenting the precepts of the Church as helpful guides. Through his discussion of the nature of sin in this second volume, the author continually emphasized the theme of obedience. The consequence of sin he noted was the loss of heaven, but did not comment on the doctrine of damnation.

Shields’ *Third Book* again built on previous material and focused on the Catholic Church’s teaching of salvation. Complimenting the book was the *Third Reader*, a supplementary text with illustrations, poems, and stories geared toward the further development of the lesson material.<sup>73</sup> In the *Third Book*, Shields’ built upon the instruction of obedience, and sought to ingrain in children the Catholic notion that salvation was “to be wrought through obedience to God and to legitimately constituted authority.” In this case, the “legitimately constituted authority” to which Shields’ was referring was the Catholic Church and the Roman Hierarchy. Hence, children’s obedience to the Church would be a reflection of their obedience to God. Shields also sought to develop children’s understanding of sacrifice and man’s need for God for protection from sin. The *Third Reader* developed conscience and related values of proper civic living.<sup>74</sup> These lessons tied directly into the children’s preparation for First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation, both sacraments received in the second or third grade that were Catholic sources of grace and taught as guards against sin.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Material was both of secular origin, such as the story of the Ugly Duckling, and religious, such as biographies of saints.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

<sup>75</sup> Shields, *Catholic Education Series, Third Book*, (Washington D.C.: Catholic Education Press, 1910), 5-7.

The *Fourth Book* illustrated the connection between the prophets, patriarchs, and events of the Old Testament to their fulfillment in the New Testament. Shields used the unfolding of Church heritage to explain and justify the operations of the Church. The primary focus of the *Fourth Book* was the Mass. It covered the basic vocabulary of the Catholic service, and described the events and procedures it entailed. The *Fourth Book* no longer employed poetry, but used hymns and song in coordination with the text.

Shields' course aimed to Christianize the entire scholastic milieu. His references to nature were attempts to unite religion with science, and his readers referenced elements of faith that were reflected in secular literature. Aside from conveying doctrinal principles, his course also developed such skills as spelling, vocabulary, and reading. In doing so, Shields hoped to emphasize the elemental links between Catholic faith and the rest of children's curriculum.

Shields textbook series was revolutionary for its understanding of the psychological elements of pedagogy, and for his effort to link religious education with other subjects. Yet, he did not have a considerable influence on catechesis during his lifetime. Perhaps Shields was too progressive for conservative catechists in the American Church. It was also noted that after his untimely death in 1921 he left no disciples to carry on his work.<sup>76</sup> Still, at its high point in 1914, sixty-thousand students, he claimed, were using his program in the United States.<sup>77</sup> The large majority of American Catholic students, however, were still learning their catechism lessons by heart.

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<sup>76</sup> Elias, 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Spellacy, 97.

### **A Step Back: Roderick MacEachen and His Course in Religion**

By the mid 1920s, the ideas of Munich were becoming more widespread in American catechesis. Gatterer and Krus' book, *The Theory and Practice of the Catechism*, had been in English print for over five years, and American catechists, though slow to start, were beginning to modernize the traditional teaching of the Gospel message. The American Catholic Church continued to deal with the adverse effects of secularism on its teaching. Cardinal Gibbons recognized this dilemma, commenting, "When we look about us to-day [sic] we are appalled at the evils that have crept into human society"<sup>78</sup> Catechists continued to outline new religious education programs. Despite Shields' progressive work and the growing recognition of the deficiencies of Catechism-centered catechesis, many in Catholic religious education were still reluctant to remove the Catechism from its pedestal in religious education and looked to provide a place for its continued use in evolving catechetical programs and textbook series. Such programs, like Fr. Roderick MacEachen's textbook course, appeared to be a backwards step in catechesis from what Shields had accomplished. Relative to the rest of catechesis, however, which was still heavily reliant on rote-memorization, MacEachen's course was progressive, yet did not completely leave out the Catechism. His course was nowhere near as advanced as Shields', but still beyond the simple content of Yorke's textbook series. MacEachen's continued reliance on the Catechism reflected a larger concern of the American catechetical community over the preservation of the traditional content of catechesis.

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<sup>78</sup> Roderick MacEachen, *The Teaching of Religion*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1921), v.

MacEachen was an American priest who had received his education in European schools, and sought to improve catechetics in the United States.<sup>79</sup> He argued that his catechetical method was different from the standard practice of the day because it departed “from the intellectualism that ha[d] prevailed.”<sup>80</sup> Catechesis, he argued, had become overly technical and caught up in theory rather than focusing on the fundamental Christian message. At the time, MacEachen worried that Catholic religious education was being presented as a study of Catholic doctrine and practice, but was not adequately presented as relevant to people’s lives. By working to reveal religion as something not only related to life, but intrinsic to its experience, MacEachen argued that children would be motivated to know and “*do* the truth.”<sup>81</sup>

Infusing students with Christian knowledge, feeling, and conduct were the keys to communicating and preserving religious faith under MacEachen’s program.<sup>82</sup> “Knowledge of God,” he stated, “creates a new mode of thought in the human mind; the love of God elevates man to a new plane of feeling; the service of God changes the character of man’s conduct, transfers it from the mere natural to the supernatural.”<sup>83</sup> In the case of catechizing children, such concepts needed to be presented in the proper order so as to build on students’ experience. MacEachen’s course attempted to relate all

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<sup>79</sup> In 1917, Fr. MacEachen worked under the directive of Pope Benedict XV as the editor of a new single universal catechism. His research brought him in contact with catechisms used in dioceses from around the world. This attempt, which endeavored to fulfill the directive of Vatican I for a universal catechism, also never came to fruition. See ACUA Faculty Reference Files: Roderick MacEachen.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

experience to God's love and use knowledge to nurture appropriate motives of Christian conduct.<sup>84</sup>

MacEachen regarded the Catechism as the main source of Christian knowledge, and emphasized its centrality in religious education. In 1911, he prepared his own doctrinal source manual, the *Complete Catechism of Christian Doctrine*. With it, he sought to repair the deficiencies of the Catechism, as he saw it, and renew its dignified stature from its youthful presentation as a "dry, distasteful, uninteresting, and burdensome study."<sup>85</sup> For MacEachen, the catechism contained the knowledge necessary to understand the Catholic Faith, but not the apologetics to defend it.<sup>86</sup> As a result, once students reached adult life, they were easily susceptible to influences of Protestantism and secular society. With such knowledge, he stated that people "may go forth to struggle bravely and victoriously against the false theories that beset them on all sides."<sup>87</sup>

MacEachen stated that textbooks were suitable materials for teaching religion to children. But, he insisted that they were not meant to be used for memorization, or as an official doctrinal text. Rather, he recommended that catechists use textbooks as a basis for teaching that would help convey foundational and simple teachings on which to build. He also stated that textbooks should be graded toward the capacity of children in each course, presenting faith "through the viewpoint of the child."<sup>88</sup> Hence, as children progressed through MacEachen's three-course program, their textbooks developed in complexity to keep pace with the child's growing understanding.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>85</sup> Roderick MacEachen, *Complete Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, (Wheeling: Catholic Book Company, 1911), 9.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>88</sup> MacEachen, *Teaching of Religion*, 39.

MacEachen conveyed that textbooks were not meant to be the sole means of teaching catechesis. The real education of faith occurred through the child's knowledge and the abilities of the catechist to help children discover their faith in their own experience. MacEachen followed the philosophy of modern pedagogy that education must be built on existing knowledge and experience. This method of passing on the understanding of faith by relating it to the child's experience MacEachen called the "assimilation-and-application process."<sup>89</sup>

His textbook, which to MacEachen's standards was "richly illustrated," contained occasional pictures meant to help children reflect on the lesson. "Pictures are good, but realities are better," he commented. "So whenever possible the reality itself should be used to stimulate thought."<sup>90</sup> When catechists did employ pictures, he continued, it was important that they did not detract from Church teaching. For example, pictures that portrayed God the Father as an elderly white-bearded man personified the deity as a human being, which was not doctrinally sound. When pictures were used, the teacher's manual contained an appendix with an explanation for each picture. MacEachen's attempt to control the use of pictorial aids, along with his use of classical illustrations taken from famous religious iconography and sacred art in his textbooks, exhibited his predisposition toward conservative content in catechesis.

MacEachen stressed the necessity of review and repetition in order to cement the lesson in the children's minds.<sup>91</sup> MacEachen's textbooks, especially in the first two years, barraged students with questions. The teacher's manual included numerous questions

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<sup>89</sup> Roderick MacEachen, *Religion—Second Manual*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922, xv.

<sup>90</sup> MacEachen, *Teaching of Religion*, 43.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

arranged in such an order that they would extract specific objective answers that would then lead to the next question. Through this method of constant interrogation, which was slightly different from the old method since its questions were simpler and meant to develop individual doctrinal tenets rather than the more complex complete questions and answers of the Catechism, MacEachen drilled the content of Christian doctrine into child's minds and drew connections between different articles of Catholic doctrine. The organized succession of questions built on previous answers. The lessons in the children's textbooks ended with a summary list of "truths" that could be drawn from the day's material. The teacher's manual contained test questions in reference to the "truths" of the day.

MacEachen's method of unceasing interrogation had another purpose. It sought to involve students in the lesson to a greater extent and "promote spontaneous activity on the part of the children."<sup>92</sup> MacEachen's religion course attempted to draw students into deeper discussion as they matured in knowledge of their faith. In courses one and two, questions aimed to train children how to reflect on aspects of church teaching. The third course weaned students from the questions of the previous courses and encourage them to personalize their own forms of reflection. In the classroom, the course manual instructed teachers to act as moderators and talk as little as possible.<sup>93</sup> All discussions, however should be guided toward a realization of God's love bearing within the issue at hand. Through discussion, MacEachen sought to make Catechesis more child-centered.

MacEachen made a special point to discuss the complexity of imparting the teaching of sin to children. He asserted that the misery of sin should always be presented

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<sup>92</sup> MacEachen, *Second Manual*, xiii.

<sup>93</sup> Roderick MacEachen, *Religion—Third Manual*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), vii.



in conjunction with the joy of virtuous living and hope of redemption, and children should have a thorough understanding of God's love and his plan of salvation before learning about sin.<sup>94</sup> He stated that catechists should communicate the existence of hell and devils, and the eschatological effects of death in the state of mortal sin.<sup>95</sup> In essence, MacEachen's teaching of sin and punishment represented the choice of sin or goodness as a selection between two roads. It was the job of catechists to communicate the virtuous path toward heaven and God and the self-destructive path to eternal death, and hope that the advertisement of a life in Christ would triumph as their students' final decision.

Unlike Shields, or even Yorke for that matter, MacEachen provided a thorough lesson on the Catholic Church's teaching of hell. The lesson stressed that the student's fate was in his or her own hands, and that people could avoid hell by being sorry for "being bad."<sup>96</sup> MacEachen presented hell in juxtaposition to heaven, making it seem like a choice with an obvious answer. However, he noted the decision was complicated by the active efforts of "devils" to trick people into being "bad."

MacEachen's program presented hell legalistically, stating that hell was the "deserved" consequence for not doing what God desired. The instruction was straightforward: "Bad people go to hell," and he defined "bad people" as "those who do not do what God wants them to do."<sup>97</sup> This was a potentially terrifying and psychologically adverse instruction for young children in the first grade, who at their age were not believed capable of committing mortal sin. Under MacEachen's broad

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<sup>94</sup> MacEachen, *The Teaching of Religion*, 189.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>96</sup> Roderick MacEachen, *Catechist's Manual—First Elementary Course*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 75.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

definition, anyone who had ever sinned was a “bad person” and deserving of hell. The doctrine conveyed in this way not only incited fear and confusion in children, but was suggestive of a vengeful God.

