

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGION
AS A SUBJECT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA:
AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION FROM
1929 TO 1982**

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THESIS DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides the first comprehensive study of the construction of religion as a subject for Catholic schools in Western Australia for the period 1929-1982. It was conducted in relation to three sub-periods: 1929-1962, 1962-1971, and 1971-1982. The focus was on three main research questions: what were the background developments that influenced the process of constructing what came to be the dominant approach to the subject during each period?; what was the actual construction of the subject, in the sense of 'construction as product', especially in terms of the stated aims, content, pedagogy and assessment approaches?; what were the issues, conflicts and compromises that arose following the introduction of the subject in schools? The focus throughout is primarily on the 'preactive curriculum', namely, what was intended and officially prescribed.

The results of the study are considered in relation to three hypotheses stated prior to conducting the investigation. The first of these states that Catholic schools and Catholic education in Western Australia for the period under investigation was not a monolithic entity but shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions. It was deemed to be upheld for all three sub-periods. The second hypothesis holds that in the process of establishing religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic tradition. This hypothesis was partly upheld. Rather than view what eventuated in terms of a linear progression however, the process can be considered to have been more of a circular one, with religion as a school subject while at all times having an academic focus, also experiencing both advances and retreats in that regard. The third hypothesis maintains that much of the debate that occurred about religion as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian Catholic schools can be interpreted in terms of wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory. That hypothesis was also deemed to be upheld for all three sub-periods investigated.

The study contributes to the existing corpus of international research on the history of curriculum and particularly the history of religion as a school subject. Further, it provides a framework for investigating the construction of religion as a school subject in other Catholic Church jurisdictions and in schools that are not Catholic. It also could act as a model for engaging in further research in curriculum history for other school subjects locally, nationally and internationally.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

One of the most distinctive features of Catholic schooling internationally, both in the past and at present is, as one would expect, the religious character of these schools.¹ The situation in Australia is no exception. There, as in many other parts of the world, the Catholic community invested significant energy over many decades in developing and preserving an education with a distinctive ethos.² Central to that has been the teaching of religion as a distinct school subject. Yet, from a historical perspective, there has been little effort to understand how that curriculum area has been constructed. More specifically in relation to Western Australia, while general patterns within the development of religion as a school subject for Catholic schools internationally have been discerned by education researchers,³ a detailed study of nuances, variation and possibly even deviation from those in that State has not been undertaken to date.

¹ T. O'Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia, 1922-65* (New York: P. Lang, 2001), 3.

² G. Grace, *Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets and Morality* (London; New York: Routledge Falmer, 2002); T. McLaughlin, J. O'Keefe and B. O'Keefe, "Setting the Scene: Current Realities and Historical Perspectives," in *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, ed. T. McLaughlin, J. O'Keefe and B. O'Keefe (London: The Falmer Press, 1996), 1-22.

³ M. Buchanan, "Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education," *Religious Education* 100, no. 1 (2005), 20-37; M. Buchanon, "Textbooks in religious education," in *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*, ed. M. De Souza, G. Durka, K. Engebretson, R. Jackson and A. McGrady (Dordrecht; London: Springer, 2007), 749-762; M. Buchanan, "Religious education in Australian Catholic schools: Past and present," *Religious Education Journal of Australia* 25, no. 2 (2009), 30-37; M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools* (Brisbane: Lumino Press, 2013); T. Copley, *Teaching Religion: Sixty Years of Religious Education in England and Wales* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008); M. Buchanan and K. Engebretson, "The significance of theory in the implementation of curriculum change in religious education," *British Journal of Religious Education* 31, no. 2 (2009), 141-152; A. Lacey, "From catechisms to texts: Engaging students in religious education in Australian Catholic primary schools," *Religious Education Journal of Australia* 27, no. 1 (2011), 16-22.

Regarding the historiography on Catholic education in Australia broadly, two interwoven themes have dominated: the campaign for the provision of State aid to build and run Catholic schools, and the commitment from the nation's Catholic bishops to their establishment and support. The literature on those matters has been well summarised by Wilkinson, Caldwell, Selleck, Harris, and Dettman.⁴ The starting point historically is the fact that the first schools in each Australian colony were religious denominational schools that initially were self-funded and later on received some form of State aid.

In the early colonial days in Australia the Christian churches of all denominations were motivated to provide schools on the grounds that all education should be religious in orientation. While many in society also took that view, which saw education as the natural prerogative of religion,⁵ they further held that education should be funded by the State. Notwithstanding accompanying friction and suspicion between denominations, it was not until the second half of the 19th century that that mindset began to change. An outcome was that as they grappled with the provision of compulsory schooling, the governments in the different Australian colonies also began to promote the notion of 'free, compulsory, and secular education'.

Acting on the latter notion, state aid to denominational schools, including Catholic schools, was eventually withdrawn in all colonies. In Western Australia that took place in 1895.⁶ The Catholic bishops of Australia, however, continued to insist on their right to maintain a separate system of education and went about mobilising

⁴ I. Wilkinson, B. Caldwell, R. Selleck, J. Harris, and P. Dettman, *A History of State Aid to Non-government Schools in Australia: A Project Funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training* (Canberra: Dept. of Education, Science and Training, 2007).

⁵ R. Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia: 1806-1950, Vol. 1 and 2* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1959).

⁶ P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008* (Inglewood: Victor Publishing, 2008), 112.

the Catholic community, both locally and internationally, to ensure that the resources needed were made available.⁷

Ever since, the establishment and maintenance of Catholic schools for the education of Catholic children has been an enduring priority for the Australian Catholic bishops.⁸ Up to the late 1950s, that situation was justified by a dogmatic insistence that Catholic families were required under pain of sin to have their children educated in Catholic schools wherever such provision was available.⁹ It was only with the advent of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that the stance was relaxed, being replaced by a position taken by the Catholic Church (the Church) that it desired of its flock that they send their children to Catholic schools. It committed also to make available Catholic education to Catholic families wherever possible.

At the heart of the commitment to fund Catholic schooling in Australia from its own resources was the conviction by the Church that Catholic children should receive instruction in the basic precepts of the faith and that the denominational school was the most appropriate place within which that should occur. Such schooling, it was held, should encompass a range of activities and strategies that would also result in a pupil's commitment to associated beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the teaching of 'secular' subjects should be infused with Catholic religious content and values. Along with that, emphasis was placed on creating and sustaining an ethos informed by the same content and values.¹⁰

The task of creating and sustaining a Catholic ethos fell largely to the teachers who worked in Australian Catholic schools. Because for many decades the Church

⁷ M. Ryan and J. Grajczonek, "Religion in Australia: A survey for religious educators," *Religious Education Journal of Australia* 26, no. 1 (2010), 9-15.

⁸ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*.

⁹ T. O'Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia, 1922-65*, 71.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

needed a supply of teachers not dependent on state aid, that labour force came in the form of priests, brothers and nuns, generally known as ‘the religious’. Those teachers were initially recruited from overseas and later were supplemented by Australian recruits. The Church argued that, as ‘religious’, they contributed to the ethos of schools in two important ways, namely as teachers of both the faith and of secular subjects, and also as exemplars of higher levels of what could be achieved by being good Catholics.

While there is a need for comprehensive studies to be undertaken that address all of the aspects of Catholic education considered so far in a synoptic manner, there is also a need for engagement in projects that investigate each aspect separately, while not ignoring their relationship to each other. The research presented in this thesis took its lead from an embracement of the later assumption. In conducting it, the present researcher focused on what, for many, was, and still is, the most distinctive feature of Catholic education, namely, the subject religion.

As a subject with a dedicated space allocated on the timetable, religion has been known under different titles in different periods of time throughout the history of Catholic schooling in Australia. Those include ‘religious instruction’, ‘catechetics’, ‘religious education’ and ‘Christian doctrine’.¹¹ Accompanying them have been various pedagogical approaches, again with variations in nomenclature ranging from ‘traditional catechesis’, ‘kerygmatic renewal’, and a ‘life centred’ or ‘experiential approach’, to a ‘shared Christian praxis’ approach, and ‘religious education’.¹² The particular approach used also varied over time. Nevertheless, the general term,

¹¹ Ibid, 72.

¹² M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*.

religion, serves to encompass all of those pedagogical approaches along with the different titles given to the subject.

The aim of the study reported throughout this thesis was to produce an historical analysis of how religion as a subject for Catholic schools in Western Australia was constructed over the period 1929 to 1982. For each sub-period, namely, 1929-1962, 1962-1971, and 1971-1982, a different construction was identified. Throughout the analysis various nuances and variations are also considered. The challenge that remains for others now is to study the remaining period, namely, 1982 to the present.

To provide the level of analysis required in relation to each sub-period, the study was guided throughout by three main research questions. They were as follows: What were the background developments that influenced the process of constructing what came to be the dominant approach to the subject, including those associated with major issues, conflicts and compromises that arose? What was the actual construction of the subject, in the sense of ‘construction as product’, especially in terms of the stated aims, content, pedagogy and assessment approaches? What were the issues, conflicts and compromises that arose following the introduction of the subject in schools?

The remainder of this introductory chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section a brief overview of Catholic schooling in Western Australian is provided. In the second section the study presented is located within the existing corpus of related research. In the third section, the topics chosen for analysis are identified and the reasons for their inclusion are outlined. The chapter closes with the presentation of an explanation of the methodology used for the study.

Western Australian Catholic Schools

Western Australia is one of six federated Australian states and occupies the western third of the Australian continent. Its capital is the city of Perth which is situated on the banks of the Swan River. Western Australia was originally founded as a colony of the British Empire in 1829. While settlement was initially along the banks of the Swan River, the colony gradually expanded. Moreover, it obtained self-government in 1890 and joined the Australian Federation in 1901.

Within Western Australia, the Catholic Church, over time, established four ecclesiastical regions or dioceses.¹³ Of these the Archdiocese of Perth came to be recognised as the main centre. This Archdiocese incorporates the State's largest population centre and also Perth, the capital city.

Under challenging circumstances, the Catholic Church in the colony that later became the State of Western Australia, established the first Catholic school in 1843.¹⁴ Today, as part of a large education enterprise, each Catholic school there operates within a Catholic education system that encompasses the four dioceses. This system is overseen by the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) on behalf of a recently incorporated body,¹⁵ Catholic Education Western Australia Limited (CEWA Ltd).¹⁶ That incorporated body is in turn owned by the four Western Australian Catholic bishops.

At an operational level, the Commission is supported by a permanent secretariat comprised of an executive team and office staff, Catholic Education

¹³ A diocese is an autonomous administrative and pastoral area or division of the Catholic Church.

¹⁴ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 1-16.

¹⁵ Catholic Education Western Australia, "A vibrant community awaits," 5 February 2021, <https://www.cewa.edu.au/school-near-you/>.

¹⁶ Catholic Education Western Australia, "Annual report 2019," 5 February 2021, <https://www.cewa.edu.au/publication/annual-report-2019/>.

Western Australia (CEWA). The head office of that secretariat is in metropolitan Perth with three regional offices located in each of the three non-metropolitan dioceses of Western Australia. As of 2020, Catholic education in Western Australia was operating 163 schools and employed over 11000 staff. Those schools ranged from small to large-sized single sex and coeducational schools and were located in metropolitan, rural and remote areas. They provided a Catholic education for more than 76000 students who ranged in age from 3 years through to 18 years.¹⁷

The Existing Corpus of Related Research

The aim of the study presented here was to make an original contribution to research on the history of religion as a school subject internationally. Regarding the later, Freathy and Parker¹⁸ have indicated that there is a paucity of rigorous historical inquiry in the field across all religions. The deficiency, they argue, is serious because it can lead researchers to adopt narrow perspectives and ahistorical epistemologies that take present-day understanding of the past for granted. At worst, they conclude, that can lead to a form of ideological fundamentalism. A similar argument was made by Goodson¹⁹ ten years earlier in making a claim for engagement in historical studies of all subjects in the school curriculum across all types of education systems, including those that are faith-based. Such studies, he²⁰ contended, could allow us to examine complex changes over time, rather than snapshots of unique events, and to discern explanatory frameworks.

¹⁷ Catholic Education Western Australia, "A vibrant community awaits," 5 February 2021, <https://www.cewa.edu.au/school-near-you/>.

¹⁸ R. Freathy and S. Parker, "The necessity of historical inquiry in educational research: The case of religious education," *British Journal of Religious Education* 32, 3 (2010), 229-243.

¹⁹ I. Goodson, "The need for curriculum history," in *History of Education: Major Themes, Vol. 3. Studies in Learning and Teaching*, ed. R. Lowe (London: Routledge/Falmer, 2000), 93-100.

²⁰ Ibid.

The study reported in this thesis was underpinned by Goodson's position. The aim was to make a significant contribution to the existing corpus of research by analysing the construction of religion as a subject for Catholic schools in Western Australia from 1929 to 1982 through exploring, and offering understandings of, change over time. It is the first study ever undertaken in the field specifically focused on the Western Australian context. It contributes also to two main bodies of literature, namely, the existing corpus of research on the history of curriculum, and the existing corpus of research on the history of religion as a school subject. Each of these bodies of work will now be considered in turn.

Research on the history of curriculum

For many decades, the history of education focused broadly on three main themes: the history of education thought and thinkers in education, the history of educational systems,²¹ and the history of educational policy.²² That led to the development of a number of sub disciplines, including the history of education aims and policy, of pedagogy, of education administration, of teacher education, and of education research. Regarding these sub-disciplines, some attention was directed to the history of the process of education in schools and higher education institutions, including universities. Amongst the pioneering works produced specifically on the history of the school curriculum are those that were undertaken by Tanner and

²¹ H. Silver, "Aspects of neglect: The strange case of Victorian popular education," *Oxford Review of Education* 3, no. 1 (1977), 57-69.

²² R. Lowe, *History of Education: Major Themes, 4 Vols.* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000).

Tanner²³ on the American situation, by Cunningham²⁴ on England and Wales, by Musgrave²⁵ on Australia, and by McCulloch²⁶ on New Zealand.

The work of Goodson²⁷ on the history of school subjects brought a new sophistication to the field. He was motivated by a view that a consequence of not engaging in the study of the history of curriculum could be ‘historical amnesia’. That, he argued, could lead to curriculum reinvention rather than development.²⁸ He then went on to reject the view of the written curriculum as a “neutral given”, proposing instead that a school subject is “a social artefact, conceived of and made for deliberate human purposes”.²⁹ Hargreaves³⁰ supported this notion with his argument that school subjects are “more than groupings of intellectual thought. They are social systems too. They compete for power, prestige, recognition and reward”. Pokewitz³¹ revisited the argument, calling for a serious exploration of “historically-formed rules and standards that order, classify, and divide what is ‘seen’ and acted on in schooling”.

Authors of various other studies also emphasised the importance of engaging in the study of curriculum history. Franklin³² “explored what contemporary curriculum historians, particularly in the USA, had to say about the curriculum as a social construct and as a regulative mechanism”. In similar vein, Glatthorn, Floyd and

²³ D. Tanner and L. Tanner, *History of the School Curriculum* (New York: Macmillan, 1989).

²⁴ P. Cunningham, *Curriculum Changes in the Primary School Since 1945* (London: Falmer Press, 1988).

²⁵ P. Musgrave, *Socialising Contexts: The Subject in Society* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988).

²⁶ G. McCulloch, “Curriculum History in England and New Zealand, Vol. 1,” in *History of Education: Major Themes*, ed. R. Lowe (London: Routledge Falmer, 1987), 297-330.

²⁷ I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum Collected Essays* (New York: Falmer Press, 1987).

²⁸ I. Goodson and C. Marsh, “Studying school subjects: A guide,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 30, no. 5 (1998), 593.

²⁹ I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum Collected Essays*, 260.

³⁰ A. Hargreaves, *Curriculum and Assessment Reform* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1989), 56.

³¹ T. Popkewitz, “Curriculum study, curriculum history, and curriculum theory: The reason of reason,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, no. 3 (2009), 301.

³² B. Franklin, “Review Essay: The state of curriculum history,” *History of Education* 28, no. 4 (1999), 459.

Whitehead,³³ in a major book chapter devoted to curriculum history, underlined the importance that the study of curriculum history has for education leaders. Equally, Wright³⁴ stated that the study of curriculum history has to be the focus “for the entire field of curriculum and for both the history and present state of play of how we conceptualize and theorize curriculum”. Similarly, McAllister, Greenhill, Madsen, and Godden³⁵ argued that a study of curriculum history is important for those educating future nurses.

Others adopted Goodson’s position in order to investigate a range of school subjects. They include Tan,³⁶ Braine,³⁷ Burton,³⁸ Green and Cormack,³⁹ and Popkewitz.⁴⁰ The study reported in this thesis, which also adopted Goodson’s position, is offered as a further contribution to the field.

The history of religion as a school subject

The study reported here contributes specifically to the history of religion as a school subject. As with the history of the school curriculum in general and the history of individual school subjects in particular, it is a much neglected area. Freathy and Parker⁴¹ emphasised this point as follows:

...surveys of the content of the British Journal of Religious Education (BJRE) (1992-02) and the North American journal Religious Education (RE) (1993-

³³ A. Glatthorn, B. Floyd and B. Whitehead, *Curriculum Leadership: Development and Implementation* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005), 33-72.

³⁴ H. Wright, “Does Hlebowitsh improve on curriculum history? Reading a rereading for its political purpose and implications,” *Curriculum Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2005), 116.

³⁵ M. McAllister, J. Greenhill, W. Madsen, and J. Godden, “Generating ideas for the teaching of nursing’s history in Australia,” *Collegian* 17, no. 1 (2010).

³⁶ K. Tan, *History of the History Curriculum under Colonialism and Decolonisation: A Comparison of Hong Kong and Macau* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1993).

³⁷ G. Braine, *Teaching English to the World: History, Curriculum, and Practice* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2005).

³⁸ D. Burton, *The History of Mathematics: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007).

³⁹ B. Green and P. Cormack, “Curriculum history, ‘English’ and the ‘New Education’; or, installing the Empire of English?,” *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 16, no. 3 (2008), 253-67.

⁴⁰ T. Popkewitz, “Curriculum history, schooling and the history of the present,” *History of Education* 40, no. 1 (2011), 1-19.

⁴¹ R. Freathy and S. Parker, “The necessity of historical inquiry in educational research: The case of religious education,” *British Journal of Religious Education*, 232.

02) carried out by English, D'Souza and Chartrand⁴² reveal a neglect of the utilisation of historical methods and a lack of historical consciousness among RE researchers....neglect of historical research in RE is demonstrated further by Francis, Kay and Campbell's book *Research in religious education*.⁴³ This focusses on psychological research perspectives (e.g. psychometric attitudinal studies). The one chapter which purports to use historical methods simply provides a history of the methodologies the authors seek to promote. A similar criticism could be levied at Jackson's⁴⁴ *Rethinking religious education and plurality: Issues in diversity and pedagogy*.

Furthermore, they concluded that many of the studies conducted have been largely descriptive and often have not been based on primary sources.⁴⁵ Amongst the works conducted specifically on the UK context that brought them to this conclusion are those by Bell,⁴⁶ Mitchell,⁴⁷ Priestley,⁴⁸ Parsons,⁴⁹ Bates,⁵⁰ Chadwick,⁵¹ Kay,⁵²

⁴² L. English, M. D'Souza, and L. Chartrand, "A 10-year retrospective of the British Journal of Religious Education: An analysis of contents and contributors," *British Journal of Religious Education* 25, no. 4 (2003), 308-19; L. English, M. D'Souza, and L. Chartrand, "Analysis of contents, contributors and research directions: Mapping publication routes in the journal," *Religious Education* 100, no. 1 (2005), 6-19; L. English, M. D'Souza, and L. Chartrand, "Comparative analysis of the research and publication patterns in British Journal of Religious Education and Religious Education," *Religious Education* 100, no. 2 (2005), 193-210.

⁴³ L. Francis, W. Kay, and W. Campbell, *Research in Religious Education* (Leominster, MA: Gracewing, 1996).

⁴⁴ R. Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy* (London: Routledge-Falmer, 2004).

⁴⁵ R. Freathy and S. Parker, "The necessity of historical inquiry in educational research: The case of religious education," *British journal of religious education*, 235.

⁴⁶ A. Bell, "Agreed syllabuses of religious education since 1944," in *Social Histories of the Secondary Curriculum*, ed. I. Goodson (Lewes: Falmer Press, 1985), 177-200.

⁴⁷ C. Michell, "Richard Acland 1906-1990," *British Journal of Religious Education* 14, no. 1 (1991), 6-8.

⁴⁸ J. Priestley, "Agreed syllabuses: Their history and development in England and Wales 1944-2004," in *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education, Part 2*, ed. K. Engebretson, G. Durka, R. Jackson, A. McGrady and M. de Souza (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 1001-1017; J. Priestley, "A new ERA - Beginning from Jerusalem? Some reflections from 1928 on matters pertaining to 1988," *British Journal of Religious Education* 13, no. 3 (1991), 143-151.

⁴⁹ G. Parsons, "There and back again? Religion and the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts, Vol. 2," in *The growth of religious diversity: Britain from 1945*, ed. G. Parsons (London: Routledge, 1994), 161-198.

⁵⁰ D. Bates, "Christianity, culture and other religions (Part 1): The origins of the study of world religions in English education," *British Journal of Religious Education* 17, no. 1 (1994), 5-18; D. Bates, "Christianity, culture and other religions (Part 2): F.H. Hilliard, Ninian Smart and the 1988 Education Reform Act," *British Journal of Religious Education* 18, no. 2 (1996), 85-102.

⁵¹ P. Chadwick, *Shifting Alliances* (London: Cassell, 1997).

⁵² W. Kay, "Belief in God in Great Britain 1945-1996: Moving the scenery behind classroom RE," *British Journal of Religious Education* 20, no. 1 (1997), 28-41.

Thompson,⁵³ Hand,⁵⁴ and Copley.⁵⁵ Later, Barnes⁵⁶ argued that matters have not improved greatly in the interim.

A specific corpus of literature generated in relation to Australia draws uncritically on particular historical interpretations.⁵⁷ Thus, it perpetuates what Freathy and Parker⁵⁸ have characterised as “a familiar and largely unchallenged narrative”. At the same time, a small but significant body of work that does adopt a somewhat objective historical approach did start to emerge. This work is of two types. The first type addresses the history of religion by way of background to contemporary overviews on religious education.⁵⁹ The second body of work consists of historical biographies of religious education practitioners, leaders, and theorists.⁶⁰ The study

⁵³ P. Thompson, *Whatever Happened to Religious Education?* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2003).

⁵⁴ M. Hand, “Religious education,” in *Rethinking the School Curriculum*, ed. J. White (London: Routledge Falmer, 2004), 152–64.

⁵⁵ T. Copley, *Teaching Religion: Sixty Years of Religious Education in England and Wales*.

⁵⁶ L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 3-4.

⁵⁷ M. Buchanan, “Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education,” *Religious Education*, 20-37; P. Goldberg, “Teaching religion in Australian schools,” *Numen* 55, no. 2 (2008), 241-271; A. Lacey, “From catechisms to texts: Engaging students in religious education in Australian Catholic primary schools,” *Religious Education Journal of Australia*, 16-22.

⁵⁸ R. Freathy and S. Parker, “The necessity of historical inquiry in educational research: The case of religious education,” *British Journal of Religious Education*, 235.

⁵⁹ G. Rossiter, “Historical perspective on the development of Catholic Religious Education in Australia: Some implications for the future,” *Journal of Religious Education* 47, no. 1 (1999), 5-18; T. Lovat, “Education in religion: Changes for public and private schooling,” *Prime Focus*, no. 23 (2000), 29-31; R. Rymarz, “Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s,” *Journal of Religious Education* 51, no. 1 (2003), 50-56; J. McGrath, “Expanded frameworks for religious education and learning,” *Journal of Religious Education* 53, no. 2 (2005), 52-59; J. McGrath, “Changing framework for learning in religious education,” *Religious Education Journal of Australia* 21, no. 2 (2005), 13-21; M. Crawford and G. Rossiter, “Historical perspective on religious education in Catholic schools: Towards a relevant religious education for the future,” in *Reasons for Living: Education and Young People’s Search for Meaning, Identity and Spirituality: A Handbook*, ed. M. Crawford and G. Rossiter (Camberwell, Vic.: ACER Press, 2006), 371-390; M. Buchanan, “Textbooks in religious education,” in *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*; M. Buchanan, “Religious education in Australian Catholic schools: Past and Present,” *Religious Education Journal of Australia*; M. Buchanan and K. Engebretson, “The significance of theory in the implementation of curriculum change in religious education,” *British Journal of Religious Education*.

⁶⁰ K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis Bendigo: La Trobe University, 1999); G. English, “An Independent Mind in Motion: M. B. Hanrahan and Catholic Religious Education in the 1920’s in Australia,” *The Australasian Catholic Record* (2005), 281-289; G. English, “Highways, byways and dead ends: School textbooks in Australian Catholic religious education,” *Journal of Religious Education* 53, no. 2 (2005), 33-45; G. Rossiter, “An interview with Dr Gerard Rummery:

reported in this thesis builds substantially on the works produced in relation to both of these areas.

The Topics for Analysis

To recap, the aim of the study reported in this thesis was to provide a historical analysis of how religion as a subject for Catholic schools in Western Australia was constructed over the period 1929 to 1982. To that end, three different constructions of religion as a subject for Western Australian Catholic schools were identified. These relate to the periods: 1929-1962, 1962-1971, and 1971-1982.

The decision to commence the exposition at 1929 was based on a number of considerations. First, the traditional approach to the teaching of religion known as ‘Catechetics’ had already been established for a number of centuries. While it endured up until the early 1960s,⁶¹ Pope Pius XI had issued an encyclical on Catholic education, *Divini Illius Magistri (That Divine Teacher)*⁶² in 1929, that signalled a willingness by Church leaders to open up to the possibility of Catholic educators learning from innovations in pedagogy within the emerging ‘science of education’.⁶³ Furthermore, from the middle of the 1950s, other significant developments were taking place that laid the groundwork for changes that occurred with the advent of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965),⁶⁴ including those that were to have an impact upon religion as a school subject.

International perspectives on Catholic Education,” *Journal of Religious Education* 53, no. 2 (2005), 14-22.

⁶¹ G. Rummery, “The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools, 1872-1972,” *Journal of Religious History* 9, no. 3 (1977), 302–317.

⁶² Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), 3 March 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html.

⁶³ B. Kelty, “Catholic Education: Historical Context,” in *The Catholic School: Paradoxes and Challenges*, ed. D. McLaughlin (Sydney: Saint Paul’s Publications, 2000), 9-29.

⁶⁴ M. Bryce, “Four decades of Roman Catholic innovators,” *Religious Education* 73, no. 1 (1978), 36-57.

The second period, 1962-1971, is one in which there was a wholesale move towards adopting insights and innovations that had been conceptualised prior to the advent of the Second Vatican Council, as well as building upon further ideas generated from considering ideas emanating from that Council.⁶⁵ The final period, 1971-1982, was a time of further innovation and experimentation in the teaching of religion as a subject that endeavoured to build on new education insights as well as address perceived shortcomings and concerns about developments in the previous period.⁶⁶ That coincided with the establishment of Catholic education ‘systems’ across Australia. Prior to then, Catholic schools had operated largely as independent entities, albeit affiliated with individual religious orders. Now, however, in order to maximise benefit from having access to newly-available government funding, they were brought together for administrative purposes, eventually operating under the supervision of Catholic education offices that functioned across large areas, sometimes coinciding with dioceses.

Methodology

For each of the three sub-periods examined, a detailed analysis was conducted. That analysis focused on nuances, variations and, where identified, deviations from general assumptions that prevailed in each of the three sub-periods. The underlying theoretical framework was based on the work of Goodson.⁶⁷ As stated already, that framework

⁶⁵ G. Rummery, “The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools, 1872-1972,” *Journal of Religious History*.

⁶⁶ M. Buchanan and K. Engebretson, “The significance of theory in the implementation of curriculum change in religious education,” *British Journal of Religious Education*.

⁶⁷ I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum Collected Essays*; I. Goodson, “The need for curriculum history,” in *History of Education: Major Themes, Vol. 3, Studies in learning and teaching*; I. Goodson, *Learning, Curriculum and Life History: Selected Works by Ivor F. Goodson* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 2005); I. Goodson, “Currículo, narrativa e o futuro social,” *Revista Brasileira de Educação* 12 (2007), 241-52; I. Goodson, “Times of educational change: Towards an understanding of patterns of historical and cultural refraction,” *Journal of Education Policy* 25, no. 6 (2010), 767-75.

rejects the view of the written curriculum “as a neutral given embedded in an otherwise meaningful complex situation”.⁶⁸ Rather, what is proposed is a view of the curriculum “as a social artefact, conceived of and made for deliberate human purposes”.⁶⁹

In adopting Goodson’s position, it was recognised that in a more extensive project cognisance would need to be taken of his argument that curriculum history should be studied at both the preactive and interactive curriculum levels. To study curriculum history at the preactive level is to focus on the plans or syllabi that outline what is intended in a course or program. It involves studying not only the structures and patterns within such documents, but also identifying the various individuals and interest groups who were involved in their production and the nature and extent of their influence. To study curriculum history at the interactive level is to focus on how the preactive curriculum was mediated in the classrooms, how the subjects or disciplines were taught, what strategies and activities were used, what experiences students had, and what learning processes took place.

Goodson made a case for focusing initially on the preactive level in one’s study of the history of an individual subject in order to increase understanding of the influences and interests at work. He also contended that this has the potential to:

... further our knowledge of the values and purposes represented... and how preactive definition, notwithstanding individual and local variations, may set parameters for interactive realisation and negotiation in the classroom and the school.⁷⁰

To argue, then that the focus of the study was on the preactive curriculum is synonymous with saying that it dealt with the construction of religion as a subject.

⁶⁸ I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum Collected Essays*, 260.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 270.

⁷⁰ I. Goodson, *Bringing English to Order: The History and Politics of a School Subject* (London.: Falmer Press, 1990), 263.

A study of the interactive curriculum would have demanded a focus on the interactions that took place in classrooms in order to examine how religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools was mediated. That was recognised as being important work that needs to be undertaken. It was also deemed, however, that to pursue it would have meant engaging in a separate project.

In the initial stages of research, the study was guided by the following hypotheses adapted from Goodson's⁷¹ work:

- Catholic schools and Catholic education in Western Australia for the period under investigation was not a monolithic entity, but shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions;
- In the process of establishing religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic tradition;
- Much of the debate which occurred about religion as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian Catholic schools can be interpreted in terms of wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory.

Testing these hypotheses at every opportunity possible was deemed from the outset to be an important practice in which to engage.

The accompanying guiding questions for engaging in the study, it will be recalled, were as follows:

- a. What were the background developments which influenced the process of constructing what came to be the dominant approach to the

⁷¹ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum* (New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1983).

subject, including those associated with major issues, conflicts and compromises that arose?

- b. What was the actual construction of the subject, in the sense of ‘construction as product’, especially in terms of the stated aims, content, pedagogy and assessment approaches?
- c. What were the issues, conflicts and compromises that arose following the introduction of the subject in schools?

As guiding questions, these were not specific questions to be answered. Rather, they were questions that suggested themselves from the particular social science position underpinning the study as being the most productive guides to generate data pertinent to the overall aim. Each of them was addressed in relation to each of the three periods identified. In doing so, stability and change in perspectives over time, both within and across topics, were also examined.