MacEachen’s lesson organization was consistent with his theory of building on previous knowledge, and was evident in his strategy of conveying the doctrine of hell. The lesson, “Hell,” fell in between “The Happiness of Heaven” and “The Commandments.”<sup>98</sup> This arrangement served an educational purpose. Juxtaposing hell with the “Happiness of Heaven” allowed children to see the two possible afterlives as a simple choice, and this, in turn, would hopefully motivate them to live their lives accordingly. Faced with the choice, and the desire to go to heaven, children could learn from MacEachen’s course the rules they needed to follow to achieve heaven, or the violations that would lead them to hell through God’s Law in the Commandments.

At the age of seven, students encountered eight “truths” about eternal punishment in their second-grade textbook.

1. Sin changed the angels into devils
2. Sin sent the bad angels to hell
3. People who disobey God go to hell when they die.
4. Mortal sin is the only thing that can send people to hell.
5. Hell will last forever.
6. The wicked will burn in hell forever.
7. The wicked in hell will never see God.
8. All the wicked in hell hate one another.<sup>99</sup>

The lesson conveyed three Catholic beliefs about suffering in hell, (1) there was spiritual suffering which would be joined with physical suffering after peoples’ souls were rejoined with their bodies after the last judgment, (2) hell was eternal, and (3) “the worst

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<sup>98</sup> Roderick MacEachen, *Religion—Second Course*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923, 23-29

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

suffering in hell [was] to be separated from God.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, it stated that a person's eternity was in their control and a product of their lifestyle. It was something they decided. Although the lesson contained a glimpse of hope for sinners through a short revelation of the redemptive power of Christ, the prevailing message was one of fear.

MacEachen's religion course, which was meant to be progressive, still had many qualities of the old modes of catechetical instruction. The course's method of catechesis still leaned heavily on drilling the content of the catechism. MacEachen's *Course in Religion* encouraged greater student participation. His textbooks better organized the teachings of the catechism into themed lessons that focused on a single aspect of church teaching. The lessons, however, did not connect to show an overarching theme in catechesis. Furthermore, his instruction on hell showed little regard for the psychological capacities of children, and even went beyond the already unnerving terminology of the *Baltimore Catechism*. MacEachen provided a program that attempted to better develop children's understanding and regard for the Catechism. It demonstrated, however, that adherence to traditional content of religious education, such as the Catechism, in many ways anchored catechists to old methods of instruction.

### **Christocentrism and the *Course in Religion***

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, catechetical programs had been predominantly the work of solo educators. Though open to revision and suggestions from fellow catechists, authors of textbook series based their work predominantly on their own theories and experiences. In the 1920s and thirties, a new generation of progressive American catechists entered the religious education scene, supplanting many

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 26.

of the unchanging disciples of the dated philosophies of Catechism-centered catechesis. Landmark publications promoting the Munich Method by Rudolph Bandas (1935), Sr. Rosalia Walsh (1937), Joseph Baierl (1938), and Anthony Fuerst (1939), circulated throughout the American catechetical community.<sup>101</sup> Textbook series began to displace catechisms. Near the end of the 1930s, an observer of this phenomenon commented, saying “Any tendency to provide new textbooks in religion was for a long period discouraged. We seem now to be more willing to face the problem, and perhaps as a result of this attitude we are in a period of great productivity of religious textbooks—some good, some bad, some inexcusable.”<sup>102</sup>

With the increasing number of progressive catechists in the United States, instructors began to collaborate in the construction of new catechetical programs and textbook series. In the period between 1930 and 1955, “there was an intensive and almost frantic effort to produce graded textbooks similar in format to those used in teaching other subjects.”<sup>103</sup> These programs incorporated the input of catechists throughout the United States, adopted modern pedagogical philosophies, such as psychological approaches to learning and assimilating content to students’ experience, and demonstrated a new level of involvement of religious educators in the American catechetical movement.

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<sup>101</sup> The particular publications were Rudolph Bandas, *Religion Teaching and Practice*, (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1935); Sr. Rosalia Walsh MSH, *Child Psychology and Religion*, (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1937); Joseph J. Baierl, *Religious Instruction and Education*, (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1938); Joseph Collins, *Religious Instruction and Education*, (New York, Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1938); and Anthony Fuerst, *The Systematic Teaching of Religion: History, Aims, and Supernatural Means*, (New York: Benzinger Brothers, Inc., 1939).

<sup>102</sup> Edward A. Fitzpatrick, *Methods of Teaching Religion in Elementary Schools*, (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1939), 57.

<sup>103</sup> Lucker, 180.

As early as the 1920s, the American catechetical community began to articulate expectations for the standards of its textbooks. The growing number of textbook series that began to emerge after MacEachen's program confronted catechists with the dilemma of selecting a text that was both competent and appropriate to the needs of their students. While the *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* of bishops ensured acceptability of content and the possibility for a publication to be used in their diocese, their blessings did not comment on the quality of the material.<sup>104</sup> In 1924, Walter Athearn, Dean of Religious Education and Social Service at Boston University, released a publication, *Measurements and Standards in Religious Education*, which contained a scorecard for grading the quality of elementary school textbooks.<sup>105</sup> It assembled evaluation criteria for catechists to help them discern the textbook series best suited for their class.<sup>106</sup> This growing scrutiny of religious education texts began to positively affect the quality of American catechetical textbooks.

For example, in 1928, catechists of the Archdiocese of Chicago began construction on the *Course in Religion*. The project developed over the next six years, during which time instructors tested the effectiveness of sample courses on actual classes nationwide and submitted recommendations for revision to a central committee. In this manner, the course was modified in both "matter and language," and aimed to

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<sup>104</sup> *Nihil obstat* (without objection) and *imprimatur* (let it be printed) were the official stamps of approval by bishops signifying that the specified material was both doctrinally sound and suitable for publication.

<sup>105</sup> Walter S. Athearn, *Measurements and Standards in Religious Education*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1924), As cited in Fitzpatrick, 59-66.

<sup>106</sup> Fitzpatrick, 66.

incorporate, “ideas which seemed desirable by reason of the children’s questions.”<sup>107</sup> Its main authors were siblings Fr. Alexander P. Schorsch and Sr. Dolores Schorsch, professors of DePaul University in Chicago. They organized their lessons into units, providing a second level of thematic organization to the series (previous textbooks relied solely on lessons for thematic grouping). The *Course in Religion* endeavored to renew the Christocentric focus of catechesis. The units sought to develop an overall theme to the eight-year course: “Around the person of Christ this course is organized in its dogmatic, its moral, its ascetical, its liturgical, and its historical aspects. Materials from all these fields are brought together to put Christ in relief and to emphasize their relationship with Him.”<sup>108</sup>

The authors of the course had a dual purpose: to convey an understanding of the Christian religion, and work toward the formation of Christian character.<sup>109</sup> Though it did its best to simplify the complicated terminology of Church doctrine, in some cases, the course instructed, it was best to maintain traditional language rather than impart incorrect ideas.<sup>110</sup> In order to compensate for this, the series attempted to familiarize students with pertinent Catholic vocabulary by providing youth-friendly definitions where necessary throughout the text. As to forming Christian character, the course emphasized the “supernatural virtues” (hope, fortitude, meekness, prudence, faith, humility, obedience, justice and temperance) and their applicability to children’s lives, and each lesson in the catechist’s manual contained a section subtitled, “Guidance in the Formation of Virtuous

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<sup>107</sup> Alexander P. Schorsch and Dolores Schorsch, *A Course in Religion for the Elementary Schools: Teacher’s Guidebook, Book Four, Jesus the High Priest*, (Chicago, Archdiocese of Chicago School Board, 1934), 6.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>109</sup> *Guidebook*, 5.

<sup>110</sup> *Guidebook*, 5.

Habits,” which related a Christian motive pertaining to the day’s lesson and provided examples of how children could act out the intent of the lesson.

The *Course in Religion* utilized the Morrisonian method of teaching. In many ways, this method reprised the Munich style of imparting Catholic doctrine. It advocated teaching through children’s known experience, insisted upon conveying the doctrine’s applicability to everyday life, and utilized lessons that built on previous classes as its students progressed. Morrison, however, placed a stronger influence on testing and retesting in order to ensure a proper grasp of lesson content. This had a substantial influence on the way the series’ creators assembled the textbooks for the *Course in Religion*.

The textbooks in the program presented students with interactive lessons unlike any series that had preceded it. Rather than assembling yet another reference source for students, both Father and Sister Schorsch worked with their team of catechists to construct a dual text/workbook. They filled all eight graded volumes of their series with various assignments that tested students in their understanding of daily lessons. Every page of the series contained an activity, whether it was coloring for younger grades, matching, fill in the blank, true/false, multiple-choice, or various arts and crafts project designs.

Due to its student-oriented content, the textbook for the *Course in Religion* was more of a review source than a presentation tool. Catechists had their own teacher’s manuals that relayed the intended aim of the lesson and provided recommendations on how to best present the day’s material to the class. The first part of the session comprised catechists’ instruction of the lesson in which they explored the material and tried to

assimilate it to their children's experiences. Catechists were to hand out the class's textbooks to engage their assignments only after completing this initial step.<sup>111</sup> The student activities helped solidify the day's lesson through non-monotonous repetition and intellectual stimulation. After completing their assignments, students returned their activity books to the teacher, who reserved them for the next lesson. By their differing tasks around a single lesson the textbook and catechist complimented one another.

The *Course in Religion* did not utilize a catechism to supplement its textbooks. Instead, it incorporated the material of the Catechism directly into its pages. The series integrated the traditional content of the Catechism into its workbook activities. Therefore, the bulk of the doctrine instructed in the course was not conveyed by question-answer format as the Catechism and many earlier textbooks had done. While the primary way that the *Course in Religion* taught doctrine was through the catechists' oral lessons and textbook activities, it still utilized the traditional memorization approach, but to a lesser extent. Each unit had a boxed section of three to five catechism questions and answers for students to commit to memory.

Another aspect of the new *Course in Religion* that distinguished it from previous series was the range of students it addressed. Rather than restricting its focus to pre-junior high children, as Shields, Yorke, and MacEachen had done, the *Course in Religion* followed students through eight years of instruction. In order to retain interest throughout students' elementary development, the course changed the appearance of successive texts to reflect the developing capacities of students and labored to vary the content of study. Textbooks relied more heavily on written word and introduced new activities as children

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<sup>111</sup> Alexander P. Schorsch and Dolores Schorsch, *A Course in Religion for the Elementary Schools, Book Three Workbook: Jesus the Good Shepherd*, (Chicago: Archdiocese of Chicago School Board, 1938), See "Note to the teacher" in the cover page.



matured. Though similar Catholic teachings emerged throughout the program, the course avoided repetition and enriched previous material by revealing new aspects of doctrine. Specifically, each volume conveyed a different perception of Christ: Jesus the Christ Child, Jesus the Redeemer, Jesus the Good Shepherd, Jesus the High Priest, Jesus the Life, Jesus the King, Jesus the Head of the Church, and Jesus the Son of God Made Man.<sup>112</sup> In each of the textbooks, the content illustrated the designated identity of Christ for that year.