Historical Analysis

The study was based largely on an analysis of primary and secondary source documents, particularly those in the archives of the Catholic Church in Western Australia. An array of reports from committees, both Catholic and non-Catholic, were also drawn upon. Those provided the present writer with insights on the pressures and demands on religion as a subject in Catholic schools that, in turn, had implications for decisions made in relation to Catholic education. Scholarly books and articles, in particular local histories of the Catholic Church and Catholic education in Western Australia, were also drawn upon to contribute to an understanding of the historical background relevant to the study. So too did a number of texts dealing with the history of religion in Western Australia. Additional insights on various aspects of the study were provided as a result of consulting a number of theses already produced by

graduate students. In addition, general literature on the meaning of such important terms as religion, education, and Catholic schools was perused.

While traditional historical approaches to the analysis of sources were used, various theoretical positions were also drawn upon. The first of those was based on Goodson's⁷² work. It required that initially there be an 'internal' analysis of various relevant curriculum documents. That was then followed by an 'external' analysis to ensure that consideration was given to the broader environmental, social, economic and political contexts. In other words, patterns uncovered during the internal analysis were considered in their relationship to such aspects of the wider context, as the nature of the Catholic Church and Catholic schooling, the structure of society, technological changes, the economy, and political and philosophical viewpoints.

A second theoretical position that informed the analysis was based on the work of Flynn⁷³ and Ryan⁷⁴. Flynn⁷⁵ proposed a three-stage linear model, namely, 'traditional catechesis', 'kerygmatic catechesis' and 'experiential catechesis'. His model was useful for developing an account of the changes that historically took place in the teaching of religion in Australian Catholic schools.⁷⁶ Cognisance was also taken of the manner in which his work was adapted and updated by Ryan⁷⁷, who identified

⁷² I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum Collected Essays*.

⁷³ M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools 2000: A Longitudinal Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic Schools, 1972-198; 1990-1998* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Catholic Education Commission, 2002); M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Pauls, 1993); M. Flynn, *The Effectiveness of Catholic Schools: A Ten-year Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic High Schools* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Paul Publications, 1985); M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools and the Communication of Faith: A Study of the Mission of Catholic Schools Today for Parents, Teachers and Students* (Homebush, N.S.W.: Society of Saint Paul, 1979); M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools* (Sydney: Catholic Education Office, 1975).

⁷⁴ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*.

⁷⁵ M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993*.

⁷⁶ T. O'Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia, 1922-65*, 73.

⁷⁷ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*.

the following five stages: ‘traditional catechesis’, ‘kerygmatic renewal’, ‘life centred’ or ‘experiential’, shared ‘Christian praxis’ and ‘religious education’.

The third theoretical position that informed the analysis was Beeby’s⁷⁸ stages of development in education systems. This stage-theory is as helpful today as when it was first put forward. It focuses on the role of the teacher in facilitating progress through four key stages: the ‘Dame School Stage’, the ‘Stage of Formalism’, the ‘Stage of Transition’ and the ‘Stage of Meaning’. The ‘Dame School Stage’ is characterised by ill-educated and untrained teachers who are only able to teach narrow subject content through rigid techniques of memorisation using simple prescribed texts. At the ‘Stage of Formalism’ teachers have received a basic training but are still ill-educated. The ‘Stage of Transition’ is characterised by teachers who have received a basic training, but who are better educated than teachers at the ‘Stage of Formalism’. At the ‘Stage of Meaning’ teachers are well educated and well trained. A variety of content and methods, including problem solving, are used within a wider curriculum, to cater creatively for individual differences of learners.

While Beeby’s theory has direct relevance to analysing teaching practise, it is also useful for considering how curriculum subjects have developed. His stages of development in education systems are also useful. Within the current study they provided a useful categorising system for considering the general position and orientation of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools at particular points in time.

⁷⁸ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

Conclusion

The remainder of the study is presented in three sections. Section One, which consists of two chapters, contextualises the study by providing relevant historical overviews. On that, the teaching of religion as a subject is considered in Chapter Two and the broad history of the Catholic Church since 1869 is considered in Chapter Three. Expositions are presented across Section Two, which consists of six chapters relating to the three time periods studied, 1929-1962, 1962-1971, and 1971-1982. In Section Three an overview of the study is presented. That is followed by a conclusion in Chapter Ten.

CHAPTER TWO

RELIGION AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT

Introduction

This chapter takes as its starting point the fact that the first schools in each colony in Australia were religious denominational schools. Initially, they were self-funded. Later, they received some form of state aid. Within them, religion as a school subject has had a long and varied history. While the purpose of the study reported here was not to recount that history internationally, it is important and an overview of some key aspects of it is informative. That is undertaken in five sections.

A brief historical overview of the Christian practice of teaching religion is presented in the first section of this chapter. An identification of key developments within the Protestant practice of teaching religion is then detailed. In the third section an overview of how non-confessional forms of teaching religion developed in the United Kingdom, the source of many of Australia's education ideas is provided. An overview of recent developments that have led to diverse and increasingly contested approaches in the subject religion follows. In the final section, the focus is on developments within Catholicism that by the 20th century had led to the dominance of a Catholic approach with Catholic schools to the teaching of religion that became known as traditional catechesis.

The discussion offered within each section of the chapter focuses only on the developments that occurred within Christian education.¹ Thus, a number of related and important aspects of religion as a subject in non-Christian contexts are not

¹ Christian education, referred to here, is a general term that identifies an education that is Christian. That term, when used later in the chapter, refers to a specific Protestant conceptualisation of the subject religion. See J. Astley, L. Francis, and C. Crowder, *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: A Reader on Theology and Christian Education* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1996), 1-2.

addressed. Regional variations within the Christian perspective are also not addressed to any great extent.

The Christian Practice of Teaching Religion as a School Subject

Religion as a subject in Christian-based schools has been shaped for much of its history by a key concept, namely, “catechesis”.² That concept originated in the thought and practices³ prevalent in the early Church.⁴ In its original use, it referred to a process of instruction in the faith that took place prior to Baptism and that was related mostly to adult converts to Christianity.⁵ Those being instructed were called ‘Catechumens’ and the steps and requirement of the process were known as the ‘Catechumenate’.⁶

With the Christianisation of the Roman Empire, children and adults were regularly baptised and their instruction in the faith before Baptism became known as catechesis.⁷ Later, with the Christianisation of Europe and the emergence of Christendom,⁸ the pre-Baptismal period of the catechumenate became shorter and shorter. Eventually, pre-Baptismal preparation gave way to a more informal post-

² κατηχέω (katécheó): to teach by word of mouth. Online Parallel Bible Project, “2727. Katécheó,” *Bible Hub*, 6 February 2021, <https://biblehub.com/greek/2727.htm>.

³ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 28-33; 49-51.

⁴ Education of the child was not a fundamental concern in the early church. That responsibility belonged to the family and focused on moral formation and preparation for life. L. Franchi, *Shared Mission: Religious Education in the Catholic Tradition* (Hounslow: Scepter, 2017), 25-35; A. Gellel, and M. Buchanan, “Contextualising the Catholic religious education project,” in *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools*, ed. M. Buchanan and A. Gellel (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 2.

⁵ A. Gellel, and M. Buchanan, “Contextualising the Catholic religious education project,” in *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools*, 2-3; T. Reese, “Lent is a time to grow in the faith,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 2 March 2017, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/lent-time-grow-faith>.

⁶ “Catechesis,” *Wikipedia*, 6 February 2021, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catechesis>; L. Franchi, *Shared Mission: Religious Education in the Catholic Tradition*, 30; G. Rossitor, “The story of the relationship between catechesis and religious education,” *REDU913 Key Thinkers in Religious Education*, 6 February 2021, <https://asmre.org/913/05/Catechesis&ReligiousEducation.html>.

⁷ L. Franchi, *Shared Mission: Religious Education in the Catholic Tradition*, 25-35.

⁸ A. Whenman, *In Good Faith: A Historical Study of the Provision of Religious Education for Catholic Children Not in Catholic Schools in New South Wales: The CCD Movement 1880-2000* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2011), 24.

Baptismal instruction or catechesis.⁹ In a mostly illiterate society, that often occurred through individuals being immersed in the widespread Christianised culture of society and in the worship and prayer life of the Church, as well as through preaching and within family life.¹⁰

During the Middle Ages¹¹ Christian education thought and structures¹² developed¹³ and religious instruction started to take on several characteristics.¹⁴ First, it was family members in the main who passed on the traditions, beliefs and practices of faith.¹⁵ Secondly, as Devitt¹⁶ has stated, “the ‘hidden’ curriculum of the culture itself played an important role in providing religious instruction, including faith dramas, pilgrimages, processions and feast days”. Another characteristic involved preachers delivering formal instruction in the faith from a pulpit during Mass. Those preaching also focused members of the congregation on memorising and analysing systematised Christian faith formulations, in particular, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Commandments and the Sacraments.¹⁷

The latter systematic approach differed from that used in the early Church. Nevertheless, it still incorporated many of the same elements, including the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. Teachers like Augustine and Cyril used those within the “context

⁹ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1992), 40.

¹⁰ A. Gellel, “Putting Catholic religious education on the map,” *Revista Pistas* 9, no. 3 (2017), 703.

¹¹ Despite the use of terms such as ‘catechesis’, it cannot be assumed that there is a continuity between the time of catechumenate, the medieval period of Christendom or even current practice. P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 42-43; M. Buchanan, “Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education,” *Religious Education* 100, no. 1 (2005), 27.

¹² Several factors contributed to the development of Christian education thought and structures during the Middle Ages for detail see L. Franchi, *Shared Mission: Religious Education in the Catholic Tradition* (Hounslow: Scepter, 2017), 37-46.

¹³ A. Whenman, *In Good Faith: A Historical Study of the Provision of Religious Education for Catholic Children Not in Catholic Schools in New South Wales: The CCD Movement 1880-2000*, 24.

¹⁴ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 40-42.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 41.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 49.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 42-43.

of the story of salvation as told in the Bible (thereby emphasising the importance of concrete language and imagination). The Medieval preachers favoured the analytical, systematic approach (with great emphasis on abstract language, intellect and memory)”.¹⁸

By the time of the Reformation, Medieval patterns of education and religious instruction were well established. Soon, however, as with many other areas of Church life, education in general and religious instruction in particular, underwent reform and renewal. From that process traditional catechesis for Catholics emerged.¹⁹

Early on during the Reformation Martin Luther published a doctrinal manual known as the ‘small catechism’.²⁰ That publication aimed to clearly articulate the beliefs of his reform movement.²¹ In response, several Catholic catechisms were produced.²² They reflected Luther’s structure²³ but incorporated distinctively Catholic points of view and condemned contrary ones.²⁴

The structure of catechisms was inspired by the Socratic method.²⁵ The content included in those printed manuals was organised into small sections and was presented in a question-and-answer format. That structure and its logic had several consequences. First, they led to the standardisation of both the content included and

¹⁸ Ibid, 43.

¹⁹ L. Franchi, *Shared Mission: Religious Education in the Catholic Tradition*, 47-48.

²⁰ Full title: *A Small Catechism for the Use of Ordinary Pastors and Preachers*. For details see, P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 53.

²¹ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 114-115; P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 53-60.

²² Howell draws a distinction between ‘school-catechism’ and ‘church-catechism’. The original purposes of Catholic catechisms were to assist priests in their duty of instructing the faithful. The success of some of those catechisms led to the development, later, of ‘school-catechisms’. C. Howell, “The new German catechism,” *The Downside Review* 74, no. 236 (1956), 114.

²³ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 61-62.

²⁴ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, 135-140.

²⁵ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 65-67; A. Gellel, “Putting Catholic religious education on the map”, *Revista Pistas*, 702-3.

of how the manuals were used for instruction.²⁶ Another consequence was that they created the impression that catechisms were comprehensive in their treatment of faith. Another, yet again was that their format and structure tended to fragment the content and create a disjointed sense of the whole.²⁷ Finally, as Gellel²⁸ has stated, the use of catechisms led to “parrot-like rote learning and, consequently, to a reductionist understanding of the faith”.

As a result of the publication of both bibles and catechisms, the Reformation²⁹ contributed to a rapid spread of literacy³⁰ and the development of modern education. Indeed, those texts were central to how reading and the particulars of a denominational faith were taught.³¹ The authorities within each Christian church developed approaches considered best for instructing members in the particulars of their faith³² and prepared them for a defence of it.³³ For Protestant educators the Bible became the central text for instruction, while for Catholics, it was catechisms.³⁴ The availability and use of those different types of texts also contributed to a diversity of education approaches that further contributed to a fragmentation of Western Christianity.

By the 19th century, a range of cultural and theological developments³⁵ within each of the various Christian communities had contributed to the emergence of a range

²⁶ There were exceptions. A. Gellel, “Putting Catholic religious education on the map”, *Revista Pistas*, 704.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 703-4.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 703.

²⁹ L. Franchi, *Shared Mission: Religious Education in the Catholic Tradition*, 47.

³⁰ Written texts and printing presses were important for disseminating the ideas of reformers.

³¹ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 53.

³² Devitt outlines not only details about Luther’s catechism but also his approach to education. P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 53-60.

³³ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, 100-102, 109-110, 120-129, 140-145.

³⁴ The technique or style of question and answer was a well-established medieval practice and did not originate with the use of catechisms. P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 45-47.

³⁵ J. Astley, L. Francis, and C. Crowder, *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: A Reader on Theology and Christian Education* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1996), 1-2.

of distinct approaches to educating members of their respective flocks.³⁶ In the United States, Protestant churches had developed and utilised “schools, colleges, revivals, Sunday schools, and campus ministries in their educational efforts”.³⁷ Various Christian churches had also been instrumental in establishing schools.³⁸ It was in those that the teaching of religion as a subject began to be constructed.³⁹

The Teaching of Religion: Protestant Developments

By the 19th century, developments in general within society and within Protestantism in particular, led to change in education.⁴⁰ Governments especially were increasingly beginning to play a role in the field.⁴¹ In response, certain Protestant groups began to exit their own schools or maintain only a nominal relationship with those they had established.⁴² In the United States, two factors contributed to that situation. First, the availability of public funds meant that the previous financial burden for churches lessened. That also presented many Protestant leaders with what they saw as an opportunity to advance their position, believing that publicly funded schools would still retain a Protestant flavour⁴³ with Protestant religious and moral elements

³⁶ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, 146-197.

³⁷ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives* (Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002), 158.

³⁸ S. Raftery and D. Leege, “Report No. 14: Catechesis, religious education, and the parish”, in *Reports: A Comprehensive Survey of Roman Catholic Parishes in the United States* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1984), 1.

³⁹ Compulsory schooling led to religious instruction taking place in schools. That tended to narrow religious education to formal schooling and created a divide between a cognitive knowledge of doctrine and a personal faith life. P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 68-69.

⁴⁰ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, 198-244, 273-278; P. Devitt, *How Adult is ARE?: Gabriel Moran’s Contribution to Adult Religious Education* (Dublin: Veritas, 1991), 11-12; S. Raftery and D. Leege, “Report No. 14: Catechesis, religious education, and the parish,” in *Reports: A Comprehensive Survey of Roman Catholic Parishes in the United States*, 1; J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 159.

⁴¹ Governments became involved in education for a variety of reasons.

⁴² J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 160.

⁴³ That included use of the King James Bible, Protestant history and textbooks.

remaining within schools. Some also believed that schools that did not accept public funds would be disadvantaged.⁴⁴ Over time,⁴⁵ however, “the influence of Protestantism in American public schools declined and education became secularised”.⁴⁶

The second factor that contributed to Protestant Churches exiting their own schools was a theological and pedagogical shift within Protestantism known as ‘revivalism’⁴⁷ or ‘religious awakenings’.⁴⁸ That movement greatly affected Protestant communities⁴⁹ in Europe, Britain, and America throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. On that Elias⁵⁰ stated:

The awakenings were educational experiences for adults and to a lesser degree for children. In their tent meetings religious awakenings took to task not only the quality of religious observance but also the existing educational methods of producing so-called committed Christians. In addition, the revivals led to the establishment of new educational institutions for maintaining and fostering the spirit of the religious revival. Revivals eventually brought changes in family patterns, reformed schools’ curricula and methods, and enacted new laws in the churches and society.⁵¹

Revivalism also highlighted concerns about the quality of Christian faith in the lives of individuals and in society. Furthermore, it led to debate within Protestantism about education. On that, two opposing positions emerged. One of those positions was based on a belief that Christian education should aim to prompt feelings of personal conversion and conviction. The alternative view was that Christian education within the family and church should gradually nurture a sound knowledge of faith.⁵²

⁴⁴ Some Protestant church leaders saw a sectarian advantage in accepting public funds.