The *Course in Religion* had another objective beyond imparting doctrine and forming Christian character. Like Fr. MacEachen's catechisms, it focused heavily on Catholic apologetics. The aim of the seventh grade course was to "prepare the pupil to defend his faith."<sup>113</sup> It did this by emphasizing the need for students to acquire the ability to orally recite the tenets of their faith without an outline, and "engender a habit of talking about their faith."<sup>114</sup> The course also depicted the Catholic hierarchy and its legion of priests as extensions of Christ himself, and reiterated the Church's claims to authority and infallible teaching.<sup>115</sup> The seventh grade course focused intently on defending the structure of the Church as one Catholics believed to be established by Christ and the Church fathers. By fostering children's abilities to defend their faith orally, and reiterating the need to be obedient to the authority of the Church, the course

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<sup>112</sup> These were the successive sub-titles in order of volumes one through eight in the *Course in Religion Series*.

<sup>113</sup> Alexander P. Schorsch and Dolores Schorsch, *A Course in Religion for the Elementary Schools, Book Seven Workbook: Jesus the Head of the Church*, (Chicago: Archdiocese of Chicago School Board, 1936), See "Note to the teacher" in the cover page.

<sup>114</sup> Schorsch, Guidebook, 13.

<sup>115</sup> Church authority and obedience were common themes throughout the course, but most specifically in the unit on papal infallibility. See Schorsch, *Workbook Seven*, 49-53.

hoped to defend against children losing their faith in adulthood when they would become more exposed to secular or non-Catholic influences.

While the *Course on Religion* reacted defensively to secularizing forces in American society, it also strived to be non-confrontational. The course told teachers to be conscious of the changing social milieu in the United States, especially pertaining to declining religious practice in the household. Teachers could not take for granted the support of parents for their children's catechesis or that they would serve as examples of Christian parenting. As a result, the course instructed catechists to "sweetly lead" students to the practices of the Church without casting aspersions on their parents.<sup>116</sup> The course's teaching and content reflected this concern, especially on the subjects of mortal sin and damnation.

Mortal sin and morality were sensitive subjects according to the *Course in Religion* that needed to be approached with care when being taught to young children. The course guidebook instructed, "A child should never be told that what he is doing is a mortal sin. Such information may shock him and lead him to grave psychological as well as moral consequences."<sup>117</sup> The course further cautioned teachers about labeling a child's actions as immoral. Children came from different familial backgrounds with often-different standards of right and wrong. The guidebook still instructed teachers to be stern with misbehaving children, even when their actions might have constituted a mortal sin. In such cases, matters often needed to be left to the priest in the confessional.<sup>118</sup>

The *Course in Religion* was very conservative when presenting the Church's teaching on eternal punishment. The workbooks mentioned hell in the traditional areas,

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<sup>116</sup> Schorsch, *Guidebook.*, 28.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

sin, contrition, and everlasting life. The content of the workbooks on the subject of hell adhered to the language of the Bible in the words that Christ spoke about eternal punishment. There was no embellishment or reflection on the physical pains of hell (though they were mentioned as Christ revealed them in the Bible), and the subject was kept in close context with heaven and eternal life. In doing so, the course's depiction of hell provided hope of redemption, with Jesus and God's grace as the heroic saving powers.<sup>119</sup> In this context, the discussion of hell had a positive message, in the sense that it pointed toward Christ's redemptive power rather than inspiring fear to motivate children to contrition.

The *Course in Religion* moved away from Catechism-centered catechesis during a more progressive era than that of Shields. While its methods reflected the influence of Munich, much of its content was reacting to the American social environment and came from the recommendations of American catechists. As seen with its delicate approach toward issues of morality and eternal punishment, the course acknowledged an increasing need to be tactful and respectful when imparting sensitive Church teachings. While this was significant, the course was most progressive in its employment of an overall Christocentric theme. Throughout children's elementary school development, the course conveyed how Catholic doctrine in different ways was tied to Christ and redemption. This renewal of Christocentric focus has traditionally been credited to Josef Andreas Jungmann, an Austrian catechist and world-renowned figure in Catholic catechesis, and his theory of the kerygma. But, by exhibiting the fundamental elements of kerygmatic renewal by organizing catechesis toward Christ and salvation, the *Course in Religion*

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<sup>119</sup> Alexander P. Schorsch and Dolores Schorsch, *A Course in Religion for the Elementary Schools, Book Five Workbook: Jesus the Life*, (Chicago: Archdiocese of Chicago School Board, 1935),

predated American sources that historians have traditionally credited with the kerygmatic influence in American catechesis by over twenty years.<sup>120</sup>

### **Quelling Concerns of Content and the Course for American Citizenship**

The *Course in Religion* was only one of the elementary school religious education programs in the United States that emerged between 1930 and the Second Vatican Council. The era introduced numerous catechetical programs from a variety of authors, both lay and religious.<sup>121</sup> As catechetical programs began to rely less on the Catechism for content, authors of religious education programs began to take greater freedoms in choosing the subject matter of their textbooks. Many publications and conferences throughout the world noted this seeming change in the focus of catechetical renewal.<sup>122</sup>

In the 1930s, the discussion of the need to change the traditional content of catechesis overshadowed the substantial modifications that previous catechists had made in the first quarter of the century. Content had been modified and reorganized since the birth of the American catechetical movement, starting with the abridgement of the *Baltimore Catechism* late in the nineteenth century. Catechism aids introduced new content by providing more thorough explanations of the traditional material. Mother

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<sup>120</sup> Josef A. Jungmann's book, *Die Frohbotschaft und Unsere Glaubensverkündigung*, which first conveyed Jungmann's theory of the importance of the kerygma was first published in Europe in 1937. For a definition of the "kerygma" see the introduction p.4 in the footnote. In 1962, Johannes Hofinger arranged an English translation of Jungmann's book, *The Good News Yesterday and Today*. The *On Our Way Series* which American catechists released in 1957 was heavily influenced by Jungmann's work, and is traditionally regarded as the pioneer American series promoting *kerygmatic* renewal. It will be evaluated in detail later in the chapter.

<sup>121</sup> New series included Edward Fitzpatrick's *Highway to Heaven Series* (1931), the Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic's *Christ Life Series* (1934), William R. Kelly's *Living My Religion Series* (1942); see Lucker 246-247.

<sup>122</sup> For a listing of authors and conferences that met to discuss the content of catechesis, see Lucker, 114.

Demetrius used pictures and Bible stories to illustrate the traditional substance of the Catechism. Shield's program eliminated the Catechism as a text, and conveyed the doctrine through parables and secular literature. In many ways, catechists in the 1930s reinvented the wheels of their less known predecessors when they turned their attention more heavily to catechetical content. With that in mind, it would be problematic to say that because the realization of the question of catechetical content was more dramatic and widespread following 1930 that the modern catechetical movement in American only then recognized that catechetical renewal needed to "give its attention also to the question of the content of religious instruction."<sup>123</sup>

The growing acceptance of substantial adjustment in catechesis led to an increased tailoring of religious education programs toward addressing social matters. Freedom from the catechism layout and question and answer format allowed program creators to better design courses that engaged current world and social issues and instructed how Church doctrine applied. The declining catechetical preparation by parents in the home society, as well as the rise in Fascist and Communist dictatorships in the Western World conveyed an urgent need for a response by the Catholic Church. To counter the political controversies of the Western World, the Pope Pius XI looked to the United States to serve as a beacon of Christian democracy.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Hofinger, 6.

<sup>124</sup> It was not typical for the Pope to direct regional catechesis. Traditional universal pronouncements came in the form of encyclicals and conveyed general observations and decrees pertaining to the overall nature and climate of catechesis. In this case, given the volatile social and political state of Europe in the years preceding the Second World War, the Pope used the stable democratic environment of the United States for the nurturing of a curriculum hailing Christian democracy. While American bishops and clergy presided over the ensuing creation of the program it is important to note that catechists and lower level clergy contributed largely to its creation and implementation.

In an apostolic letter on Sept 21, 1938, Pope Pius XI instructed the American bishops to create a religious education program that developed Christian principles in light of social issues within the domestic and international communities. American catechists responded with the creation of the Commission on American Citizenship, and their project of a new Catholic curriculum for church-run schools. The Commission was headquartered at the Catholic University of America by Bishop Joseph M. Corrigan, the Rector of the University, and included one hundred and forty-four members, made up of Catholics and non-Catholics, as well as clergy and laity. The Right Reverend Francis Haas, dean of the School of Social Science, and Reverend George Johnson of the Department of Education at Catholic University led the committee with an advisory council, whose members hailed from distinguished national universities as well as elementary public schools.<sup>125</sup> American catechists with elementary school experience, the Commission's annual report added, assisted in the formation of the curriculum.<sup>126</sup> Under the request of the American bishops, the Commission prepared "a curricula and teaching materials on Christian social living and American citizenship for use in the Catholic Schools of the United States."<sup>127</sup>

In 1944, the Commission on American Citizenship released its curriculum, *Guiding Growth in Christian Social Living* for Catholic elementary schools. This new catechetical program related Catholic doctrine to everyday *American* life more than any religious series that had preceded it. *Guiding Growth* instructed teachers on how to

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<sup>125</sup> For a listing of the members of the Advisory Committee, see George Johnson, "The Commission on American Citizenship of the Catholic University of America," *Journal of Education Sociology*, 16 no. 6 (Feb., 1943), 380-381.

<sup>126</sup> Commission on American Citizenship, Box 6, "Commission on American Citizenship, First Annual Report July 1, 1939-June 30, 1940, (Washington D.C.: National Capital Press, 1940), p. 20, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington D.C.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

infuse all of school curriculum, from math and science to social studies and even physical education (“Moderate care of the body must be taught as one factor in Christian social living, by which we show respect for the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost and preserve the gifts of life and health given to us by God, our Heavenly Father”).<sup>128</sup> Shields had attempted to Christianize academic curricula decades earlier, but the depth to which *Guiding Growth* addressed all aspects of elementary education demonstrated a much more thorough attempt. The purpose of the course was to enlighten Catholics about the Church’s teaching of “the true nature of Christian democracy.” Its primary aim was to educate children in the social message of the Catholic Church.<sup>129</sup>

The *Guiding Growth* series sought to convey an understanding of four basic relationships that “condition the life of the Christian.”<sup>130</sup> They were the relationship with God, Church, human beings, and nature. Understanding these relationships in light of Christian doctrine was the foundation of the program.

The series did not use the Catechism as a text. The program, rather, infused the principles of Catholic doctrine into the entire elementary school curricula. To aid this purpose, it provided a series of textbooks, the *Faith and Freedom Readers*, to serve as the program’s primary guides in Christian social behavior. Like Shield’s text’s these readers did not draw directly from the catechism for their content, but conveyed it indirectly through stories and parables. The Catechism in *Guiding Growth* functioned as a review source for the teacher’s use when summarizing catechism answers that the children

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<sup>128</sup> Msgr. George Johnson, *Guiding Growth in Christian Social Living: A Curriculum for the Elementary School*, vol. 1 Primary grades, (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1944), 150. For Christianizing arithmetic studies, the *Guiding Growth* teacher’s guidebook recommended teaching students “honesty in the use of money,” or to play counting games, such as “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven; All good children go to Heaven.” See page 145.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, v.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

should acquire through their progress in *Guiding Growth*. But students did not have to memorize doctrine.<sup>131</sup>

The *Faith and Freedom Readers* provided a narrative example of Christian social living. They followed the experiences of a Christian family, illustrating how its characters acted as devoted members of their Church and nurtured the Christian relationships that the course developed. By the actions of this fictitious Catholic family, the first and second grade readers imparted lessons of common courtesy, honesty, fair play, and selfless giving. They also depicted those members of society that were there to serve, such as teachers, priests, parents, and police officers. The older grades' readers contained lessons on toleration, and respect for all races, (though the illustrations in the readers were all of white people). The texts also included Bible stories, which aimed to familiarize children with the Bible and illustrate how Church tradition and heritage with applicability to modern lifestyles. *Guiding Growth* called this the "correlative method" which sought to lead children to God "by means of the association of the natural scene, which he sees and knows with the supernatural elements of religion."<sup>132</sup> This series served as a model for catechetical series in years to come.