⁴⁵ P. Devitt, *How Adult is ARE?: Gabriel Moran’s Contribution to Adult Religious Education*, 16.

⁴⁶ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 159.

⁴⁷ P. Devitt, *How Adult is ARE?: Gabriel Moran’s Contribution to Adult Religious Education*, 16.

⁴⁸ Occurring in several waves, evangelical revival movements were called awakenings and this period is referred to as the Great Awakening. “First great awakening,” *Wikipedia*, 7 February 2021, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Great_Awakening.

⁴⁹ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 160.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 160-1.

⁵¹ W. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 22.

⁵² J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 161.

Connected to the associated debate were two important concerns. First, questions arose about who should be allowed to preach and to teach. Some asked if only those who had experienced the type of conversion advocated by the revivalists had the right to preach and teach or if competent teaching and preaching was more essential?⁵³ Secondly, questions arose about how to conduct the education of children. In that regard some revivalists stated a belief the focus of any education should be on promoting and supporting conversion within each child.⁵⁴ On that matter Elias⁵⁵ commented:

the contrasting views ... about the role of knowledge and affections, as well as of conversion and nurture, have been constant challenges to Christian educators. One hears in them echoes of arguments between Augustinians and Thomists, Bernard and Abelard, pietists and rationalists. While present-day Christian educators try to do justice to all facets of education, questions still break out about how the differing components are to be organised and where the emphasis should be placed. Greater understanding of the processes of human and faith development and knowledge of differences among individuals give contemporary educators more information and insight on how to provide for the religious education of children and youth.

One of the related vehicles used to promote evangelical revivalism was the Sunday School movement. Originating in England, teachers at Sunday Schools first taught literacy to underprivileged children. However, with increasing access to state schools being available, the focus shifted to Bible study and conversion. Essentially conducted by lay people, the Sunday School curriculum was Bible-based and teaching was supported by making uniform lessons and a certain amount of teacher training available.⁵⁶

⁵³ That question reflects an ongoing dichotomy that frequently resurfaces regarding who should teach the subject religion and what should the outcome of that process be? What should be privileged – conviction and conversion or training and competence?

⁵⁴ The revivalist movement challenged traditional approaches to education. It called into question the nurturing of faith in the family and in the school where the use of reason and an understanding of the faith were fostered. In contrast, revivalism saw education more in terms of how it fostered experiences of conversion and feelings towards one's faith. Schools and families were still valued in that process, but conversion rather than education was a priority.

⁵⁵ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 165.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 166.

In the early 20th century, the religious education movement emerged within Protestantism.⁵⁷ The aims of that movement were to reform⁵⁸ and develop the teaching of religion in Sunday Schools, and reform and develop “adult education, religion in public schools, research in religious education, and the religious education of the public”.⁵⁹ In contrast to prevailing forms of Protestant education, that movement embraced modernity, rejected evangelical theology, reacted strongly against revivalism⁶⁰ and embraced Liberal Protestantism as well as many features of progressive education.⁶¹

Liberal Protestantism⁶² was open to the modern world and encouraged the exploration of ways to reconcile Christianity with many aspects of modern thought. There was also an acceptance by some of the theory of evolution and the use of modern historical methods for studying the Bible. These notions about how to engage with the modern world and human nature⁶³ placed ethics and social justice above dogma in the Christian life. Liberal Protestant schools also expressed tolerance for different religious views and rejected proselytising. Moreover, they accepted humanistic and social interpretations of the Christian tradition.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ In 1903 liberal religious educators such as Coe, Brower, and Fahs began the Religious Education Association (REA). Members of the REA aimed to professionalise the field of religious education. They mobilised academics and parish educators, held yearly meetings and conferences, and began the journal *Religious Education*.

⁵⁸ Critics complained of the mechanical and lifeless way students were taught.

⁵⁹ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 167.

⁶⁰ P. Devitt, *How adult is ARE?: Gabriel Moran's Contribution to Adult Religious Education*, 17.

⁶¹ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, 273-275; P. Devitt, *How adult is ARE?: Gabriel Moran's Contribution to Adult Religious Education*, 17; A. Gellel, “Putting Catholic religious education on the map,” *Revista Pistas*, 706-7.

⁶² Liberal Protestantism was founded in Europe but also had influential proponents in the United States.

⁶³ Viewed human nature more positively and that contrasted with a traditional Christian perception of human nature as ‘fallen’. J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 167.

⁶⁴ Christian doctrine was not seen as absolute and definitive, instead was viewed as an attempt to explain the mystery of life and a product of an historical context. J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 167.

In education, Liberal Protestantism found expression in the ‘religious education movement’⁶⁵. Proponents drew on psychology and sociology for insights about pedagogy and emphasised the growth and learning of children through experience. They also promoted the idea of adapting education to the interests of learners. There was an associated belief too that education should promote social change.

George Coe (1862-1951),⁶⁶ an American leader of the ‘religious education movement’, “wed Protestant liberal theology to elements of the progressive educational theory of John Dewey (1859-1952)”.⁶⁷ He was also critical of the ‘revivalist’ approach to Christian education. On that, he was particularly critical of the ‘transmission approach’ that he believed ran the risk of promoting indoctrination.

The Bible and use of the Bible in education was a key source of difference between those affiliated with the ‘religious education movement’ and both evangelical Christian educators and members of the later neo-orthodox movement. Evangelicals claimed that the Bible should be the only source of content for religious education. For people like Coe, however, it was one of a number of sources of content that could be used to inform and guide the experience of students.⁶⁸

The religious education movement, however, did not have the impact that its proponents desired, as a range of factors worked against the implementation of its ideals and principles. Those included the Great Depression, a lack of interest in the approach by authorities in public schools, and minimal engagement from other, non-

⁶⁵ P. Devitt, *How adult is ARE?: Gabriel Moran’s Contribution to Adult Religious Education*, 17.

⁶⁶ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, 273.

⁶⁷ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 168

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 168

Protestant, religious educators. The influence of reactions by conservative Protestants to the movement were also influential.⁶⁹

In the period between the World Wars, Protestant neoorthodoxy⁷⁰ emerged and challenged the theology of liberal Protestants.⁷¹ For example, God's transcendence rather than immanence was emphasised by the former. Likewise, they gave more emphasis to revelation rather than experience. Liberal Protestants were criticised "for ignoring fundamental biblical doctrines in its attempts to make Christianity relevant in the modern world".⁷² Nevertheless, those committed to neoorthodoxy did not try to restore all of the principles or approaches of orthodox Protestantism. For instance, like Liberal Protestants, some used modern critical approaches in the study of the Bible. Others, like Randolph Crump Miller (1910-2002), also wanted theology to be foundational for religious education and the curriculum to be "both God-centred and experience centred".⁷³

As with liberal Protestant theology, the theology of neoorthodox Protestantism also had an impact upon Protestant education and the teaching of religion. The Bible was central to it and learning was meant to be focused on developing an awareness of human sinfulness and the authority of what God has revealed, rather than on the life situation of the student and the potential of humanity. Concurrently, 'Christian Education' became the label used for writing and speaking about religious education. Moreover, theology rather than the social sciences became important in framing the content taught and methods used. Moreover, because teachers were expected to focus

⁶⁹ P. Devitt, *How Adult is ARE?: Gabriel Moran's Contribution to Adult Religious Education*, 16.

⁷⁰ A theological movement originating in Europe under the leadership of Karl Barth. That movement emphasised Biblical revelation, the transcendence of God, human sinfulness, grace, Jesus and salvation.

⁷¹ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, 275.

⁷² J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 170

⁷³ R. Ulich, *A History of Religious Education: Documents and Interpretations from the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, 275.

on transmitting the theology and tradition of the Church, the theological education of teachers was considered important. The role of the teacher, it was held, was not to convert the student. Rather, it was to sow the seeds of conversion by transmitting the truths of God's revelation.⁷⁴

The 1960s saw further significant developments in relation to the teaching of religion as a subject. In Protestant education circles, the dominance of neoorthodox theology came to an end and theological pluralism emerged. That in turn created a spectrum of competing approaches on pedagogy.⁷⁵ Examples include the faith community approaches, faith development approaches, liberation theories, evangelical religious education, and feminist approaches.⁷⁶ All used and integrated, with differing emphases, theology, social sciences, proponents of psychology, and education theory.⁷⁷ Those developments also foreshadowed what was to eventuate within Catholic educational circles in later periods.

The Teaching of Religion: Non-Confessional Approaches

Within Protestantism a plurality of thought and approaches in relation to the teaching of religion as a subject contributed to the development of non-confessional approaches. One place where that happened was in Britain. There, modern forms of mass education began early in the 19th century. Funding for the associated schools came primarily from the Christian churches,⁷⁸ with government reluctant to be involved.⁷⁹ However, growing demand for schooling created gaps in provision.

⁷⁴ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 172-4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 175.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 176.

⁷⁷ J. Astley, L. Francis, and C. Crowder, *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: A Reader on Theology and Christian Education*, x-xix, 1-2, 3-13.

⁷⁸ L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 53.

⁷⁹ Government money to support these schools was first provided in 1833.

Addressing those eventually required the involvement of the State.⁸⁰ The first significant response was the 1870 Elementary Education Act.⁸¹ That led to the creation of Board schools.⁸²

In terms of the teaching of religion as a subject in Board schools, the government instituted several measures. The 1870 Act did not specify that religion needed to be taught. However, following the example of the schools established by the different churches, religious instruction did tend to be taught in them. Additionally, parents had the right to withdraw their children⁸³ from religious instruction and religious observance.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the Cowper-Temple clause “excluded denominational specific teaching”⁸⁵ of religion. Instead, a religiously inclusive, non-denominational form of religious instruction was required.

In the 1944 Education Act⁸⁶ church and Board schools were integrated into one system administered through Local Education Authorities. Both types of school now received financial support from the government. Furthermore, religious education, that included both ‘religious instruction’ and ‘collective worship’, was compulsory. However, the Act also allowed both students and teachers to be exempted from those activities.

⁸⁰ Government was the only institution with the capacity to fund such a large enterprise.

⁸¹ Great Britain. *Elementary Education Act, 1870, amendment. A bill to amend section ninety-seven of the Elementary Education Act, 1870.* Cambridge [England], http://gateway.proquest.com.ezproxy.slv.vic.gov.au/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:rec:1897-074471.

⁸² Those schools were referred to as Board schools because the Act required local boards to oversee each school. L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 54; *Education Act of 1870*, 9 July 2021, <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1870-elementary-education-act.html>.

⁸³ L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 54.

⁸⁴ In the 1944 Act, religious instruction and religious observance (collective worship) were seen to comprise religious education. L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 56.

⁸⁵ That clause was in response to Nonconformist’s who feared their children would be taught Anglican doctrine.

⁸⁶ The degree of control and funding depended upon whether they were classified as ‘aided’, ‘controlled’ or ‘special agreement’. L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 55; *Education Act 1944*, 9 July 2021, <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1944-education-act.html>.

The Act did not specify what religion was to be taught but the assumption was that it would be a Christian one. The authorities in each school were required to teach an ‘agreed syllabus’ developed or approved by a local school authority. The aim was to ensure that it was uncontroversial and as inclusive as possible. In a similar vein and reflecting changes in British society, many of the syllabi approved were non-denominational Christian ones.⁸⁷

Up to 1960s, the British system of teaching religion as a subject in schools funded by the State had a number of distinctive features. It was a form of non-denominational confessional religious education and school boards developed the ‘agreed syllabuses’.⁸⁸ Those “assumed the truth of Christianity and presumed that the aim of religious education was to nurture Christian faith”.⁸⁹ Content was Bible based⁹⁰ and included lessons on the history of Christianity in Britain and the study of local saints.⁹¹

In the 1960s, in Britain, consensus about the aims of religious education began to break down as in other parts of the world and across Christian denominations. Contributing to the development was a cultural shift in society that involved widespread criticism of traditional authority and institutions;⁹² “progressive and liberal ideas became the currency of public debates and discussions”.⁹³ That shift led to an increased willingness to question prevailing or dominant modes of thought in

⁸⁷ Voluntary aided schools, through their own Church controlled board were able to approve and use a denominational religious education. L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 55-56, 57.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 53-58.

⁸⁹ The 1944 Education Act did not specify a religion, but many assumed Christianity would be the only religion studied. Local boards negotiated a solution where ambiguities or exceptions existed. L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 56-57.

⁹⁰ Religious education classes were sometimes referred to as ‘the scripture lesson’ because passages from the Old and New Testament and biblical history were studied.

⁹¹ L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 57.

⁹² Ibid, 57-58.

⁹³ Ibid, 58.

society. Other related factors also contributed to the re-evaluation of religious education in Britain. Those included less support for institutional religion, a questioning of traditional Christian beliefs and values and, following a growth in post-War immigration, the development of a multi-faith Britain.⁹⁴

The broader societal changes also contributed to a re-evaluation of the aims of education and methods used. As part of that, the teaching of religion as a subject gained attention,⁹⁵ particularly in government ‘maintained’ schools. In Britain, for example, the effectiveness of the approach and content of the agreed syllabi for religious education was now questioned.⁹⁶ Some argued for “a more experientially focused (Loukes 1961) life-centred approach to religious education (Hubrey 1960). Others, such as Brigid Brophy and A.J Ayer advocated a more radical solution and called for the subject to be replaced with secular moral education”.⁹⁷

The early criticisms when considered alongside the results of new research in psychology and theology prompted debate and discussion about the aims and directions of religious education. On that, Jackson⁹⁸ stated:

A subsidiary influence from the 1970s was the emergence of the scientific study of religions in universities (itself subject to secular and pluralistic influences) and various developments in pedagogical theory and practice, supported by educational research. To exemplify this academic influence briefly, religious education writing from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s began to take account of the increasing secularity and plurality of British society, notably Edwin Cox’s book *Changing Aims in Religious Education* (1966) and Ninian Smart, *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion* (1968). There was a general move towards an epistemological and social justification of the place of RE in the curriculum based, not on religion’s self-evident or publicly agreed truth, but on its role as a distinctive area of experience, or ‘realm of meaning’, and on its active presence in society.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ R. Jackson, “Religious education in England: The story to 2013,” *Pedagogiek* 33, no. 2 (2013), 121.

⁹⁶ L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 58.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 58-59.

⁹⁸ R. Jackson, “Religious education in England: The story to 2013,” *Pedagogiek*, 121.

In Britain, Ninian Smart played an important role.⁹⁹ His ideas became especially influential following the publication¹⁰⁰ of the 1971 *Working Paper 36: Religious Education in the Secondary School*.¹⁰¹ That paper made three key contributions.¹⁰² First, it critiqued Christian confessionalism, considering it be a form of indoctrination, inconsistent with modern education and inappropriate in a secular and plural society.¹⁰³ Secondly, as a counter to Christian confessionalism, it argued for a phenomenological approach in religious education. That would entail a systematic presentation of the beliefs and practices of different religions.¹⁰⁴ Thirdly, it argued that a phenomenological approach would help build religious tolerance by teaching about different religions and would simultaneously help address issues of racism, prejudice and religious intolerance.¹⁰⁵

The Teaching of Religion: A Contested Space

Early approaches to teaching religion were essentially catechetical in orientation.¹⁰⁶ Many also tended to make the teaching of religion very content focused. Twentieth century education thought, however, introduced the idea that the role of the student in the learning process is important. Subsequent models and approaches emerged from educationists grappling with the social and cultural context in which learning takes

⁹⁹ L. Barnes, "Ninian Smart and the phenomenological approach to religious education," *Religion* 30, no. 4 (2000), 315–32; D. Cush, "Schools Council Working Paper 36, several books by Ninian Smart, and the 2019 golden anniversary of non-confessional, multi-faith RE," *British Journal of Religious Education* 41, no. 3 (2019), 367-369.

¹⁰⁰ Ninian Smart directed the production of that paper.

¹⁰¹ Schools Council, *Working Paper 36: Religious Education in Secondary Schools* (London: Evans/Methuen, 1971).

¹⁰² L. Barnes, "Working Paper 36, Christian confessionalism and phenomenological religious education," *International Journal of Christianity and Education* 6, (2002), 61-77.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 65.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 71-72.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 74-75.

¹⁰⁶ A catechetical orientation presumes that students are engaged or wish to be engaged with faith and the Church.

place and with which the religion interacts.¹⁰⁷ Those developments gave rise to a number of different approaches to the teaching of religion and to the asking of questions on the nature of learning. The outcome was an increased plurality of approaches.¹⁰⁸

Protestant approaches to the teaching of religion reflected many of the shifting and contested debates referred to above.¹⁰⁹ In each case, a different theological perspective dominates. Each also uses and integrates a variety of theories and practices drawn from the social sciences, from psychology and from education.

The construction of religion as a subject during the second half of the 20th century began to increasingly be marked by a plurality of approaches and divergence in both thought and practice. From the 1990s, approaches became increasingly fragmented, disparate, and highly contested.¹¹⁰ That development is also significant because it witnessed a discernible shift towards grounding the teaching of religion in education rather than in theology. That was so in relation to the confessional as well as to the non-confessional forms of the subject. For example, according to Barnes,¹¹¹ a successive set of beliefs and values have influenced the teaching of religion as a subject in the United Kingdom. A confessional model of religious education dominated but then declined¹¹² during the 1960s and 1970s.

¹⁰⁷ L. Robinson, "Contemporary approaches to religious education," in *A Companion to Catholic Education*, ed. L. Franchi, and S. McKinney (Gracewing: Leominster, UK., 2011).

¹⁰⁸ P. Hemming, *Religion in the Primary School: Ethos, Diversity, Citizenship* (London: Routledge, 2017), 1-14.

¹⁰⁹ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 175.

¹¹⁰ Robinson refers to three related concepts that help explain that fragmentation. Each refers to the social and cultural context in which the teaching of religion occurs. These concepts are the pre-modern world, the modern world, and the post-modern world. The modern worldview refers to "the belief that facts are discoverable, and truth is objectively knowable" while the pre-modern worldview, see truths "revealed by God, in religious, infallible texts". In a post-modern worldview, a disputed concept, there is less certainty about what is true and knowable. L. Robinson, "Contemporary approaches to religious education," in *A Companion to Catholic Education*, 162-163.

¹¹¹ L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 6.

¹¹² A confessional model stills endures in Catholic schools. L. Barnes, *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*, 6.

A non-confessional approach to religious education replaced the latter model. Liberal theology and values shaped it and were dominant through to the 1990s. By then, the liberal model of non-confessional religious education too was competing with another form of non-confessional religious education, one “model strongly influenced by post-modern accents and commitments”.¹¹³ For Barnes,¹¹⁴ however, neither the liberal model nor the post-modern model of non-confessional religious education were capable of meeting the challenges posed by social diversity.

Highlighting the latter matter, Barnes¹¹⁵ stated:

The commonly recited narrative of modern British religious education, at least among professional religious educators... is of confessionalism (in the form of Christian religious nurture) giving way to neutrality, commitment to professionalism, and indoctrination to education. It is a tale of progress and the triumph of reason over unreason... The story is more controversial, contested, convoluted and ideological, resulting in educational losses as well as educational gains.

Robinson¹¹⁶ further emphasised both the contested nature of the subject and the diversity found in approaches taken to the teaching of religion. He listed and examined a number of those. They include the critical realist approach, the phenomenological approach, the anthropological approach, the interpretative approach, the experiential approach, religious education as a gift to the child, the narrative approach, the religious literacy approach, and the constructivist approach. Each approach has a number of distinctive qualities. In practice, however, the distinctions may become blurred, a process Buchanan¹¹⁷ has referred to as ‘pedagogical drift’. That term refers to the

¹¹³ Ibid, 6.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 1.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ L. Robinson, “Contemporary approaches to religious education,” in *A Companion to Catholic Education*, 166-180.

¹¹⁷ M. Buchanan, “Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education,” *Religious Education: The Official Journal of the Religious Education Association*, 20-37.

situation “where aspects of the pedagogical techniques and the rationale associated with a particular approach surface in a distinct yet related paradigm”.

The Teaching of Religion: Catholic Developments

When developments in Protestant education and associated debates¹¹⁸ about the teaching of religion as a subject started to take place, the stalwarts of Catholic education developed and maintained¹¹⁹ what is known as traditional catechesis.¹²⁰ On that, two important developments early in the Catholic Counter Reformation contributed to the development and success of traditional catechesis. The first was the formation¹²¹ of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD),¹²² while the second was the redirection in focus by existing religious orders¹²³ towards the task of providing Catholic education.¹²⁴ Both initiatives helped sustain the teaching of religion within the Catholic community, contributed to the development of modern

¹¹⁸ Prior to the 1960s, many developments within Protestant forms of religion teaching prefigured the types of issues, debates and developments that occurred with Catholic forms of religion teaching after the 1960s.

¹¹⁹ L. Franchi, *Shared Mission: Religious Education in the Catholic Tradition*, 47-59.

¹²⁰ The purpose of such instruction was to develop orthodox believers who knew and could defend the key propositions of the faith. According to Elias, Catholic education has been informed in the past by three broad educational ‘theories’: the Christian humanist tradition, opposition to the theology of Protestantism, engagement with modernity. Each of these ‘theories’ or dispositions have influenced how the Church has constructed and interacted with the subject religion. J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 191.

¹²¹ The CCD was proposed in 1560 and finally established in 1571. J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 98.

¹²² J. Collins, “The beginnings of the CCD in Europe and its modern revival,” in *Sourcebook for modern catechetics*, Vol. 1, ed. M. Warren (Winona: Saint Mary’s Press, 1983); A. Whenman, *In Good Faith: A Historical Study of the Provision of Religious Education for Catholic Children Not in Catholic Schools in New South Wales: The CCD Movement 1880-2000*, 23-35; S. Raftery and D. Leege, “Report No. 14: Catechesis, religious education, and the parish,” in *Reports: A Comprehensive Survey of Roman Catholic Parishes in the United States*, 2.

¹²³ T. O’Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-Speaking World 1891-1965* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); B. Hellinckx, F. Simon, and M. Depaepe, *The Forgotten Contribution of the Teaching Sisters* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009); R. Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹²⁴ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 97.

forms of Catholic schooling, and laid foundations for what became known as traditional catechesis.¹²⁵

Prior to the Reformation the religious education of lay people and many of the clergy was limited. During the Catholic Counter Reformation that followed the Council of Trent (1545-1563), Church authorities recognised that and they responded to the deficiency. In Italy ‘schools’¹²⁶ for children that taught Christian doctrine were established by priests and groups of lay catechists.¹²⁷ From those foundations two distinct groups of schools developed. The first had priests providing instruction. From that group ‘teaching orders’ first began to emerge. The second was led by lay catechists¹²⁸ working in parishes¹²⁹ and teaching under the title of the ‘Confraternity of Christian Doctrine’ (CCD).¹³⁰ Both groups focused on providing doctrinally sound teaching presented in a manner deemed appropriate and suitable to the needs of the individual learner.¹³¹ Fostering and practising faith through instruction and practice was also important.

¹²⁵ Both initiatives underwent their own evolutions during the period spanning the 16th and 20th century. How each was constructed when first developed did not remain constant and unchanging. P. Devitt, *How Adult is ARE?: Gabriel Moran’s Contribution to Adult Religious education*, 12.

¹²⁶ The idea of a school in this context should not be confused with modern institutions where a structured program of learning exists in a fixed place. These ‘schools’ were available places where learning could occur. From these places of learning more fixed and more formal spaces that today we know as schools began to develop.

¹²⁷ J. Collins, “The beginnings of the CCD in Europe and its modern revival,” in M. Warren, *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, Vol. 1, 147.

¹²⁸ In the Catholic faith tradition the term catechist has been used in a variety of ways. J. Paprocki, *Beyond the Catechist’s Toolbox: Catechesis that not only Informs but also Transforms* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2013), 4. Also see G. Moran, “Catechetics in context ... later reflections,” in M. Warren, *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics* (Winona: Saint Mary’s Press, 1983), Vol. 1, 290-299; J. DiMartino Lanter, *Catechesis and Culture: An Analysis of Catechetical Approaches for Elementary-Age Students in the United States, Pre-Colonial to Present* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, the Athenaeum of Ohio/Mount St. Mary’s Seminary of the West, 2014).

¹²⁹ The CCD began as a mostly parish based lay movement providing a religious education for Catholic children and adults. A. Whenman, *In Good Faith: A Historical Study of the Provision of Religious Education for Catholic Children Not in Catholic Schools in New South Wales: The CCD Movement 1880-2000*, 23.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 25.

¹³¹ For most Catholics prior to the founding of the CCD, a formal education, and in particular a religious education, did not exist. Education in general was either for clerical and religious life or only available to the privileged few. The pulpit and the culture of Christendom provided the only opportunity for learning about faith and being socialised into the Christian life. A. Whenman, *In Good Faith: A*

Traditional catechesis, a highly standardised approach to teaching the subject religion to Catholics, developed gradually from those foundations. Central was the use of catechisms.¹³² In Australia,¹³³ in 1885, all dioceses decided to use one in the teaching of religion that was based on the Irish Maynooth Catechism.¹³⁴ That was later referred to as the ‘penny’¹³⁵ or ‘green’¹³⁶ catechism and was in use for the next 80 years.¹³⁷ The structure and style were similar to other catechisms, with each of its four main sections using a question-and-answer format. Those sections were the Creed, Commandments, Sacraments, and Prayer. Memorisation of the text was a common if not the sole teaching strategy employed in the classroom.

According to Campion,¹³⁸ that catechism was “the single most influential document in Australian Catholic history”. It was a common and familiar source of instruction for Catholic children for many years up until the 1960s.¹³⁹ Further, use of it had fostered a uniform and shared faith for several generations¹⁴⁰ of Australian

Historical Study of the Provision of Religious Education for Catholic Children Not in Catholic Schools in New South Wales: the CCD Movement 1880-2000, 24.

¹³² P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 45, 65.

¹³³ Catholic schools became the typical locus of catechesis following the advent of compulsory schooling. P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 70.

¹³⁴ The First Plenary Council of bishops in Australia (1885) adopted for use in all dioceses a catechism based on the one approved for use by the National Synod of Ireland in 1875. This was further reinforced in later Plenary Councils in 1895, 1905 and 1937. R. Rymarz, “Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s,” *Journal of Religious Education* 51, no. 1 (2003), 50.

¹³⁵ An important feature of a catechism was that it was accessible and affordable. These catechisms would often be passed down within a family and across generations. R. Rymarz, “Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s,” *Journal of Religious Education*, 50.

¹³⁶ There were a range of different local catechisms in use throughout the world.

¹³⁷ Trainor suggests the green or penny catechism was developed as a result of concerns about the Maynooth catechism. M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism* (North Blackburn, Vic: Collins Dove, 1991) 81-82; J. Laffin, “Beovich, Matthew (1896–1981),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography*, Australian National University, 28 July 2019, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/beovich-matthew-12198/text_21871.

¹³⁸ E. Campion, *Great Australian Catholics* (Ringwood, Victoria: Aurora Books in association with David Lovell Publishing, 1997), 146.

¹³⁹ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools* (Brisbane: Lumino Press, 2013), 46.

¹⁴⁰ That shared experience broke down in the 1960s. M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 51-53.

Catholic families.¹⁴¹ That also meant that in matters concerning the teaching of religion as a school subject, multiple generations understood what took place in the classroom. At the same time, that shared experience also meant that there was often resistance to those trying to improve upon or change what was taught.¹⁴²

While learning the catechism was a universal experience for Australian Catholic children in Catholic schools during the period, some also experienced a form of biblical studies that relied upon secondary sources,¹⁴³ not the Bible. Those sources re-told biblical stories and presented maps and pictures that illustrated some aspects of the Bible. The intended purpose was not to promote an understanding or use of the bible, but to reinforce Church doctrines learnt from the catechism.

The use of catechisms in traditional catechesis meant that the content to be learnt was explicit and the method of instruction straightforward. Teachers were dependent upon the text and were expected to rely upon the authority of the Church as expressed in it. The view was that teachers did not need to be well versed or skilled in theology or even to necessarily be a skilled instructor. As a result, teacher training for the role tended to be rudimentary. Some, however, did draw upon progressive ideas about classroom teaching when those emerged in the early part of the 20th century in the United States and Europe. Furthermore, the style of teaching relied upon for traditional catechesis was not unique in terms of the way in which other subjects were taught. For example, textbooks tended to shape the content and method of instruction used in all subjects.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 70.

¹⁴² G. Rummery, "The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools, 1872-1972," *Journal of Religious History* 9, no. 3 (1977), 312.

¹⁴³ Bible history textbooks included Reeve's *History of the Bible and the Church* and Schuster's *Illustrated Bible History of the Old and New Testament*. M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 46.

¹⁴⁴ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 50.

Traditional catechesis became a stable and well established approach to teaching religion as a subject. By the end of the 19th century, however, many recognised problems with it in relation to both the prescribed content and the style of teaching.¹⁴⁵ Critics also pointed out the challenges that using the approach presented for both students and teachers,¹⁴⁶ indicating that it relied upon memorisation and casuistry. They also pointed out that it depended upon indoctrination and a non-questioning acceptance of Church authority. For many students too, learning in the subject was dull, was lacking in imagination and was unresponsive to their own ‘real’ questions.¹⁴⁷

Hagarty¹⁴⁸ summarised as follows the types of concerns expressed overall about the methods used:

The typical religious instruction around the turn of the century was rooted in the view that the mind was an isolated faculty. Because of this, revelation was presented as a system of truths that were expressed in precise definitions, and "an iron wall separated the life of faith from secular life." Pierre Ranwez described the lessons at this time as deductive and abstract. They involved limited participation of the students and were characterized by a lack of adaptation. Some problems manifested themselves: students were bored and lacked interest, many former students ceased practicing their religion, and there were many who showed signs of external fidelity but not of genuine spirituality. Josef Jungmann points out that before the end of the nineteenth century, the milieu of the pupils was becoming less Christian. This de-Christianization of the masses was evident in large cities despite extensive catechetical instruction. The recognition that fostering knowledge was not sufficient and the awareness that psychology was enhancing the methods used in secular subjects spurred change.

During the 20th century, a combination of dissatisfaction with traditional catechesis and advances in education did, however, lead to developments in the subject religion.

¹⁴⁵ C. Sultana, "Catechesis in Europe during the 20th Century," *Sophia - Paideia. Sapienza e Educazione (Sir 1, 27)*, *Miscellanea Di Studi Offerti in Onore Del Prof. Mario Cimosà*, (Roma, 2012), 423-424.

¹⁴⁶ P. Devitt, *How Adult is ARE?: Gabriel Moran's Contribution to Adult Religious Education*, 14.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 74.

¹⁴⁸ M. Hagarty, *The Role of Experience in Religious Education/catechesis in the United States Since the Second Vatican Council: An Analysis and Critique* (Thesis, Catholic University of America, 2000), 6-7.

Those developments and how they relate to the construction of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools will be analysed and discussed in more detail from Chapters 4 onwards.