*Guiding Growth* aimed to develop behavior that would nurture certain "fundamental understandings" that would lead to a positive attitude toward Christian conduct, and the personal choice of children to act "Christ-like." To accomplish this, there were basic messages and skills covered by the readers. The texts suggested that happiness resided in a healthy faith life, and strove to instill pride in faith, especially for

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>132</sup> Commission on American Citizenship, Box 4, Sister M. Thomas Aquinas and Katherine Kenelly, *Methods and Procedures for This is Our Land Fourth Reader*, (Washington D.C.: Gin and Company, 1944), p. 6, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington D.C.



the perseverance of the Church against hardship. It endeavored to convey an understanding of the application of faith to social problems, and inspire an appreciation for how the Catholic faith has endeavored to secure man's dignity and freedom. Lastly, it hoped to bring its students to love the Catholic Faith for its "Divine foundation" and "social gospel," and love and respect all people as children of God.<sup>133</sup> As conveyed by these principles, "The fundamental purpose of this series [was] the association of religious motivation with attitudes created by the teaching of social understandings."<sup>134</sup>

The program was complimented by a weekly newsletter for students called the *Catholic Messenger Series*. The *Little Catholic Messenger* was for primary and elementary grades, and for it the editorial staff of the Commission "prepared verses, stories, and very short feature articles which stressed the child's responsibilities towards his home, his playmates, and his neighborhood."<sup>135</sup> The *Junior Catholic Messenger*, prepared for intermediate grades, contained stories and passages that illustrated children's contribution to American history. The *Young Catholic Messenger*, for higher grades, used radio skits, plays, and stories to demonstrate how Catholics had contributed to the creation of American ideals. While this series was originally created in lieu of the program's upcoming textbook series (which was to be published later), its success led publishers to continue running the newsletters well into the 1960s.<sup>136</sup>

*Guiding Growth* differed from previous Catholic religious education programs because it stressed civic pride and participation rather than traditional doctrinal instruction. Its goal was to diffuse doctrine into democratic life, and tried to do so

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<sup>133</sup> Sr. Aquinas, *Methods and Procedures*, 4.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>135</sup> Commission on American Citizenship, p. 23, ACUA.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

through models of Christian living, rather than assume this to follow from understanding the Catechism. It also defended American Catholics from prejudices that challenged their loyalty to democratic principles that consider the Church to be operated hierarchically and authoritatively under a foreign leader, the Roman Pope. *Guiding Growth's* proclamation of Christian democracy demonstrated an American Catholic group that was trying to gain acceptance in a predominantly Protestant nation.

Aside from its instigation by the Pope, historians have lauded *Guiding Growth* for being uniquely American in its methods, stating that though its writers were familiar with the Munich-influenced writings of Gatterer, Fuerst, and Baierl, the program “gave no evidence of familiarity first hand with the men of the European catechetical renewal.”<sup>137</sup> In the following decades, *Guiding Growth* initiated a widespread effort toward diffusing Christian principles throughout children’s curriculum in the United States.<sup>138</sup> In light of its considerable influence, and domestic origin, the program served as an example of American initiative and ingenuity in the modern catechetical movement.

### **The MSHS and Sr. Rosalia Walsh Spearhead the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.**

Up until now, the textbook programs discussed have been for use in Catholic religious schools. But, catechetical programs in Catholic schools were not the only religious education programs benefiting from the American catechetical movement. In 1875, the Congregation of Propaganda instructed bishops in the United States to permit

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<sup>137</sup> Rev. Gerard S. Sloyan, “The Good News and the Catechetical Scene in the United States,” found in Josef A. Jungmann, *The Good News Yesterday and Today*, ed. Johannes Hofinger, (New York: W.H. Sadlier, Inc., 1962), 216.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

Catholic parents with sufficient reason to send their children to public school.<sup>139</sup> In 1905, the issue of catechizing such children came to play when Pope Pius's encyclical *Acerbo Nimis* reiterated the decrees of the Council of Trent emphasizing the duty of pastors to catechize all of their parishioners.<sup>140</sup> With growing numbers of Catholic students attending public institutions, the American Church needed to devise a new system of catechesis for non-Catholic school children.

In 1905, under the decree of the Holy Father, the American Church began to incorporate the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) into its parishes to meet the catechetical needs of public school children.<sup>141</sup> Those enrolled in CCD programs met at least once a week with their parish catechists in a classroom environment. In its first years, it was implemented sporadically on the parish level, mostly through Sunday school classes, and the program did not receive much focus until over two decades later. It was not until the 1930s that the American Catholic Church began investing greater time and thought to its neglected educational obligation toward its publicly schooled youth. CCD students met less frequently than Catholic school religion classes, and lacked the daily influence of the total Christian environment of parochial schools. It needed catechetical methods tailored to its unique demands in Catholic religious education. To accomplish this task the program turned to the aid of a familiar group to American's Catechetical

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<sup>139</sup> Spellacy, 17.

<sup>140</sup> Pope Pius X, *Acerbo Nimis*.

<sup>141</sup> In *Acerbo Nimis*, Pope Pius X stated "22. IV. In each and every parish the society known as the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine is to be canonically established. Through this Confraternity, the pastors, especially in places where there is a scarcity of priests, will have lay helpers in the teaching of the Catechism, who will take up the work of imparting knowledge both from a zeal for the glory of God and in order to gain the numerous Indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs."

heritage. Spearheading the CCD revival in the United States was the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart.

Since Mother Demetrius (formerly Sr. Demetrius until she took over as the Reverend Mother of the MSHH), the Mission Helper's had continued their educational legacy through the twentieth century. The goal of the early pioneers of its catechetical mission was to "bring the light of the Word of God to His little ones and to foster growth of this Word in their hearts by prayer and knowledge."<sup>142</sup> In their initial years, they concentrated on the catechesis of public school children, the infirm, and the deaf, and took mission trips to revitalize the Catholic faith in isolated towns whose Catholic inhabitants were not catechized and often did not have access to Catholic churches or the Sacraments. Through these excursions, by 1904, the Mission Helpers perceived a growing need for year-round religion classes for youth, staffed with efficiently trained catechists.<sup>143</sup> They opened new Mission centers where the need was greatest (both in the United States and Puerto Rico (1900)), but the catechetical void would not be sufficiently filled until the arrival of the CCD. While their dealing with the neglected members of society kept them out of the spotlight, in the following decades the MSHH, with the help of influential members and new publications, moved to the forefront of the CCD in the United States.

In 1918, the Mission Helpers gained their most charismatic and influential member since Mother Demetrius. Marie Rosalia Walsh, a young Catholic woman from Maryland, entered the services of the MSHH. In her years as a Mission Helper, she

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<sup>142</sup> AMHSH, Sr. Constance, "Historical Documentation of the Foundation, Spirit, Apostolate, and Growth of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart; Book Three," (1978), 275.

<sup>143</sup> AMHSH, Sr. Constance, "Historical Documentation of the Foundation, Spirit, Apostolate, and Growth of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart; Book Two," (1978), 184.

would represent the organization on a national scale and become one of the elite figures in American catechesis. Soon after her arrival, Mother Demetrius tasked Sr. Rosalia with writing a manual of the Mission Helper's catechetical method. Up until that point, the members of the organization had imparted their pedagogical methods by word of mouth, and Mother Demetrius wanted to unite their growing order through its common teaching philosophy. In 1924, Sr. Rosalia's "Method of Catechization" circulated throughout the MSHS as the first document to illustrate their catechetical method.<sup>144</sup> Over the next few decades, the Mission Helpers drew much of their organizational identity from their catechetical method.<sup>145</sup>

In the 1930s, with the American Church's growing effort toward catechizing non-Catholic school youth, the Mission Helpers sought to adapt their catechetical method to the needs of the CCD. In 1937, under the pseudonym "A teacher of those who teach religion," Sr. Rosalia and the MSHS released their instruction manual entitled, *Child Psychology and Religion*. It complimented the experiences of the organization from nearly fifty years of catechizing with the ideas of Gatterer and Krus's 1914 manual, an influential publication in the formation of the Mission Helper's method. Through the success of *Child Psychology and Religion*, and due to their experience in training lay catechists and catechizing public school children, they became officially affiliated with the CCD on May 24, 1942.<sup>146</sup>

*Child Psychology and Religion* was well regarded by the American Catechetical community, and sought to fix alleged deficiencies of the Munich Method. The MSHS criticized Munich for being overly focused on the catechist and not engaging enough

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<sup>144</sup> Spellacy, 102.

<sup>145</sup> This was Spellacy's main thesis for her doctoral dissertation.

<sup>146</sup> Spellacy, 114.

pupil participation.<sup>147</sup> The Mission Helpers tried to make students active participants in their religious education. Upon receiving Sr. Rosalia's manuscript, the Bruce Publishing Company commended the group as "pioneering in the field" and added that they were "well ahead of the procession."<sup>148</sup>

In the 1950s and early 1960s the Mission Helpers, through Sr. Rosalia, created new catechetical manuals for CCD instructors. These booklets gave general lesson outlines, but did not coordinate specifically with a textbook. The manuals commented on the typical psychological capacities of certain grade levels to help instructors tailor their courses to student needs. They specified the aim of the lesson, and described the Christian motivations they should inspire. The *Baltimore Catechism* remained the most widely used catechism in developing curriculum for CCD programs, and Sr. Rosalia's manuals coordinated with its questions and referenced where she'd drawn the material for the lesson.

The Mission Helpers' program still required students to memorize their Catechism. It coordinated primarily with the *Baltimore Catechism* series, though it suggested that any approved catechism could be used.<sup>149</sup> Younger students were not required to memorize anything. The First Grade course laid the general foundation by stressing God's love for children, the fundamental tenet upon which the rest of the course was built. The following year, when the curriculum began to call for memorization.

Eventually, the Mission Helpers saw a need for creating an interactive textbook, much like that of the *Course in Religion* series had developed. In 1956, they released their first CCD textbook, *Catholic Living Series*, with a second printing in 1964. The

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<sup>147</sup> Spellacy, 131.

<sup>148</sup> Spellacy, 77.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., iv.

Mission Helpers designed the program for both Catechists and parents to be used in both school and home environments, and claimed that their lessons were “the fruit of years of experience and testing on the part of the authors.”<sup>150</sup> They aimed to reveal the message of God’s love through history, divine revelation, and personal experience, commenting that Christ’s “eternal law of love is the antidote to modern secularism, pride, greed, and racism.”<sup>151</sup> They also described their intent to present the Catholic Faith through the “Christ-centered doctrinal perspective,” which like the *Course in Religion* endeavored to provide an overall Christocentric presentation of the Catholic Faith.<sup>152</sup> Through their series, the Mission Helpers hoped to show underlying themes of love throughout Catholic doctrine.

The intent of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart to provoke student activity was evident in the way that they arranged their textbooks. Rather than offering standard readers, Mission Helpers used graded workbooks for their students that contained activities meant to better instill the lesson. Another aim of the workbooks was to encourage family discussions and activities pertaining to the material and engage parents in the child’s religious education. The Mission Helpers viewed the role of the parents in religious education as being the most important, and by involving all family members in catechesis their program sought to restore a Christian presence in the home.