Conclusion

To recap, the exposition in this chapter, presented in five sections, provided an historical overview of the subject religion. The first section focused on key developments in the Christian practice of teaching religion. The second identified key developments within the Protestant practice of teaching religion. The third provided an overview of how non-confessional forms of teaching religion as a subject developed in the United Kingdom. The fourth section of the chapter considered recent developments in the subject that have led to diverse and increasingly contested approaches in the construction of religion as a subject. The final section of the chapter focused on developments within Catholicism that by the 20th century led to the dominance of a Catholic approach to the teaching of religion known as traditional catechesis. The exposition in the next chapter, Chapter 3, is aimed at placing the study reported later within an historical context by providing an overview of the history of the Catholic Church in Australia.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SINCE 1870

Introduction

The construction of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools historically occurred within various contexts. This chapter provides an overview of one of the most important of those, namely the Roman Catholic Church (the Church) as an institution internationally, nationally and regionally since 1870. It is presented in four sections. The first section outlines a rationale for beginning at 1870. The second section provides an overview of the history of the Church internationally from then. The third section provides an overview of the history of the Church in Australia over the same period. The final section presents an historical overview of the Church in Western Australia.

The Nineteenth Century Church and Modernity

The latter half of the 19th century was a period of flux in the Church's engagement with modernity. During the century, like those in many institutions in European society, leaders of the Catholic Church grappled with a variety of changes in society. These changes had a significant impact upon the ideals, politics, and economic and social lives of people.¹ For the Church, the year 1870 marked an important moment in that period of change and provides a helpful starting point for understanding the context in which the construction of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools occurred.

¹ For example, democratic and liberal ideals, and revolution in both America and France.

Frequently, in response to changes in society, leaders of the institutional Church were slow to adapt, being suspicious if not hostile.² While there were exceptions,³ they often aligned themselves with forces opposed to change, viewing what was occurring in society as an “anti-Catholic onslaught”.⁴ That perception gave rise to a movement known as Ultramontanism,⁵ a political and theological development that was based on a belief in a centralised form of Church government with the Pope at its head and having supreme authority in matters of faith and discipline.⁶ During the 19th century the movement gained in strength, gradually replacing the “traditional decentralized Gallican⁷ form of Church government”.⁸ Furthermore, the ideal central to the movement had a great affect when, in 1870, the First Vatican Council declared Papal infallibility to be a dogma of the Church. For many, and particularly those outside of the fold though, how the leadership of the Church responded to change confirmed their belief that it was a reactionary institution, protective of its privileges, and irrelevant in the modern world.

The pontificate of Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) epitomises how the Church struggled with and responded to the emerging modern world.⁹ Considered a potential

² E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Murdoch University, 2005), 4.

³ C. Cadorette, *Catholicism in Social and Historical Contexts: An Introduction* (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 161-166.

⁴ E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 4.

⁵ Proponents advocated a form of hierarchical and militant Church with the Papacy at its apex and Rome the inspiration for Church life and practice. E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 5.

⁶ J. O’Malley, *Vatican I: The Council and the Making of the Ultramontane Church* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018); A. DeVille, “Vatican I, Pius IX, and the problem of ultramontanism,” *The Catholic World Report*, 3 January 2019, <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2018/09/17/vatican-i-pius-ix-and-the-problem-of-ultramontanism/>.

⁷ E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 65

⁸ *Ibid*, 4.

⁹ R. De Souza, “Two Popes (John Paul II, Leo XIII),” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 136, no. 10 (2003), 36-40; S. O’Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present* (Lanham: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2009), 242-243.

reformer early in his Papacy, personal experience with mob violence and threats to his power in Italy changed his disposition towards social and political reform. From 1850, with the gradual dismantling of the Papal States,¹⁰ his position on social and political reform hardened. He viewed the Papacy's loss of political power as a threat to the authority and the wellbeing of the Church.

Pope Pius IX also believed that the threat and the ongoing pressures for reforms in society were inspired and motivated by the liberalising ideals of the day; ideals considered antithetical to Catholic belief. In response he issued the 1864 encyclical,¹¹ *Quanta Cura (Condemning Current Errors)*.¹² That document contained an appendix, the *Syllabus of Errors*, that was made up of 80 propositions. Those condemned such movements and ideas promoting reform as "rationalism, socialism, liberal capitalism, pantheism, materialism, the defence of divorce, attacks on the traditional family, and accommodation to the modern world".¹³ Many in society, including Catholics, were outraged by them.¹⁴

In 1869, Pope Pius IX convened an Ecumenical Council¹⁵ to counteract the ideas already condemned in the *Syllabus of Errors* and to define doctrine concerning the Church. Known as the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), it met in three sessions, with 714 bishops from around the world participating. Deliberations led to the approval of only two constitutions, the 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith'

¹⁰ Until 1869, popes were both spiritual and political leaders. Loss of the Papal States undermined the political influence of the Papacy.

¹¹ Originally a form of papal communication, in the 19th century those documents became a mode of authoritative teaching. S. O'Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 245.

¹² Pope Pius XI, "Quanta cura: Condemning current errors," *Papal Encyclicals Online*, 26 February 2021, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9quanta.htm>.

¹³ M. Pennock, *This is Our Church: A History of Catholicism* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2007), 191.

¹⁴ C. Cadorette, *Catholicism in Social and Historical Contexts: An Introduction*, 166.

¹⁵ A meeting of Catholic Church leaders.

and the ‘First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ’.¹⁶ The latter represented the most significant outcome of the Council. Its focus was on the role and authority of the Pope, and it defined the doctrine of Papal infallibility.¹⁷ However, after those attending the Council approved the second constitution, the Council went into recess because of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war and was unable to reconvene as Italian troops occupied Rome.¹⁸

An Overview of the Church Internationally since 1870

From 1870, following the loss of the Papal States and the unification of Italy, the leadership provided by the Papacy was largely restricted in the spiritual domain, albeit with some influence exerted upon several political decision makers. Led by Pope Pius IX, the Church continued to resist and oppose liberal thought. The conservative reaction indeed continued for much of the later history of the Church. Nevertheless, some debate was generated on how to possibly come to terms with the modern world.

Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), the next pope, while still suspicious and anxious about modernity, was more accommodating and conciliatory than had been Pope Pius IX.¹⁹ Under his leadership, the Church regained “some of its former influence as a social institution”.²⁰ Two important developments made that possible. First, as noted earlier, with the loss of the Papal States, the Papacy was largely limited to playing a spiritual rather than a political role within society.²¹ Secondly, Catholic theologians

¹⁶ Vatican I, “First Vatican Council (1869-1870),” *Eternal Word Television Network*, 24 February 2021, <https://www.ewtn.com/library/councils/v1.htm>.

¹⁷ M. Pennock, *This is Our Church: A History of Catholicism*, 191.

¹⁸ Only officially brought to a close just before the start of the Second Vatican Council in 1962.

¹⁹ R. Ventresca, “‘A plague of perverse opinions’: Leo XIII’s aeterni patris and the Catholic encounter with modernity,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2009), 145-146.

²⁰ C. Cadorette, *Catholicism in Social and Historical Contexts: An Introduction*, 174.

²¹ R. Ventresca, “‘A plague of perverse opinions’: Leo XIII’s aeterni patris and the Catholic encounter with modernity,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 148; R. De Souza, “Two Popes (John Paul II, Leo XIII),” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, 38.

turned to, and renewed, the use of the Church's philosophical tradition. Central in that task was the revival of Thomistic philosophy that experienced a renewed ascendancy within the Church up until the advent of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).²²

One important way that Pope Leo XIII promoted and developed the spiritual leadership of the Papacy was through papal encyclicals. Many of those explicitly dealt with, or responded to, particular social issues. Often, they either identified or further developed Church teachings and explained how those related to the contemporary world. Pope Leo, and all subsequent popes also used papal encyclicals as a key instrument for promoting papal views on social issues. Furthermore, those documents provided a platform for promoting and enhancing the centrality of the Papacy within the Church.

From Pope Leo onwards, the value and use of encyclicals also grew in stature within the Church, having developed from a form of papal communication into an authoritative instrument of Church teaching. Of those written by Leo, two had a major impact upon the Church and its relationship to wider society: *Aeterni Patris (Of the Eternal Father, 1879)* and *Rerum Novarum (Of New Things, 1891)*.²³ Both typified the Papacy's new approach to the modern world and established two powerful strands or movements²⁴ within the Church. The first strand, initiated by *Aeterni Patris (Of the Eternal Father)*, was the dominance of Neo-Thomistic thought²⁵ (also referred to as

²² R. Ventresca, "A plague of perverse opinions': Leo XIII's aeterni patris and the Catholic encounter with modernity," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 152-154.

²³ Pope Leo XIII, "Encyclicals," The Holy See, 26 February 2021, <http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals.index.html>.

²⁴ Thomistic philosophy became the philosophical and theological basis for the Church's engagement with modernity. It also reinvigorated the Church's academic traditions and provided a basis from which critical historical research could be conducted. R. Ventresca, "A plague of perverse opinions': Leo XIII's aeterni patris and the Catholic encounter with modernity," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 143-144, 157-158; C. Cadorette, *Catholicism in Social and Historical Contexts: An Introduction*, 177-178.

²⁵ J. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003); R. Ventresca, "A plague of perverse opinions': Leo XIII's aeterni patris and the Catholic encounter with modernity," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 144.

Neo-Scholasticism) within the Church. The second, initiated by *Rerum Novarum* (*Of New Things*), was the development of an explicit tradition of Church teachings on social issues that came to be known as the social doctrine of the Church.

The latter developments represented a shift in how the Church interacted with modernity. The fact that the focus developed towards philosophy rather than politics is important as it indicated a move towards a “post-Constantinian Papacy”.²⁶ That in turn was, as indicated already, tied to the renewal of Thomistic philosophy. Looking to the past, leaders of the Church, beginning with Pope Leo XIII, found in it a *modus vivendi* or an acceptable means to allow for engagement with the modern world.²⁷ Furthermore, drawing on Thomistic philosophy, they began to engage with questions and issues in society that dealt with the relationship between the individual and the social order.

The Church’s difficulties with modernity in the 19th century had arisen partly because of developments occurring in relation to a range of intellectual movements.²⁸ A number of those led to social, political and economic changes taking place within society that had repercussions for how the Church and its role within society were perceived. Most notable were Liberalism, Socialism and Communism. In addition, the Enlightenment principles behind associated political movements led to the emergence of a range of intellectual developments that challenged the internal life of the Church and how Catholics thought about themselves, their traditions and Church teachings.

Catholic scholars were not immune from or necessarily opposed to developments in contemporary intellectual thought and methods. Indeed, some

²⁶ R. De Souza, “Two Popes (John Paul II, Leo XIII),” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, 38.

²⁷ R. Ventresca, “‘A plague of perverse opinions’: Leo XIII’s aeterni patris and the Catholic encounter with modernity,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 145.

²⁸ S. O’Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 261.

Catholic scholars began to apply historical methods to the study of liturgy, theology and the Bible. Others considered the use of modern methods and ideas useful for demonstrating ‘the superiority of the past’. Others yet again, however, considered that turning to the past was a fruitless exercise and disagreed with Pope Leo XIII’s encouragement of the use of Thomistic philosophy. The scholars in question did not see in the Medieval canon the “firm, stable and not subject to change”²⁹ way of thought that Pope Leo XIII had seen.³⁰ Further, they argued that Thomistic philosophy did not provide an effective counter-cultural message for society. Instead, in their view, it lacked relevance in the world of modern thought.

In response to such developments, the Papacy, as was the case with so much change at the time, “was generally suspicious or fearful but sometimes, as in the case of liturgy, selectively positive”.³¹ Debate and controversy eventuated. The intensity of that led to the ‘modernist crisis’ that erupted during the Papacy of Pope Leo XIII’s successor, Pope Pius X (1903-1914).

During the papacy of Pope Pius X, the Church responded to a number of political and intellectual issues. For example, fearing Socialism, the requirement that Catholics could not become involved as electors or representatives of the Italian state was relaxed. The Pope also showed a willingness to be flexible in dealing with anticlerical anti-Catholic governments in Latin America, while at the same time taking an uncompromising position in dealings with France and Portugal. On Church governance matters, he reiterated the hierarchical nature of the institution, began a process of codifying Canon law, took measures to ensure that there was a high level

²⁹ Ibid, 262.

³⁰ R. Ventresca, “‘A plague of perverse opinions’: Leo XIII’s aeterni patris and the Catholic encounter with modernity,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 156-158.

³¹ S. O’Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 262.

of training for the priesthood, and closely supervised the appointment and administration of dioceses around the world.³²

The examples provided above illustrate the existence of a Papacy that was capable of being simultaneously both flexible and hard line in its response to issues both within the Church and within wider society. That flexibility was also evident in how Church leaders responded to Catholic scholars in the fields of liturgy and biblical studies. For example, on the one hand, Pope Pius X encouraged and promoted the liturgical reform movement, that in turn had a significant effect upon the worshipping life of all Catholics. On the other hand, suspicion and then hostility towards the work of biblical scholars led to the repression of any Catholic considered to be promoting what he defined as the heresy of Modernism.³³ On that O'Malley³⁴ commented:

Modernism was not so much a heresy as 'the synthesis of all heresies'...[Yet] the definition of Modernism was so general, virtually equated with 'any novelty,' that it could be applied to almost any work of any philosophical or historical school. A veritable purge followed, with excommunications, dismissals from office, and the banning of books reaching epidemic proportions. With more than a grain of truth it has been described as a reign of terror. No doubt, some of the tenets of the Modernists could not be reconciled with Christian belief...but...the innocent got stigmatized and in some cases their careers ruined. The papal actions dealt a heavy blow to Catholic theological life and to Catholic intellectual life more broadly, from which the church suffered for two generations. But they could not utterly stamp out the methods that had struck such deep roots in culture at large and that scholars saw as yielding new truths about old texts and old beliefs.

Pope Pius X died on the outbreak of World War One and his successor, Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) was enthroned. With Catholics located on both sides of the conflict, he was faced with great challenges.

The Church had a presence in most countries throughout the world and was directly involved in responding to the horrors of war, both on and off the battlefield.

³² Ibid, 263-264.

³³ The heresy of Modernism can be difficult to define. See, S. O'Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 266-267.

³⁴ Ibid, 267-268.

Officially, the Vatican maintained strict neutrality, seeking ways to end the conflict and provide help for those suffering. Thus, it began to function as a humanitarian institution with an international presence.

In addition to responding to the war, Pope Benedict XV, while still essentially conservative, was somewhat conciliatory in his dealing with matters of state. For instance, he took steps to mend the Vatican's relationship with various governments, including the French Third Republic. Regarding Italy, he showed a willingness to resolve 'the Roman Question'. Essentially, he oversaw a move towards the Church's acceptance of the Italian state and its legitimacy.

Concerning the internal life of the Church, several significant developments occurred. While Pope Benedict continued to enforce Pope Pius' measures against Modernism, he moderated the zeal and ferocity of some anti-Modernist Catholics. He also oversaw the completion of the new Code of Canon Law in 1917. As part of the codification process and contrary to what had been the case throughout much of the history of the Church, Canons 329 and 330 established the right of the Pope to both set criteria for the selection of bishops and decide on all episcopal appointments.³⁵ In establishing that Papal right, another bureaucratic force in the Church gained momentum.

In his apostolic letter, *Maximum Illud (That Momentous)*, 1919,³⁶ Pope Benedict also insisted on missionaries cultivating the recruitment of local indigenous Catholics for the priesthood and religious life. Furthermore, he reminded bishops in mission countries that they were not there to promote or support the interests of the colonial powers. Those measures not only addressed a particular need at the time, they

³⁵ That decision gave popes "firm control over the episcopacy". S. O'Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 272-273.