The student workbooks of the *Catholic Living Series* offered similar activities to the *Course in Religion* text, but differed in their content. Where the *Course in Religion*

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<sup>150</sup> Archives of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart (hereafter AMHSH) CA Box 10, *Religion Lessons for Catholic Living: Manual for Teachers and Parents, Grade 2*, (Baltimore: Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, 1962), 180. The AMHSH did not keep the original 1956 editions of *Catholic Living*, so the second edition will be used

<sup>151</sup> AMHSH, CA Box 10, *Religion Lessons Manual, Grade 1*, iii.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, iv.

had used its questions to test children in their knowledge and understanding of the doctrine, the *Catholic Living* textbook designed its activities to evaluate children in their capacity to apply the doctrine to everyday situations. For example, rather than quizzing on what the tenets of mortal sin were, the Mission Helpers' program might give an example of a person's sinful actions, and then call upon the student to decide its classification: venial or mortal. Doing this furthered the catechetical mission to apply the doctrine to everyday life. The Mission Helpers' workbook also included stories and explanations for reflection that illustrated the doctrinal content and aim of the lesson, which the *Course in Religion* did not.

The Mission Helpers cautioned that although the method of imparting catechesis should employ the child's use of his or her imagination, communicating an accurate explanation of church doctrine was paramount. This consideration illustrated their concern for preserving doctrinal integrity when imparting the lessons. For example, instruction about sin should avoid anything exaggerated or unfounded. Teachers should avoid anything that would incite fear in their children, which could potentially "engender dislike for religion."<sup>153</sup> Such use of fear was anachronistic in teaching religion, they contended. Instead the Mission Helpers promoted the theory that good conduct would be the result of children's understanding of God's love.

The Mission Helpers offered a similar presentation on the doctrine of hell to the *Course in Religion*. In Second Grade, children learned about the three Catholic options for life-everlasting: heaven, hell, and purgatory. In the activity book, children were instructed to draw lines between illustrations of heaven, purgatory, and hell with the three

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<sup>153</sup> Archives of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart (hereafter AMHSH) CA Box 10, *Religion Lessons for Catholic Living: Manual for Teachers and Parents, Grade 1*, Baltimore: Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, 1964, x.



choices (1) Mortal sin—no grace, (2) Sanctifying grace—no sin, (3) Sanctifying grace but with punishment due. Heaven was depicted as a cloud, purgatory as flames, and hell as slightly larger flames.<sup>154</sup> The Teacher’s Guide explained the lesson aim to show that God rewarded those who did His will and punished those who transgressed. This was meant to reveal the “all-just” character of God. Furthermore, it designed its presentation to impress that God’s revelation of the “horror of hell fire” was a “gift” to make people aware of the consequences of their actions.<sup>155</sup> In its depiction of eternal punishment, the Mission Helpers painted a picture of a just God whose often-frightening revelations of eternal damnation were given as a loving warning.

The *Catholic Living Series* presented yet another differing opinion of how to incorporate the Catechism into modern religious education. The MSHH published their own material, allowing their organization to preserve the integrity of their method and content and format their textbooks to their desire. Their textbooks’ end-pages of Catechism questions allowed for the Mission Helpers’ workbook to supplant the Catechism text completely without fully sacrificing its content. It also infused the Catechism into stories, similar to *Guiding Growth*. This dual-purpose use of the Catechism sought to meet the standards of modern pedagogy without entirely sacrificing the traditional content of catechesis. In this way, the MSHH met conservative and progressive catechesis at a middle ground that acknowledged the advances in pedagogy and the asset of the Catechism to Catholic religious education.

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<sup>154</sup> AMHSH CA Box 10, *Religion Lessons For Catholic Living: Activity Book: 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade*, (Baltimore: Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, 1961), lesson 20.

<sup>155</sup> Archives of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart (hereafter AMHSH) CA Box 10, *Religion Lessons for Catholic Living: Manual for Teachers and Parents, Grade 1*, Baltimore: Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, 1964, iii.

### **Sr. Maria de la Cruz and the *On Our Way Series***

In 1954, another progressive catechist reported to the United States from her order in Mexico to leave her footprint in the history of the modern catechetical movement in America. Sr. Maria de la Cruz, a member of the religious order of the Society of Helpers, arrived in San Francisco as supervisor of catechetics in the Archdiocesan Department of Education. Tasked with the evaluation of the quality of CCD courses in the archdioceses, she witnessed first-hand the dismal state of the program. Classes were overcrowded, attendance was inconsistent, catechists were ill prepared and failed to control class conduct, and no stimulating material was presented.<sup>156</sup> She responded with the creation of her own program, which soon grew so popular that the diocese requested she find a publisher. But before she could start, she received an abrupt review of her course from an outside observer, which simply commented, “So much work, so poorly done.”<sup>157</sup>

The seeming demise of her course was a blessing in disguise. Her blunt critic was Johannes Hofinger, one of the most esteemed catechetical theorists of the age hailing from the University of Notre Dame, and a firm advocate of Jungmann’s kerygmatic approach to catechesis. After de la Cruz’s request for help, he agreed to a joint project with her to develop a new program. Their collaboration, with the input of Jungmann himself, culminated in a six-year elementary school program for CCD students, entitled the *On Our Way Series: Based on the Kerygmatic Approach to Christian Doctrine*.

The *On Our Way Series* proclaimed itself as the first attempt in the United States to base a religious education course on the kerygmatic philosophy of teaching religion.

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<sup>156</sup> Francis J. Buckley, “Christian Educators: Maria de la Cruz,” [cited 26 October 2006] from the Talbot School of Theology website, found at [http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=maria\\_aymes](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=maria_aymes); INTERNET.

<sup>157</sup> As cited in Ibid.

Archbishop of San Francisco, John J. Mitty, praised the series for its ingenuity in incorporating the traditional content of catechesis, stating, “This approach, which has come to the fore in the past several decades, brings the child into a deeper, personal appreciation of Christ and His Mysteries through a *careful selection of material*.”<sup>158</sup> The Archbishop further praised the series for its careful adherence to child psychology, as well as the thematic organization of its lessons, rather than “giving the child incoherent fragments.”<sup>159</sup> The series may have been the first to follow the theories of Jungmann, but when juxtaposed with previous catechetical programs in America the contributions of *On Our Way* were not as pivotal as its proponents believed.

The *On Our Way Series* oriented its curriculum toward the kerygma through the organization of its textbooks, but its techniques were the same ones used in previous series that arranged their content to manifest the Christocentric aim of catechesis. The teacher’s manual had an introductory note and specified aim, which provided the attitude or reaction that the day’s doctrine was supposed to produce. Each lesson also had vocabulary terms that needed to be explained first in order for the student to comprehend the lesson. The manual also encouraged the use of pictures, props, and any other materials that would help illustrate the doctrine of the day, methods that had been used since Mother Demetrius in the 1890s. The design of its textbooks to reveal a new aspect of the students’ relationships with Christ each year also echoed the arrangement of the *Course in Religion*.

Sr. Marie de la Cruz offered nothing new in her textbooks that her predecessors had not included in their series. They had a graduated arrangement, which even

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<sup>158</sup> Sr. Maria de la Cruz, H.H.S. and Sr. Mary Richard, H.H.S., *On Our Way Series: With Christ to the Father, Teachers Guide*, (New York: W.H. Sadlier, 1958), 3. Italics added by author.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

MacEachen had developed, and the series sought to meet the growing capacities of its students by providing more in-depth text explanations of the material and maturing the appearance of textbooks in each successive year of the series.<sup>160</sup> The student text served as dual-purpose interactive text/workbooks as did the *Course in Religion* and *Catholic Living Series*. *On Our Way* incorporated the Catechism into its textbooks almost identically to the Mission Helpers' format. Both diffused the doctrine throughout stories and explanations and offered direct references from the Catechism as well.

The way that de la Cruz and Hofinger arranged the content of *On Our Way* was what distinguished the series from its predecessors. Though earlier programs had aimed at a Christocentric catechesis by the orientation of their content, the kerygmatic approach focused its catechesis on Christ and Salvation by selection of content and emphasizing the doctrine that best revealed the intended Christocentric message. For example, in the second grade teacher's manual, the lesson on sin and the fall of man made only a brief mention of hell. The only mention of hell was in the discussion of fallen angels. Even then it was not given its typical description, but only discussed as a dwelling place of the "bad angels."<sup>161</sup> In the discussion of actual sin there was no delineation between mortal and venial sin.<sup>162</sup> In the sixth grade, in the lesson covering the "consequences of sin," the program used the stories of God's curse on Cain for murdering Abel and the tale of the Great Flood as examples of how God punishes humanity for sins. It described the result of death in mortal sin as the death of the life of grace in the soul, and eternal separation

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<sup>160</sup> Maturing the appearance of the textbook entailed, most notably, increasing the amount of reading per page, decreasing the font size of the text, using less pictures, and incorporating activities that were more engaging for older children, such as reading Scripture rather than coloring.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>162</sup> Sr. Maria de la Cruz, H.H.S. and Sr. Mary Richard, H.H.S., *On Our Way Series: Christ's Life in Us, Teacher's Guide and Key*, (New York: W.H. Sadlier, 1958), 47.

from God.<sup>163</sup> Yet, even here, where a fiery description of the pains of eternal damnation would have traditionally seemed appropriate, *On Our Way* did not impart the classical depiction of hell. This was what Archbishop Mitty was describing when he remarked about the “careful selection of material.” By eliminating subjects, such as the pains of hell, which detracted from the focus on salvation, *On Our Way* kept its content focused on the elements of the kerygma. It avoided the chance of inciting a psychologically unhealthy fear of damnation by simply not including it in the description of sin.

The *On Our Way Series* was the first program specifically to implement the kerygmatic approach to catechesis in the United States. Its Christocentric focus, however, was not a new development in American religious education. The *Course in Religion*, the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart and even Thomas Shields, with his illustrative use of color photos to emphasize the pictures involving Christ, had already addressed this element of Jungmann’s kerygmatic design. Its progressive contribution, therefore, was its careful control of content, seen, for example, in forgoing of the traditional discussion about the pains of hell. Shields and *Guiding Growth* had also not commented on eternal punishment, but that was because their programs diffused the Catechism into their material and functioned as guides to Christian living, rather than lessons in doctrinal instruction. In the case of *On Our Way*, omitting the pains of hell was a much more deliberate act. The *On Our Way* series received high acclaim. With the endorsement of Hofinger and Jungmann, the program eventually reached an international audience, and received greater press than previous series.

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<sup>163</sup> Sr. Maria de la Cruz, H.H.S. and Sr. Mary Richard, H.H.S., *On Our Way Series: Fulfillment in Christ, Teacher’s Guide and Key*, (New York: W.H. Sadlier, 1962), 38.

## Summary

The first six decades of the modern catechetical movement in the United States showed different degrees of pedagogical development. Catechists disagreed on the extent of the actual Catechism's place in modern religious education programs. As reformist religious education instructors developed American catechesis, however, the catechetical community grew more receptive to modern approaches to religious education. These new approaches included questions of both method and content throughout the movement. Since new methods conflicted with traditional content, progressive catechesis determined that a level of diffusion of the dry doctrine of the Catechism was necessary in order to harmonize method and content toward a common message. In the 1930s, American catechists nurtured this aspiration by developing the thematic organization of catechetical programs toward a Christocentric aim. Much of these developments in American catechesis echoed the early program of Thomas Shields, the first American catechist to apply modern pedagogical methods to catechesis.

The actual practice of the catechetical movement in America, as seen through textbooks and religious education programs, demonstrated domestic initiative in the development of modern methods and content in American catechesis. Catechetical modernization in the United States was not solely in response to European influences. American pioneers in contemporary catechesis, such as Thomas Shields and the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, have been overshadowed by later catechists, such as Jungmann, Hofinger, and Marie de la Cruz, who earned esteem for their ideas by presenting similar theories to a more receptive generation of catechists. The existence of progressive catechetical pedagogy in the United States before the arrival of theories from

alleged European catalysts, though ahead of the times and not widely received by peers, illustrated that America's progress in the modern catechetical movement was largely a product of domestic initiative.

### Chapter 3

#### **Affirmations From Above: Setting the Modern Catechetical Standard**

Until the late 1950s, ground level catechists had performed much of the catechetical movement's progressive work in America through modern Catholic religious education textbooks and programs. During the 1930s and 1940s, the number of modern catechetical programs entering American religious education increased. There were, however, still a large number of catechists who were reluctant to dislodge the Catechism from its central place in traditional catechesis. The *Baltimore Catechism* remained the *de facto* publication for Catholic religious education programs in the United States through the 1960s, and modern programs still did not constitute the norm.

In the 1960s and early seventies, modern American religious education programs, with the support of Vatican II, received the authoritative endorsements that helped propel them to the forefront of catechesis in the United States. The documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education), were helpful in pushing the Catholic world to modern educational standards. Their pronouncements on religious education, however, were nothing new to progressive American catechists, who had already been implementing much of the Council's suggestions in their earlier religious education programs.

Following the Council, the American bishops of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), the organization of the American Catholic hierarchy, took similar steps as Vatican II to help modern catechetical programs. In 1969, it founded the



Catholic Education Department, which developed a report in the following year entitled, *Evaluative Review of Religious Textbooks*. The findings of the yearlong study demonstrated a growing acceptance for modern religious education programs, paralleled by an increasing disdain for old-world methods and content.

In 1971, the issuance of the General Catechetical Directory by Pope Paul VI provided a universal guide to modern catechetical standards. This document was the first universal catechetical publication since the Roman Catechism in 1569, and considered the various implications of presenting Catholic teaching to a culturally and socially pluralistic world. The following chapter will illustrate how the Second Vatican Council, the *Evaluative Reviews of Religious Textbooks*, and the *General Catechetical Directory* helped fortify the advancements of progressive catechists in the United States.

### **Echoes in Vatican II**

The Second Vatican Council was a milestone in modern Catholic history. Initiated by Pope John XXIII on October 11, 1962, the Council spoke on the state of universal catechesis among many other topics of concern. Of the sixteen documents of Vatican II, many touched on the subject of education. Its discussions on catechesis culminated on October 28, 1965 with *Gravissimum Educationis*, the “Declaration on Christian Education.” The primary theme of this document was the Church’s support of education as a freedom reserved for all humanity by right of people’s dignity as human beings. It also made remarks specific to religious education, particularly pertaining to the involvement of parents in children’s catechesis, the incorporation of modern pedagogy into religious education, the proper training of catechists, and the need to nurture a

Christian milieu conducive to imparting the Catholic faith. *Gravissimum Educationis* and the documents of the Second Vatican Council were important for universalizing the call for modern catechesis, but they did not initiate it. In America, progressive catechists had already developed and implemented the recommendations reiterated by the Council.

One of the main prescriptions of Vatican II on religious education was that the primary responsibility of catechizing children rested with the parents. *Guadium et Spes*, “The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” commented that mothers and fathers must “eagerly carry out their duties of education, especially religious education.”<sup>164</sup> This fundamentally meant that parents were given the task of creating a “prayerful” atmosphere and a home that fostered Christian values. *Gravissimum Educationis* reiterated this direction, stating that parents must create a nurturing family environment “which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children.”<sup>165</sup> On a much smaller scale, the family, the Council instructed, was the child’s first impression of a well-balanced human society and the Church.<sup>166</sup> The Declaration also urged school programs to work in close cooperation with parents.<sup>167</sup> The Council hoped to renew the role of parents in catechesis.

Modern American religious education programs sought a similar objective. The Catholic Church’s emphasis on the role of parents in the catechesis of their children was not a new revelation. In 1930, Pius XII’s encyclical *De Scholis Catholicis* had discussed

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<sup>164</sup> *Guadium et Spes*, in *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents; Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 220.

<sup>165</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis*, in *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents; Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 578.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 579.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 584.

the rights and duties of parents toward the education of their children. Given parents declining participation as catechizers in their own homes since the late nineteenth century, modern American catechists tried to revitalize parental involvement in their children's religious education. The Mission Helper's designed their program for the use of parents as well as classroom catechists.<sup>168</sup> Their *Catholic Living* program, as well as the *On Our Way Series* included family activities in their workbooks. The exercises primarily sought to develop a dialogue between parents and children on elements of the Catholic Faith. Progressive American catechists had perceived a lack in parental involvement, and reacted on their own initiative to rectify this deficiency. This was not the only American catechetical headway that was echoed by Vatican II.

American catechists also anticipated the Council's call to bring catechesis in line with modern pedagogical standards. The teaching of Christian doctrine, *Gravissimum Educationis* directed, needed to be adapted to the nature of the student and revealed in "a manner suited to their [children's] age and background" through "activities adapted to the requirements of time and circumstance."<sup>169</sup> Starting with Peter Yorke and Thomas Shields, modern American catechists had tailored catechetical programs to the capacities of their students by grading their textbook programs to the age and sophistication of students. Shields' understanding of psychology and his application of new pedagogical methods of teaching to religious education helped him develop a model for modern catechesis in line with his knowledge of the psychology of education. Though his ideas were ahead of official Church policy, later American catechists replicated similar programs based on a psychological approach to education in the late 1920s.

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<sup>168</sup> Given the title of the series' catechist manual, *Religion Lessons for Catholic Living: Manual for Teachers and Parents*.

<sup>169</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis*, Flannery, 582.

The Council also recommended that catechetical methods be continually adapted to meet the changing needs of students in an evolving sociocultural milieu, another area already explored by modern American catechists. *Guadium et Spes* urged catechists and theologians to incorporate psychological and sociological principles into the presentation of doctrine.<sup>170</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis* insisted that the vocation of catechists required “special qualities of mind and heart, most careful preparation, and constant readiness to accept new ideas and adapt old.”<sup>171</sup> This characterization defined most modern catechists in the United States in the twentieth century, who were progressive by the nature of their willingness to challenge the traditional methods and content of catechesis. They however, were not the status quo, and the Council urged conservative catechists to adopt modern pedagogical standards, saying that religious educators needed to be “skilled in the art of education in accordance with the discoveries of modern times.”<sup>172</sup> In this way, Vatican II validated the efforts of modern catechists that their conservative counterparts often viewed with apprehension.

Another directive of Vatican II was for the proper training of catechists. Religious educators, the Council stated, needed to be acquainted with modern pedagogy and adequately trained to fully carry out the demands of their vocation. The Council’s “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity,” *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, recognized the inadequacy of old catechists ingrained in anachronistic methods, and ordered that the education of catechists be raised to meet the demands of modern circumstances.<sup>173</sup> Old-

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<sup>170</sup> *Guadium et Spes*, Flannery, 239.

<sup>171</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis*, Flannery, 581.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 583.

<sup>173</sup> Suso Brechter, “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 4 ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), 138.

world catechesis was no longer conducive to the increasing secular social environment, and conservative catechists, the Council directed, needed to adjust. *Gravissimum Educationis* urged the faithful “to cooperate readily in the development of suitable methods of education and systems of study and in the training of teachers competent to give a good education to their pupils.”<sup>174</sup> Catechists, furthermore, like parents, were to be examples of Christian lifestyles, and needed to have “both a practical and theoretical knowledge of laws of psychology and of educational method.”<sup>175</sup> This push for professionalizing catechesis signified the Church’s recognition of the gravity of the catechist vocation, and sought to instill the solemnity of catechesis in the hearts of religious instructors, both lay and religious.

The Church in Vatican II was trying to do what progressive American catechists had been promoting throughout the twentieth century: incorporate modern pedagogical standards into Catholic religious education. As teachers of secular subjects needed professional training, so did religious educators. At the turn of the twentieth century, the MSHS were some of America’s most adamant supporters of catechist training. A large part of their catechetical mission was the preparation of catechists, both within and outside of their organization.<sup>176</sup> Through their training of catechists and the development of standards through their own catechetical method (first circulated throughout the order in 1924 with “Method of Catechization” and later publicly released in 1937 in *Child Psychology and Religion*), the MSHS were pioneers in providing skilled training to religious educators in the United States. While the push for higher education of

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 581-582.

<sup>175</sup> *Christus Dominus*, in *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents; Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 291.

<sup>176</sup> AMSHS, Sr. Constance, Book three, (1978), 276-277.

catechists occurred following Vatican II, the Mission Helpers were some of the first in America to treat the catechist vocation as a skilled position.

The Second Vatican Council also proclaimed that catechesis was not something that could be restricted to the classroom and a single course in children's curriculum. In the case of Catholic schools, *Gravissimum Educationis* instructed Catholic institutions to "develop in the school community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel."<sup>177</sup> It recognized the growing participation of children in activities outside of the home, and urged that the Christian milieu of the school building needed to be extended into extracurricular programs.<sup>178</sup> These proclamations mirrored many American catechists' concerns over the rise of secularism in society and the increasing perception of religion as an isolated subject without relevance beyond the classroom and church.

Progressive American catechists worried about the rise of secular society early in the twentieth century, and sought to counter its effects on catechesis by building a Christian milieu in Catholic schools. One of their strategies in accomplishing this was developing curricula infused with Catholic doctrinal principles. The purpose was to extend the relevance of the Catholic Faith beyond the religion class. In 1907, Shields' textbook series was the first in America to infuse secular subjects, such as spelling and literature, with Christian principles.<sup>179</sup> In 1944, the *Guiding Growth* program developed by the Commission on American Citizenship further synthesized catechesis with traditionally secular subjects, such as math, science, and physical education to nurture an atmosphere conducive to understanding Catholic teaching. It also sought to create "good

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<sup>177</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis*, Flannery, 528.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 584.

<sup>179</sup> See Chapter 2, page

citizens” who understood their contribution as Catholics in democratic society, saying, “Christian charity, the love of neighbor extended to our countrymen, is the basis for true patriotism.”<sup>180</sup> The increased catechetical focus on understanding and *application* of Church doctrine, a theme that ran throughout modern American catechesis since Mother Demetrius in the late nineteenth century, was also oriented to the goal of reestablishing a Christian presence in society by encouraging the exercise of Catholic principles in everyday life.

Although the Second Vatican Council’s statements on catechesis echoed much of what was already going on in the modern catechetical movement, this is not to say that Vatican II gave nothing to modern catechesis. It did sanction the progressive elements of the modern catechetical movement, which contributed to the bounty of textbook programs that circulated in the United States following the Council.<sup>181</sup> It pointed to certain areas of life that needed particular care in catechesis, such as familial and social justice issues,<sup>182</sup> and later evaluations of local programs graded catechetical textbooks by their treatment of such subjects.<sup>183</sup> For this reason, the *On Our Way Series* and *Catholic Living* textbooks issued “post Vatican II” revised editions that included the suggested content of the Council. But, given their already progressive nature they did not have to

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<sup>180</sup> Msgr. George Johnson, *Guiding Growth*, 6.

<sup>181</sup> See the titles listed in The United States Catholic Conference, *Evaluative Reviews of Religion Textbooks*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference Division of Research and Development in Religious Education, 1971).

<sup>182</sup> Let them [bishops (this would also apply to all catechists)] explain also how high a value, according to the Church’s teaching, should be placed on the human person, on personal liberty and bodily life itself; how highly we should value the family, its unity and stability, the procreation and education of children; human society with its laws and professions, its labor and leisure, its arts and technology, its poverty and affluence. They should also explain how to set about solving the very serious problems concerning the ownership, increase and just distribution of material goods, concerning peace and war, and the sisterly and brotherly coexistence of its peoples. See *Christus Dominus*, Flannery, 230.