³⁶ Pope Benedict XV, "Encyclicals," *The Holy See*, 26 February 2021, <http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/en/encyclicals.index.html>.

also began a process of broadening the make-up of the Church beyond its European roots and contributed to a sense of the institution as an international and supranational organisation.³⁷

Pope Benedict XV's successor, Pope Pius XI (1922-1939),³⁸ while theologically and politically conservative, increased engagement with the modern world. A scholar³⁹ who specialised in Church history, he also had an interest in science, technology and culture. For example, in 1931, he installed a radio station in the Vatican and became the first Pope to speak on radio. The use of that new communication technology enabled him to develop a public presence and profile beyond the Vatican. His encouragement of pilgrimages to the Vatican also helped broaden the public profile and appeal of the papacy for Catholics throughout the world, thus further emphasising its spiritual leadership role. Pope Pius XI also rehabilitated the image of some scholars censured due to the Modernist crisis.⁴⁰ Then, in 1929, he resolved 'the Roman Question' by signing the Lateran Pact with Mussolini.

Throughout the interwar years, Church leaders grappled with the rise in Europe of Fascism and Communism as well as the geopolitical tensions that those new ideologies created.⁴¹ On the eve of World War Two, Pope Pius XII (1939-58) was elected Pope and Catholics again became involved in all sides of the conflict. In 1944, in his Christmas message, he became the first pope to discuss and recommend the merits of democracy. That in turn became a trigger for Catholics worldwide to become more actively engaged in politics.⁴²

³⁷ S. O'Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 274.

³⁸ Within a short space of time, he was appointed Archbishop (October 1919), Cardinal (June 1921) and Pope (February 1922).

³⁹ Ambrose Damiano Achille Ratti, Pope Pius XI, was a well-regarded scholar and librarian who in 1914 became head of the Vatican library.

⁴⁰ S. O'Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 275.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 275-279.

⁴² *Ibid*, 285.

Pope Pius XII also had an important impact upon public perceptions of both the person of the Pope and the central place of the Vatican in the lives of Catholics. Particularly after the war he, like Pope Benedict XV and Pope Pius XI before him, continued to acknowledge and promote the international nature of the Church. He internationalised the make-up of the College of Cardinals, strongly promoted international pilgrimages to Rome, was photographed extensively by the world's media and became the first pope to appear on television.⁴³

While the war preoccupied him throughout much of his papacy,⁴⁴ Pope Pius XII also made significant contributions to the life of the Church, both during and after it.⁴⁵ He was a prolific writer who published much of what he wrote, including 40 encyclicals. Three of those were *Mystici Corporis* (*The Mystical Body of Christ*, 1943), *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (*Inspired by the Holy Spirit*, 1943) and *Mediator Dei* (*Mediator of God*, 1947).⁴⁶ Collectively, they contained ideas and changes that drew upon and promoted scholarship by academics who utilised modern historical and scientific methods of research. Nevertheless, in the 1950s he seemed to reverse his support by issuing his encyclical, *Humani Generis* (*On Human Origin*, 1950),⁴⁷ whose tone and content contrasted with his prior and apparent acceptance of research in historical and biblical studies, theology and liturgical renewal.

Some leading theologians were also removed from office or forbidden to teach and write.⁴⁸ In commenting on that, O'Malley⁴⁹ stated:

It seemed inspired by the fear that Modernism had risen from the grave, and some passages in it seemed to step back from positions Pius earlier took – or

⁴³ Ibid, 281.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 281-282.

⁴⁵ Pius XII is a controversial figure for historians – “the problem of ‘the silence of Pius XII’”. S. O'Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 281-282.

⁴⁶ Pope Pius XII, “Encyclicals,” *The Holy See*, 26 February 2021, <http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals.index.html>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ S. O'Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 287.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

at least they gave comfort to those who were opposed to the positions in the first place. The most recurring complaint of *Humani Generis* was that theologians were not giving due respect to the official teaching of the church, especially as expressed in encyclicals. Pius decried again and again criticisms of Thomistic/Scholastic theology and programs designed to replace or modify it.

While by the end of the war Fascism had effectively been defeated and removed as a threat, Communism had grown with the ascendancy of Russia and the spread of Communist political parties and nations.⁵⁰

The Cold War added to tension and division, both in terms of ideological conflict and the increasing potential and capacity for a global nuclear war. Relatedly, Pope Pius XII not only opposed Communism but also took action to resist its spread. For instance, in 1949, with his approval, “the Holy Office issued a decree excommunicating any Catholic who was a member of the Communist Party” and declared “Communism and Catholicism irreconcilable”.⁵¹ That hostility was to reach its climax during the Papacy of Pope John Paul II (1978-2005).

The Papacy of Pope Pius XII’s successor, Pope John XXIII (1958-63), was a pivotal moment in modern Church history. During his relatively short time in office he initiated processes that saw Catholic Church leaders re-evaluate the Church and its relationship to the modern world. His most significant contribution to that process was a decision that took many by surprise, namely, to convoke an Ecumenical Council, the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).⁵² How he saw the Council was summarised by O’Malley:⁵³

When he announced it he said that the council would reaffirm doctrines and discipline, but he then went on to indicate two special purposes. The first was to promote ‘the enlightenment, edification, and joy of the entire Christian people,’ and the second was to extend ‘a renewed cordial invitation to the faithful of the separated communities to participate with us in this quest for

⁵⁰ After the World War Two, Communism became a very important issue for leaders of the Church.

⁵¹ S. O’Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 288.

⁵² Ibid, 299.

⁵³ Ibid, 298-300.

unity and grace, for which so many souls long in all parts of the world.’... The council was to be ‘predominantly pastoral in character.’ It was to ‘make use of the medicine of mercy rather than of severity,’ so that the church ‘show herself to be the loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness toward the children separated from her.’ The church must of course remain true to itself, but at the same time it must make ‘appropriate changes.’

The Council was an event of global significance and took place at a time of heightened tensions caused by the Cold War. It was a large event involving the participation of many Church leaders from around the world. It met for 10 weeks each year from 1962 through to 1965.

The world’s media paid close attention to the proceedings of the Council and many non-Catholics followed or observed them with interest.⁵⁴ When the Council began, the assembled body of bishops, archbishops and cardinals from around the world rejected many documents prepared by the Roman Curia. In taking that step, and supported by the Pope, they took control of proceedings. They also turned to their own theologians for independent and informed advice. Many of those became instrumental in shaping the direction and content of the Council and became key leaders in the Church afterwards.⁵⁵

In addition to convening the Council, Pope John XXIII made important contributions to both the Church and society. During the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) he took steps to reduce the tension between the two superpowers, including taking initiatives involving the Soviet premier, Nikita Khrushchev. His encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (*Peace on Earth*, 1962),⁵⁶ that argued for peace and reconciliation, was intended for all people, not just Catholics. In contrast also to the demeanour of his predecessor, Pope John XXIII was considered a friendly, jovial and pastoral person. He re-

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ All popes elected during and after the Second Vatican Council, up until the election of Francis I in 2013, made significant contributions to the work of that Council.

⁵⁶ Pope John XXIII, “Encyclicals,” *The Holy See*, 26 February 2021, <http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals.index.html>.

established a working relationship with his co-workers in the Roman Curia and rejuvenated the College of Cardinals. He was positive and supportive in his dealings with the Italian government and avoided involvement in Italian party-political matters even when that meant Christian Democrats might lose votes to Communists.⁵⁷

The appeal of Pope John XXIII was due not only to some of the decisions he took but also to his personality:

His death evoked an outpouring of grief worldwide that had never occurred for any other pope. People saw in his death the loss of a great world leader, but many felt the death almost as the loss of a personal friend, of somebody who understood them, who could tell jokes, and whose heart was warm.⁵⁸

With his death, many in the Church wondered if the Council would meet again, and if it did, whether its direction would change. With the election of Pope Paul VI (1963-78), both questions were answered: the Council continued and in the same direction. Yet neither Pope Paul VI's election to the pontificate, the remaining sessions of the Council, nor the implementation of the Council's positions were free of tension and conflict.

The operation of the Council continued to be difficult, partly because of its large size,⁵⁹ but mostly due to the existence of an aggressive minority unwilling to work towards consensus.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Pope Paul VI was able to steer it to a conclusion with a number of important achievements:

Its major achievements were the result of the historical and philosophical scholarship of the previous hundred years, much of it done under an atmosphere of suspicion and repression. The decree on the liturgy especially recovered the principle of full participation of the congregation in the sacred action of the mass, reversing a long historical process that located all action in the priest. The decree on religious liberty was the fruit of philosophical reflection on the changed political and social conditions that began to prevail after the French Revolution. It validated forms of separation of church and state, which overturned previous papal condemnations of the idea. The decree

⁵⁷ S. O'Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 294-297.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 301.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 307.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 304.

on ecumenism and non-Christian religions (especially Judaism) resulted from research into the historical origins of religious divisions and diversities, from philosophical and theological reflection on them, and from a more acute realisation of the cost in human life and suffering those divisions and differences had caused. The final decree of the council ‘on the Church in the Modern World’ attempted to reverse the papacy’s utter rejection of that world proclaimed in the nineteenth century and reiterated in more muted terms in the twentieth. The document made clear that the church is not against the modern world, nor is it for the modern world. It is *in* the world as a privileged partner in dialogue with it and hence takes its share of responsibility for the well-being of the world. Although Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* first notably moved the church in this direction, the decree took it incomparably further.⁶¹

While the Papacy of Pope Paul VI achieved much and earned him respect both within the Church and in the world, the Church had to contend with the fallout set in motion by many of the changes he oversaw.⁶² His famous encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (*On the Regulation of Human Births*, 1968),⁶³ essentially a reflection upon love in marriage, quickly gained notoriety for its declaration prohibiting birth control. That development, how the decision was arrived at, and a change in attitudes within the Church, all contributed to strong disagreement, with bishops and theologians openly debating and dissenting from the teachings presented.⁶⁴

Pope John Paul I was elected in 1978 but only after 33 days in office, he died. During that short pontificate he did away with much of the ecclesiastical pomp associated with his office.⁶⁵ He also broke with tradition when he chose a double name to honour his two immediate predecessors.

The election of Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) also involved a break with tradition. When the conclave elected Karol Wojtyla, from Poland, he became the first non-Italian Pope since the early 16th century. His Papacy, unlike that of his

⁶¹ Ibid, 308.

⁶² Ibid, 306-7.

⁶³ Pope Paul VI, “Encyclicals,” *The Holy See*, 26 February 2021, <http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en.html>.

⁶⁴ S. O’Malley, *A History of the Popes from Peter to the Present*, 309.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 314.

predecessor, had a significant impact upon both the Church and the world. He travelled widely and had a rock star-like presence⁶⁶ when he engaged with the public. What tended to be projected, though, was a conservative worldview. He was strongly anti-Communist.⁶⁷ Because of his support and use of his moral authority as pope, he is also credited with having contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Along with others in the Church, Pope John Paul II was determined to wind back some of what were seen by him to be the more radical and excessive developments that had occurred in the Church after the Second Vatican Council. At the Council, that he had attended as a bishop, he also became one of a number of leading thinkers who helped shape it. Like Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger,⁶⁸ another significant contributor, he became concerned about what was happening to the Church. On the world stage, he not only fought against Communism, but also what he referred to as a ‘culture of death’ which he saw as an issue in Western societies, particularly with regard to legislation permitting abortion. He also installed many bishops who complied with his vision of Church. Finally, while not seen at the time as a defining issue during most of his Papacy, it was during his period in office that the issue of child sexual abuse by Church officials and the management of the issue by Church officials, including the Papacy, began to emerge publicly as a matter to be addressed.

⁶⁶ He developed a committed group of followers within the Church, especially among young people. It is ironic to note that having personally lived through the worst of two totalitarian regimes there are aspects of his Papacy that reflect these regimes. For example, a ‘cult of the leader’ and ‘youth rallies’.

⁶⁷ He experienced firsthand both Nazi and Soviet occupation and repression.

⁶⁸ Joseph Ratzinger succeeded John Paul II and became Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013).

An Overview of the Australian Catholic Church since 1870

Several important forces contributed to the distinctive features of the Australian Church, particularly since 1870. On the Australian continent there is a long history of settlement that predates the arrival of non-Aboriginal people, who did not begin to occupy and settle there until 1788. The first European settlement, a British penal colony in Sydney Cove, became the colony of New South Wales. Later, other British colonies were established.⁶⁹ Those merged in 1901 to form the federated nation of Australia.

The Catholic Church established a presence early in each colony, and as each grew dioceses were established. Those located around the capital of a colony became an archdiocese with the status of each tending to reflect the standing of each colony.⁷⁰ Further, regional differences at times meant that how leaders of the Australian Church responded to issues were not always uniform.⁷¹ At various times contested issues generated differences between dioceses and amongst key Australian Church leaders.⁷² Sometimes they were even inconsistent with the position of the Vatican.⁷³

Patterns of migration also shaped the character and disposition of the Australian Church. The transportation and management of convicts to British penal

⁶⁹ Additional settlements led to the creation of new colonies: Van Diemen's Land, later called Tasmania, in 1825; The Swan River Colony, later Western Australia, in 1829; South Australia in 1842. In 1851, Victoria separated from New South Wales and became a separate colony. Queensland separated from New South Wales in 1859. With Federation in 1901, the six colonies in Australia became the six States and formed the Commonwealth of Australia. After Federation, Australia created two new Territories: The Northern Territory in 1925 and the Australian Capital Territory in 1938.

⁷⁰ The Archdiocese of Sydney became the most prominent archdiocese in Australia, with the Archbishop of Sydney frequently appointed a cardinal. The Archdiocese of Melbourne was a colonial rival. The dynamic between those two archdioceses often echoed the rivalry of their respective colonies. Both archdioceses have played a major role in shaping the Australian Church. P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History* (Kensington: University of New South Wales Press, 1985), 365.

⁷¹ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 359; E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 40-42.

⁷² The World War One conscription debates in Australia provide a good example.

⁷³ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 364-365.

settlements dominated considerations during the early years of settlement. Catholics who arrived in those years tended largely to be both Irish and convicts.⁷⁴ Further waves of Irish-Catholic migrants, often poor, fostered a distinctive way of being Catholic in Australia.⁷⁵ That developed into a form of Catholic tribalism that was a dominant but evolving⁷⁶ force in the Australian Church. Connected to that Irish tribal identity was the experience of sectarianism.⁷⁷

While much of the history of the Church in Australia up until the end of World War Two involved the unravelling of division and disadvantage,⁷⁸ the tribalism based on religion, ethnicity and class became a dominant force. Indeed, it endured until the end of World War Two, after which significant numbers of Catholic immigrants from non-English speaking countries arrived. Many of those had different experiences of Catholicism and a different sense of religious identity.

While the bitterness of sectarian division had been a feature of British society both before and during the early years of British colonisation in Australia, those administering the colony worked hard to keep government and religion separate.⁷⁹ That secular impulse was another dominant force to emerge and consolidate within society. Consequently, much of the history of religion in Australia, and therefore much

⁷⁴ Being Irish and being Catholic tended to be an ethnic identity rather than a religious identity. From 1850 onwards, however, a closer connection between that ethnic identity and a religious outlook began to be forged. O'Farrell refers to a 'devotional revolution' in the Irish Catholic Church that took place between 1850 and 1875. P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 83.

⁷⁵ E. Campion, *Rockchoppers: Growing up Catholic in Australia* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1982).

⁷⁶ While the Irish character of the Australian Church was a dominant theme, it was contested. For example, Archbishop Polding's struggle with a group of Irish Australian bishops over whether the Church and its hierarchy in Australia would be Irish or English. Later, during the 20th century, a similar struggle emerged involving Australian born clergy, beginning with the Manly Union, who opposed the ongoing appointment of Irish born clergy to positions within the Australian hierarchy.

⁷⁷ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 54-55.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 29.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 17.

of the nation's Catholic Church history, has been shaped by secularism. Nevertheless, it was not static in its conceptualisation or in how it interacted with religion.