<sup>183</sup> See *Evaluative Reviews of Religion Textbooks*, 135-138.

alter their programs too significantly. Education, the Council proclaimed, was important to the dignity of humanity, but catechesis had supernatural significance, the Catholic Church taught, that guided people in earthly life to have eternal fulfillment in the next.

### ***The Evaluative Reviews of Religion Textbooks and National Acceptance of the Modern Catechetical Method***

Following the Second Vatican Council, the American hierarchy sought to develop standards of excellence for its catechetical textbooks. In the wake of the Council, an unprecedented number of religious education texts for both Catholic schools and CCD programs flooded the American market. At this point in time, there was no standard on which to base the quality of the new textbook series, and by 1969, the American bishops had received widespread complaints from both parents and catechists pertaining to the discord in quality of religious education textbooks.<sup>184</sup> Through the USCC Department of Education, and its newly established Division of Research and Development in Religious Education (DRDRE), the American bishops arranged for the development of a national guide for choosing textbooks.

In September of 1969, Fr. Thomas C. Donlan, O.P. became the first director of the DRDRE, and began organizing an evaluation of the nation's current religious education textbooks, the division's first project. After, requesting publishers to send copies of their catechetical textbooks, formulating a project outline and conferring with members of the Department of Education over the agenda of the report, he submitted his plan of action to Bishop William McManus of Chicago, the newly elected Chairman of the Committee on Education, USCC. The Committee determined that the criteria for Fr. Donlan's

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<sup>184</sup> *Evaluative Reviews*, i.



evaluation should be framed by a team of five theologians. It also resolved that the ensuing report was to be an evaluation of quality, and “not a re-imposition of ecclesiastical censorship.”<sup>185</sup>

The fundamental purpose of the evaluation was to determine whether the texts offered an “effective, clear and adequate presentation of the Faith.”<sup>186</sup> To accomplish this, Father Donlan appointed a committee of four religious educators to join his team of theologians to develop criteria for assessing the forty-eight textbooks under evaluation in the division’s report. They released the protocol for this project in the *Instrument for the Evaluation of Religion Textbooks*, which, after multiple trials and revisions became the official guideline of the evaluation.<sup>187</sup>

The next step was to assemble teams across the country to implement the critiques. Fr. Donlan appointed fifty-four representatives on the diocesan level from different areas throughout the country, who then nominated twelve representatives from their diocese to serve on their local evaluation team. Donlan proceeded to invite eight of the nominees to be team members. Teams included people with theological, religious education and scriptural backgrounds, as well as pastors, teachers, parents, religious and laymen.<sup>188</sup> Each team’s makeup was to be a balanced representation of expertise and “persons of interest.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid, i. All of the textbooks evaluated in the DRDRE’s report had received a *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur*, which signified they had already past an ecclesiastical censorship by a bishop.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., i.

<sup>187</sup> The *Instrument for the Evaluation of Religion Textbooks* was included in the appendix of *The Evaluative Reviews of Religion Textbooks*.

<sup>188</sup> *Evaluative Reviews*, ii.

<sup>189</sup> “Persons of interest” refers to participants, such as parents and volunteer catechists, who had a stake in catechesis, but were not professionally involved with religious education like theologians, clergy, and professional catechists were.

In the summer of 1970, Fr. Donlan and his fifty-four diocesan teams commenced their evaluation. The format of the report was a series of detailed book reviews that followed the criteria specified in the *Instrument* (see Appendix B). The diversity of the teams contributed to the variety of perceptions represented in the reviews. The report sought to provide constructive criticism, rather than blanket condemnation of textbooks, and provided both positive and negative commentary for each of the texts according to how they measured against the *Instrument's* various criteria. The primary function of the report was to serve as a guide for diocesan catechists who were selecting textbooks for their class, much like Walter Athearn's 1924 publication, *Measurements and Standards in Religious Education*. It was also a response to the appeals of concerned parents and catechists for improvements in the standards of catechetical texts.

The comments of evaluators demonstrated their expectations for religious education textbooks in 1970. The section "What Catechetical Reasons Specially Commend the Text," focused on the positive contributions of specific textbook series.<sup>190</sup> Comments varied. Evaluators affirmed textbooks that incorporated the directives of Vatican II, specifically those that promoted parental involvement through family-oriented activities. They favored series that were "life experience oriented" and encouraged students to become part of the Catholic apostolate through participation in devotional practices, such as attending Mass, using the sacraments, and involvement in their parish community.<sup>191</sup> They commended texts for illustrating the Catholic Faith as an organic relationship with Christ and imparting a Christian message that was "hope-filled."<sup>192</sup> The

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<sup>190</sup> See *Evaluative Reviews*, 110-114.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

report demonstrated that religious education needed to focus more intently on promoting Christian lifestyles and encouraging active participation of the laity in the Church.

The negative critiques provided added insight to evaluators' expectations for catechetical texts. The report's section, "What Catechetical Reasons Advise Against the Use of the Text," offered negative appraisals of the study's textbooks.<sup>193</sup> Aside from reproving texts that were not "hope-filled," life-experience oriented or encouraging of family activity, the report blasted textbooks whose methodology was not in line with modern pedagogical standards. Texts receiving this criticism often acquired the additional labels, "old-fashioned" or "outdated." Evaluators were especially meticulous regarding textbooks and their approach to their intended audience. They often reported that material was overly intellectual too soon, or under-sophisticated for older students. The report also denounced texts that did not properly tie Christian behavior to the Gospel, or presented content that was not "specifically Catholic or Christian."<sup>194</sup> The texts, furthermore, needed to be child-focused, and not over-rely on the catechist for their understanding. These comments illustrated the catechetical need to be student-focused, Christocentrically themed, and in line with progressive education.

The report further expressed the catechetical community's diminishing regard for the Catechism as a primary text for children in Catholic religious education. The *New St. Joseph Baltimore Catechism*, the final revision of the *Baltimore Catechism* published in 1969, received highly negative reviews in the report, which illustrated the text's declining favor in American religious education at the end of the 1960s. Under favorable reviews, the study reported, "None." Its pedagogical approach was "old-fashioned," and

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<sup>193</sup> See *Ibid.*, 114-119.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

evaluators criticized the publication for being “out of date” and out of step with the current generation of catechesis.<sup>195</sup> They slammed the text for its legalistic<sup>196</sup> presentation of doctrine and passive approach to learning, stating that it “psychologically [left] much to be desired.”<sup>197</sup> The comment, “It overemphasizes information and underemphasizes formation,” summed up the report’s general complaints about the text, such that it provided knowledge, but offered no application of the material to everyday life. At best, evaluator’s recommended it be used “as a reference tool for a very experienced professional teacher.”<sup>198</sup> For all intensive purposes, the *Baltimore Catechism* had reached the end of its reign in American catechesis.

The report also specifically commented on the way some of the series presented sin and punishment. Evaluators criticized texts that conveyed an “over-emphasis on fear and damnation.” The *Way, Truth, and Life Series* for grades one through eight, specifically, received an intense reprimand for its depiction of sin and punishment. While the series, evaluators commented, provided a skewed definition of sin, “even worse was the tendency, especially in the primary grades, to employ frightening and guilt inducing techniques with young children.”<sup>199</sup> The report further denounced the series for suggesting children were capable of committing mortal sin. Evaluators’ final remark on the *Way, Truth, and Life* texts stated, “It is unfortunate in the extreme that such scare techniques should continue to be used in a series that claims to be up to date.”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>196</sup> “Legalism” is the doctrine that salvation can be obtained through good works and adherence to Church rules.

<sup>197</sup> *Evaluative Reviews*, 114.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 119.

The fearsome presentation of eternal punishment was anachronistic and characteristic of the old-world method of catechesis. It was, apparently, equally wrong to leave out any discussion of it. Evaluators criticized texts that did not include a discussion on eternal punishment where it was due, specifically the *On Our Way Series* which made no mention of hell. These comments, nevertheless, were much less intense critiques. Overall, series that included a frightening presentation of hell received mostly negative comments, while those criticized for lacking a discussion of hell were given generally favorable appraisals by the report. In 1970, contemporary catechetical standards demanded a careful presentation of hell, and modern textbooks would need to tread lightly on the subject.

The *Evaluative Reviews of Religious Textbooks* illustrated modern expectations for Catholic religious education programs that were in line with the efforts of progressive American catechists of the twentieth century. It promoted the application of progressive pedagogy, and sought to remove rote-memorization and the Catechism from the forefront of catechesis. Catholic religious education, the report commented, was incomplete if it did not assimilate knowledge to common practice. Catechetical texts, therefore, needed to be oriented toward the application of the Gospel to everyday life and offer examples of Christian behavior. In regard to negative subjects, such as sin and punishment, the report conveyed that these were sensitive Catholic teachings that needed to be addressed with the utmost care. The unstated message was that if textbooks could not present hell in such a way that it did not incite fear, it was better to exclude it altogether. “The issue of quality and orthodoxy of religion textbooks are hotly debated today,” the report announced. “The rancor and intemperance that marks some of this controversy must

dishearten and discourage any who struggle in the difficult area of religious education.” In 1970, catechesis was entering a new stage of development where the status quo was shifting to meet a fresh modern standard. The Catholic Church, however, would not leave its catechists alone in the transition without a guide, and through a new universal publication it would, like Vatican II, promote modern catechetical standards previously endorsed by progressive American catechists.

### **The New Universal Standard of the *General Catechetical Directory***

In 1971, the Roman hierarchy released its new rubric for modern catechesis: the *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD). Its creation carried out the prescription of *Christus Dominus* from Vatican II, which had recommended the formation of a “special directory concerning the care of special groups of the faithful according to the various circumstances of different countries or regions.”<sup>201</sup> It provided “the basic principles of pastoral theology,” building mainly from the Magisterium of the Church and from the Second Vatican Council.<sup>202</sup> With the decline of the Catechism from catechesis, the GCD sought to quell confusion over catechetical content by providing catechists with a list of criteria of the Christian message that were to be “held by all.” It also directed religious education instructors to adopt modern pedagogical methods. The purpose of the GCD, specifically, was to aid in the development of regional directories, catechisms and

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<sup>201</sup> *Christus Dominus*, Flannery, 316.

<sup>202</sup> *General Catechetical Directory*, [cited 26 November 2006] found at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/gencatid.htm>; INTERNET, see forward. The “Magisterium” referred to the infallible teaching ability of the Catholic Faith claimed by the Roman hierarchy. “The Roman Pontiff and the bishops are ‘authentic teachers, that is, teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach the faith to the people entrusted to them, the faith to be believed and put into practice.’ The *ordinary* and universal *Magisterium* of the Pope and the bishops in communion with him teach the faithful the truth to believe, the charity to practice, the beatitude to hope for.” See Article 2034 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

textbooks.<sup>203</sup> While it prescribed mandatory items for national directories to include, it repeatedly called for local bishops and catechists to tailor programs to regional circumstances. The GCD, overall, served as the official guide for the development of modern catechetical programs.

The mandatory aspects of the GCD dealt predominantly with content. Part three of the directory, entitled, “The Christian Message,” outlined “the norms or criteria which catechesis must observe in the discovery and exposition of its content.”<sup>204</sup> While it did not note every doctrinal precept to be covered in religious education, it reiterated those teachings of the Magisterium that needed essential focus. The Catholic depiction of salvation, the GCD instructed, needed to be imparted through the Christocentric focus of catechesis.<sup>205</sup> This required the proclamation of the three elements of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and an instruction on how each of the three divine persons operated in the economy of salvation. This, the GCD stated, was essential to humanity’s understanding of God’s plan of love. To accomplish this, the GCD advised that catechesis “must take care to show that the supreme meaning of human life is this: to acknowledge God and to glorify him by doing his will, as Christ taught us by his words and the example of his life, and thus to come to eternal life.”<sup>206</sup>

Catechesis, the GCD further advised, needed to be grounded in history. The Catholic Church had formulated its doctrine and traditions over the course of two millennia. The GCD sought to validate the legitimacy of the Roman Catholic Church and its proclamations through its historical foundations, and ordered regional catechesis to

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., see forward.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., Art. 36.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., Art. 40.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., Art. 41.

provide similar expositions. The sources of catechetical content, therefore, were historical, such as the teachings of the Magisterium, the liturgy (Bible), tradition, saints' lives, and "genuine moral values...found in human society."<sup>207</sup> Despite the antiquity of Catholic teachings, the directory stated that doctrine needed to transcend the past into an "awareness of the present, and hope of the future life" in order to have relevant application in modern life.<sup>208</sup>

The GCD also provided general advice on methodology. Part four, entitled, "Elements of Methodology," urged catechists to incorporate advances introduced by psychological, educational, and pedagogical sciences. First, it established that the catechist was responsible for "creating suitable conditions" and employing creative methods for imparting the Christian message.<sup>209</sup> Next, it condoned the use of doctrinal formulas, such as the "Creed," the "Our Father," and other professions of the faith, but insisted that they be understood before memorization. But, this was not a request for renewed memorization of the Catechism. Formulas provided, instead, for "a uniform way of speaking to be used among the faithful."<sup>210</sup> Third, catechesis was not complete until it assimilated Christian knowledge to common practice. Religious education instructors, the directory stated, needed to apply Church teaching to sociocultural circumstances, so as to "make men respond in an active way," to the catechetical lesson.<sup>211</sup> Lastly, catechists reserved the responsibility of tailoring religious education to the intellectual capacities of their students. This typically entailed selecting an appropriate text and choosing the method most suitable for the students.

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., Art. 45.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., Art. 44.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., Art. 71.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., Art. 73.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., Art. 74.



The *General Catechetical Directory* provided a universal outline for Catholic catechetical programs. It left room for local catechists to adapt religious education to student capacities and regional circumstances, but sought to preserve the essential elements of the Catholic Faith through mandated content. This filled a void in American catechesis during a time when programs no longer leaned on the Catechism as their source of content. The GCD was not specific to the American religious education. In 1977, however, the USCC published *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States*, which proved to be an amalgam of official doctrine and American practice. This source followed the instruction of the GCD and adapted the content of the universal Roman guide to the sociocultural circumstances of American Catholics. It was a milestone publication that, like Vatican II, the GCD, and the *Evaluative Reviews of Religious Textbooks*, confirmed progressive American catechetical efforts of the twentieth century. Nearly ninety years after Mother Demetrius had first broken away from the status quo of Catechism-centered catechesis, Americans, finally, had a new catechetical standard.

### **Summary**

In the 1960s and early 1970s, beginning with Vatican II, the Church validated the advances of progressive American catechists on universal and national levels. The documents of the Second Vatican Council reiterated the innovative advances of modern catechists, and the *Evaluative Review of Religious Textbooks* in 1970 demonstrated national acceptance of modern pedagogy in catechesis. Modern catechetical expectations also demanded different treatment of certain subjects, such as eternal punishment, and

textbooks that imparted the traditional fearful rendition of hell were condemned as “old-fashioned.” With the dismissal of the Catechism from the forefront of American catechesis, religious education had lost its standard of catechetical content. The *General Catechetical Directory* clarified the questions of catechetical substance with mandated content, and universalized the call for modern standards of religious education. In 1977, the ensuing publication of *Sharing the Light of Faith* was the fruit of nearly a century of progressive efforts in religious education, and instituted the new paradigm of progressive education in American catechesis. With the affirmations of advances of modern catechists from the higher counsels of the Catholic Church and the newly widespread support of the general catechetical community for modern educational standards, formerly “innovative” catechists found their progressive efforts not so broad-minded relative to the new norm of American catechesis.

## **Conclusion**

At the end of the nineteenth century, two things were evident in American catechesis. First, Catechism-centered catechesis and rote-memorization were growing increasingly ineffective in imparting the Christian message. Second, flaws in Catholic religious education in the United States were problems for individual catechists to correct. While the Roman and American Catholic hierarchies over the following decades would continue to nurture catechetical renewal, the real advances in religious education occurred at the classroom level with individual catechists.

At the turn of the twentieth century, there were no standards for modern religious education. Progressive catechists, on their own initiative, developed a new religious educational paradigm that drew from fresh pedagogical approaches from secular counterparts to improve their full imparting of the Christian message. In doing so, progressive catechists introduced new questions pertaining to method and content in Catholic religious education, particularly the involvement of the Catechism in modern catechetical programs. As catechesis developed more modern standards, the Catechism began to decline as the primary text in religious education into the role of a doctrinal reference.

Though traditional depictions of the modern catechetical movement in America attribute much of the initiative to European theories, Americans were not just passive recipients of new catechetical philosophies. While European catechists were making similar advances in their programs in the twentieth century, American religious education programs demonstrated that a parallel movement for catechetical improvement was

ongoing in the United States. European born ideas, such as the Munich Method and the kerygmatic approach, had their American counterparts with Shields' and the Mission Helper's pedagogical modes and the Christocentric organization of catechesis.

Up until the Second Vatican Council, progressive catechesis in the twentieth century was still a rare phenomenon in American religious education. Conservative educators continued to cling to the Catechism and its four-century-old tradition in the Church. Vatican II, however, universalized the directive to bring catechesis in line with modern pedagogical advances, and validated the headway of progressive American catechists. The national catechetical sphere acknowledged the need for modernization in catechesis, and denounced textbooks that failed to make the jump into the new age of modern religious education. In particular, the way textbooks treated the subject of sin and punishment reflected their adoption of modern methods and content. Progressive catechesis achieved its most significant accomplishment with the release of the *General Catechetical Directory*. This publication universalized the new paradigm of modern catechetical pedagogy.

The modern catechetical movement is still ongoing. The dynamics of the sociocultural milieu demand that the doctrine of the Catholic Church be presented in new and creative ways. Science's increasing understanding of the human learning process never ceases to challenge catechists in refining their pedagogy. The national catechetical directory of the United States continues to publish revised editions in response to new circumstances. In 1992, furthermore, the Church submitted a modern universal catechism, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This sourcebook, however, was not a question and answer manual, and kept with its modern identity as a reference for Catholic

doctrine. Progressive catechesis is a combination of innovative and conservative forces that endeavor to infuse the very essence of the human spirit with the Catholic presentation of Christ's original Gospel message. The desire for perpetual improvement reflects a catechetical community that is increasingly self-aware and understanding of the importance of its task in the future of the Catholic Church.

Appendix A: The Question and Answers of the Baltimore Catechism pertaining to Mortal Sin and Punishment. See *Baltimore Catechism No. 2*, found at <http://www.catholicinformationcenteroninternet.org/Catechism/index.html>.

54. Q. What is mortal sin?

A. Mortal sin is a grievous offense against the law of God.

55. Q. Why is this sin called mortal?

A. This sin is called mortal because it deprives us of spiritual life, which is sanctifying grace, and brings everlasting death and damnation on the soul.

56. Q. How many things are necessary to make a sin mortal?

A. To make a sin mortal three things are necessary: a grievous matter, sufficient reflection, and full consent of the will.

201. Q. Why should we be sorry for our sins?

A. We should be sorry for our sins, because sin is the greatest of evils and an offense against God our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, and because it shuts us out of heaven and condemns us to the eternal pains of hell.

204. Q. What is imperfect contrition?

A. Imperfect contrition is that by which we hate what offends God, because by it we lose heaven and deserve hell; or because sin is so hateful in itself.

412. Q. What are the rewards or punishments appointed for men's souls after the Particular Judgment?

A. The rewards or punishments appointed for men's souls after the Particular Judgment are Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell.

413. Q. What is Hell?

A. Hell is a state to which the wicked are condemned, and in which they are deprived of the sight of God for all eternity, and are in dreadful torments.

419. Q. Will the bodies of the damned also rise?

A. The bodies of the damned will also rise, but they will be condemned to eternal punishment.

421. Q. What words should we bear always in mind?

A. We should bear always in mind these words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul, or what exchange shall a man give for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then will He render to every man according to his works."

Appendix B: Criteria For Evaluating Religious Education Textbooks. See *Evaluative Reviews of Religious Textbooks*, 137-138.

A. Christian faith is mediated to believers historically and communally by the Church. The modes of apprehending the Faith, of thinking about the world and of coming to a sense of values are handed on to each new generation of Christians through the symbols and norms of the believing community.

1. The text or series should focus on the heart of the Christian message: the Christ of the Gospel is risen, alive and active in the world through the Christian community.
2. The presentation of Sacred Scripture should reflect the historical development of divine revelation and its most significant themes for Christian living.
3. The Church should be presented as a community having an historical development as well as a present existence, together with an assurance by Christ of its future continuance. It should make clear that the college of bishops united with the Pope, their head, enjoy special authority in defining and teaching religious truth.
4. The doctrinal tradition of the Church should be presented accurately, and in such a way as to invite belief and to enable believers to live their personal faith and to explain it in the light of today's realities.
5. The moral traditions of the Church should be presented accurately, and in such a way as to invite belief and to make responsible decisions in light of that teaching in both its personal and social dimensions.
6. The liturgical presentation should aim not only to teach, but also to lead to an active and understanding participation in worship.
7. The text should treat of unresolved theological and scriptural questions only when they are relevant and only in proportion to the capacity and interest of the learners, and should clearly state that such questions are unresolved and open to discussion.
8. When the text treats of a plurality of theological opinions on particular issues, it should present such opinions fairly and accurately.

B. A basic aim of all education is the development of the human person; a basic aim of religious education is to lead the believer to maturity in Christ. Catechetics does not seek to force conformity to a creed or to a code of conduct; such an effort would violate a right that even children enjoy. Catechetics rather encourages children to weigh moral values with an upright conscience, to embrace them by personal choice, and to know and love God more adequately. A response of faith that is not made freely and lovingly by personal choice is neither pleasing to God nor expressive of human dignity.

1. The texts should incorporate the best in psychological and pedagogical processes that will aid the pupil's learning of and growth in the faith.
2. The presentation of the material should be tailored to the psychological age of the learners. A text must be adaptable to a variety of personal needs, stages of development and learning habits.

3. The learning experiences evoked or presumed by the text should take into consideration varied social milieu, the families and group needs of the learners. Life experiences must be related to the realities of the Christian message.
4. The Christian message should be communicated in a meaningful language, as far as possible free from abstract concepts of theological jargon. Language must be suited to the vocabulary of the learner.
5. Ideally, a series of textbooks should present a unified vision of Christian life. It should relate one theme to another and not lose its focus on the central point of the Christian message. It should be designed to lead learners toward a living, conscious and active faith.
6. Although the text is only a part of the total learning environment, its appearance should be attractive to the users. Typography, layout and graphic materials should have appeal as well as function.
7. Parents have the foremost responsibility in their child's development. Textbook series should, therefore, provide opportunity for parents to become actively involved in the religious education of their youngsters.
8. A well designed textbook assumes a correlation between the teacher's guide or parents' manual and the learner's text.
9. In general, the presentation should be such that it tends toward clarity and vigor in faith, the nourishment of a life lived according to the spirit of Christ, a knowing and active participation in the liturgical mystery, and the inspiration of apostolic action.



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