The nature of Church leadership also shaped the distinctiveness of the Australian Church. In the early years, lay people provided leadership within the Catholic community.⁸⁰ Some priests, of whom a few were convicts, did arrive and provided leadership.⁸¹ However, until 1819, no episcopal leadership existed⁸² as the bishop responsible resided in Cape Town.⁸³

The process of establishing a Church hierarchy also became a contentious and divisive issue. Internal debate centred on whether the members of that hierarchy would look to England or Ireland for leadership.⁸⁴ Connected to that was the concept of 'home rule', a particularly potent concept for Irish Catholics. For the Irish clergy in colonial Australia, home rule⁸⁵ meant a Church run by Irish clergy with the needs of Ireland, not England, being central. It was to be autocratic and clerical.⁸⁶ Ireland was the centre of its attention⁸⁷ and Rome its arbiter. Its chief battleground was the composition of the Australian bishops. The associated basic argument was that they should be drawn from the Irish clergy for an Irish populated Australian Church.

⁸⁰ E. O'Brien, *The Dawn of Catholicism in Australia*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1928), 149; E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 36.

⁸¹ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 39.

⁸² Catholic emancipation coincided with the early years of colonial settlement in Australia.

⁸³ R. Wiltgen, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, 1825 to 1850* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1979); B. Nairn, "Polding, John Bede (1794–1877)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 25 February 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/polding-john-bede-2557/text3485>.

⁸⁴ E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 38; P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 47, 124.

⁸⁵ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 358-363, 366-371, 378.

⁸⁶ Irish ecclesiastical imperialism is important for understanding how a hierarchical and clerically controlled Church developed in Australia and its impact upon the Church and society in Australia. P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, x.

⁸⁷ E. Larkin, "The devotional revolution in Ireland, 1850-75," *The American Historical Review* 77, (1972), 625-652; J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society, 1848-1916* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1973); D. Miller, "Irish Catholicism and the historian," *Irish Economic and Social History* 13, (1986), 113-116.

Led by a group of Roman trained clergy like the Ultramontane Archbishop of Dublin, Cardinal Cullen (1850-1878),⁸⁸ the Church in Ireland itself underwent a devotional revolution that transformed Irish Catholicism, including its leadership,⁸⁹ into a ‘Romanised’ Irish Church.⁹⁰ Consequently, with Ireland supplying many of Australia’s missionaries and Church leaders, the Australian Church also underwent a similar transformation, placing Rome rather than Ireland at the centre of Church life.⁹¹ The characteristics of that Church meant that it was highly structured, authoritarian, centralised in its administration, and clerical. Lay participation was passive, formalised and Church-centred.⁹²

In the early decades, some form of schooling had been offered in each colony by a range of different institutions, including the Church. Further, in each colony some State aid was available in a variety of formats.⁹³ Most debate about that tended to focus on whether government funds should be given to denominational based schools or if some structure like that of the Irish National School System should be established.⁹⁴ Then, in the 1870s, colonial governments began to consider introducing a state-based system of education that would be free, compulsory, and secular.⁹⁵ O’Farrell⁹⁶ summarised the Catholic response to that:

For Catholics this became the centre for what was probably the most passionate, fundamental and continuing ideological conflict in Australia’s

⁸⁸ E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 44.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 6-7.

⁹⁰ The Irish Church prior to that transformation had been Gallican in outlook. E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 6.

⁹¹ J. Molony, *The Roman Mould of the Australian Catholic Church* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969); E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 39-40.

⁹² *Ibid*, 44.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 26-28.

⁹⁴ E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 28.

⁹⁵ Once each colony recognised the need for such a system, the creation of a suitable system became a priority and debate focused on how it would be organised, paid for and implemented.

⁹⁶ P. O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 358-363, 366-371, 138.

history, the Australian focus for a confrontation that was world-wide; between Catholicism and all those varieties of nineteenth century thought which came under the general heading of 'liberalism'.

From 1870 onwards, different colonial governments then decided to withdraw public funds from all religious schools.

The Catholic community in Australia, led by bishops and clergy, agitated persistently against that decision and committed to supporting a Catholic school system.⁹⁷ With no success though, they now had to provide the resources needed to keep its schools operational. Local Catholic communities were asked to provide the funds needed to build and maintain schools. Furthermore, they recruited, often from overseas, teachers for those schools from a range of different religious communities of women and men who belonged to religious orders. Both the character of the schools and the Australian Church then became influenced significantly by the beliefs, practices and way of life of the religious orders.

Institutionally, the Australian Church also actively participated in public debates. In the colonial period and following Federation in 1901, Church members participated in a range of political and social issues of public concern at a national level. That participation was often motivated by a desire to protect and promote the Church's interests and those of its members.

Moral issues were also of concern for the leaders of the Australian Church. At various times, they commented on or led campaigns directed at certain moral issues, particularly those related to the family and sexual matters. Thus, "by the 1940's Catholic spokesmen were frequently denouncing birth control and contraceptive practices".⁹⁸ Some have claimed that that focus can be attributed to the influence of

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 377.

Irish Jansenism within the Australian Church. O'Farrell, however, explained it in terms of Victorian prudishness.⁹⁹

Small Catholic lay intellectual and professional groups also existed.¹⁰⁰ In Melbourne, much of that development was due to support received from Irish-born Archbishop Mannix who was motivated by a concern for the economic and social well-being of Catholics and was encouraged by Pope Pius XI's teachings, especially as outlined in *Quadragesimo Anno (In the 40th Year, 1931)*.¹⁰¹ The Catholic Action¹⁰² he promoted was a response to Pope Pius XI's desire¹⁰³ for the Church¹⁰⁴ to engage with the modern world. Out of it developed the Catholic Worker group from which a smaller break-away group known as the 'Movement' emerged.¹⁰⁵ That was a secretive group,¹⁰⁶ aimed at combatting the influence of Communists in the trade unions and in the Australian Labor Party (ALP). In 1956, Roman authorities ruled that the Church could not be associated with it but individual Catholics, including priests and bishops, remained sympathetic.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ Before the 1880's a so-called preoccupation with sexual sins did not exist in the Australian Catholic Church, rather Victorian values and the Wowsers movement were picked up by Catholic clergy. P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 377.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 381-384; C. Ryan, "A brief history of Australian catholic youth ministry-part II," *Australasian Catholic Record* 97, no. 1 (2020), 431-444.

¹⁰¹ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 383; C. Ryan, "A brief history of Australian catholic youth ministry-part II," *Australasian Catholic Record*, 440.

¹⁰² That movement was founded and led by a Belgium priest named Joseph Cardijn. Pope Pius XI officially sanctioned it in 1925, and Catholic Action gained wide acceptance with the 1931 publication of the papal encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*. P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 384-387; P. Ormonde, *The Movement* (Sydney: Thomas Nelson, 1972).

¹⁰³ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 384.

¹⁰⁴ Most Australian bishops tended to either ignore or apply a very broad definition to the concept of Catholic Action, often placing a spiritual and devotional emphasis upon the required action. Archbishop Mannix was a significant exception. P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 385.

¹⁰⁵ The Catholic Worker group was one of the few Catholic groups in Australia to oppose the work of Santamaria and the Movement.

¹⁰⁶ The aim of that body was to encourage lay people to find ways to actively influence all areas of society. Santamaria formed a secret group to combat the influence of Communists in trade unions and the Labor Party. This essentially anti-Communist body became known as the 'Movement'. P. Ormonde, *The Movement*, xi.

¹⁰⁷ In 1957, the 'Movement' became a public advocacy organisation known as the National Civic Council and a key supporter of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). Both groups continued to attract

Both Australian society and the Australian Church saw significant changes take place after World War Two because of post-war patterns of migration. Significant numbers of new arrivals were often refugees from non-English speaking European countries, and later, from other parts of the world. That had such an impact upon Australian culture that today Australia is a multicultural society made up of many different ethnic and national groups.

Post-war Australia also saw a significant shift towards lay leadership within the Catholic Church. Education had contributed to the evolution of that development by enabling Catholics to improve their social standing and economic well-being. Many lay people also became directly involved in the work of the Church due to renewed understandings emanating from the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council and to the numerical decline in the number of priests and religious men and women, the traditional backbone of the Australian Church's workforce. In fact some lay people, in addition to their own professional education and training, acquired a professional theological training, further equipping them for leadership within the Church.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) had taken place at a time when Australian culture in general was beginning to expand its horizons and the society generally was experiencing significant change. Particularly for young people, the Australia of the 1960s and 1970s was different to what it had been in the past. For example, "Indigenous Australians achieved greater rights, immigration restrictions and censorship laws were swept aside, theatre and opera companies were established

support from the Catholic community and played an important role in Australian society up until the 1970s. P. Ormonde, *The Movement*, xvii-xviii.

across the country, and Australian rock music began to mention explicitly Australian themes".¹⁰⁸

Catholic education too underwent a transformation following the reintroduction of State aid in the 1960s. That not only provided essential funding for a large, growing and demanding Church schooling enterprise, it also led to the creation of new administrative structures within Catholic education. Concurrently, as the numbers of priests and religious began to decline, bishops had to adjust how they provided for the needs of their diocese. Now, however, they could afford to pay lay Catholic teachers. The process though was not always easy. The Catholic community, used to seeing religious and priests teaching in their schools, found it difficult to accept lay teachers.¹⁰⁹ Lay teachers too had to deal with certain issues. For example, Catholic schools were still often run by members of a religious community or by a diocesan priest and the notion of spiritual 'vocation' prevailed, thus restricting their voices. Bishops also became anxious about the quality of lay teachers and their capacity to teach religion effectively. Complicating their concern was the fact that many Catholics had become disenchanted with some of the Church's teachings, particularly in relation to birth control, following the release of Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* (*On the Regulation of Human Births*)¹¹⁰ in 1968.

A sense too that some lay disobedience existed in Australia made some bishops anxious. Coyne¹¹¹ summarised associated developments:

In the decades since 1970, and the establishment of the modern Catholic Education system, there has been a massive increase in adult faith and

¹⁰⁸ B. Coyne, "Australia and the popes: Significant events in Australia's history during the reign of Pope Paul VI, 1963-1978," Catholic Australia, 3 March 2014, <http://www.catholicaustralia.com.au/page.php?pg=austchurch-popes15>.

¹⁰⁹ Teachers that were religious lived a particular religious way of life which permeated the teaching and ethos of the school; lay teachers were not viewed as having these same qualities.

¹¹⁰ Pope Paul VI, "Encyclicals," *The Holy See*.

¹¹¹ B. Coyne, "Australia and the popes: Significant events in Australia's history during the reign of Pope Paul VI, 1963-1978," Catholic Australia.

theological education albeit that it has mainly been restricted to the privileged elite who are today fortunate enough to be employed by the Church in the Catholic Education and Health Care sectors. On the downside, there was a long period, about a generation in length lasting from about 1970 until the mid-1980s when Religious Education in Catholic schools was considered to be less than ideal. However, what were the bishops to do? Close the system down until they had enough trained lay teachers? The Church tends to do her thinking in decades and centuries and the bishops of Australia pressed on but have attracted considerable criticism, ironically from some of the more conservative sectors of their flocks who were largely responsible for the ‘political success’ in bringing about a more equitable funding of Catholic education from taxation dollars.

There were two major outcomes. First, a significant effort was made by the Church to provide teachers and lay people with an education in theology. That occurred at parish level, in diocesan adult education institutions, through the creation of Catholic teachers’ colleges, and later, through Catholic universities. Secondly, bishops, through Catholic Education Offices, began to oversee the development of religious education support materials for teachers. Those developments led to the growth of an increasingly professional Catholic education system and to numerical growth as more people sought access to Catholic schools for their children. At the same time, however, Catholic parishes experienced gradual and significant decline in numbers, with many baptised Catholics “no longer regularly participating in the weekly sacramental life of the domestic church”.¹¹²

The Western Australian Church 1829 – 1920

The previous sections provided an historical overview of the Church at an international and national level. An historical overview of the Western Australian Catholic Church (WA Church) is now outlined up to the year 1920. Together, those perspectives

¹¹² Ibid.

provide a broad context to how religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools was constructed.

The early years of settlement: 1829-1849

Situated on the western side of the Australian continent and occupying about a third of its size, is the sparsely populated State of Western Australia. It is defined in the north, west and south by coastline. Its eastern boundaries are all large deserts that separate it from the rest of the country. Geographically, it stretches from the tropical north to the temperate south. Its wealth has largely been generated from agriculture and mining. First called the Swan River Settlement, it became the colony of Western Australia in 1832, and then with Federation, the State of Western Australia. Much of its history has echoed that of the rest of the country. However, because of its remote location and the particulars of its own history and geography, the history of Western Australia and the Western Australian Catholic Church (WA Church) have not always reflected the same concerns or outcomes that unfolded in the rest of the country.

The Vicar Apostolic of Mauritius,¹¹³ and later Bishop Polding in Sydney, had early responsibility for the Church in Western Australia. Then, on 1 September 1843, Polding, with Rome's blessing, appointed a Sydney priest, John Brady, as his Vicar General for the Western Australian Colony. Rev. Brady arrived in the colony in November with two other experienced missionaries from the eastern colonies.¹¹⁴ Within three months, he concluded that resources were inadequate for building

¹¹³ D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia* (Perth: Archdiocese of Perth, 1979), 7.

¹¹⁴ The provision of schooling was always considered a part of that mission. E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 13, 22.

churches and schools¹¹⁵ and he left for Europe¹¹⁶ seeking help, both financial and in terms of personnel.¹¹⁷ He returned to Perth, the capital city, in 1846. He was now bishop of a new diocese,¹¹⁸ had raised considerable amounts of money, and brought along 27 missionaries. Together, they had two distinct foci: sustaining and building the European Catholic community and helping and converting Aboriginal people.¹¹⁹ However, it was not long after Bishop Brady's return that certain realities took their toll:

It became painfully obvious that the small Catholic community could not absorb this group of differing nationalities and ecclesiastical training. Only one of the seven priests spoke English fluently. The French priests could do little with the Aboriginals near Albany, were suspected by the English settlers and finally transferred to Mauritius. Dom Joseph Serra and Dom Rosendo Salvado after initial difficulties established the flourishing Aboriginal mission at New Norcia. Meanwhile Brady was living in conditions of extreme privation as death or disaster scattered many of his helpers.¹²⁰

Of the original complement of 27 missionaries, only two groups surmounted the difficulties of mission work and the turmoil created by Bishop Brady's own poor administration skills.¹²¹ The first group consisted of two Benedictines and the second was a community of Sisters of Mercy.¹²²

¹¹⁵ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 13-16.

¹¹⁶ Brady departed for Rome on 11 February 1844 and left Joostens and O'Reilly to continue the work he had initiated.

¹¹⁷ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 16-17.

¹¹⁸ D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 10.

¹¹⁹ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 17; D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 15-21.

¹²⁰ K. O'Donoghue, "Brady, John (1800-1871)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 3 January 2014, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brady-john-1821/text2087>.

¹²¹ E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 10, 19-21, 49, 79-80; D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 15-18, 31.

¹²² G. Byrne, "Ursula Frayne: Sister of Mercy," in *Pioneers of Education in Western Australia*, ed. L. Fletcher (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1982), 9-37.

Colonial Western Australia: 1850-1900

Rome removed Bishop Brady and appointed Dom Serra, a Benedictine,¹²³ to administer the diocese.¹²⁴ Bishop Brady, in response, engaged in a series of disputes and legal actions, creating a schism within the WA Church and a significant amount of scandal in the Colony. The matter was only resolved after Archbishop Polding intervened in 1852. Bishop Brady, then, without resigning as Bishop of Perth, left for Ireland and then France.¹²⁵

In 1849, the Colony became a British penal settlement. From 1850, when the first convicts arrived through to 1868, nearly 10,000 convicts were transported to there.¹²⁶ Significant change followed. The population grew, government funds stimulated the economy, public infrastructure was developed, more land was opened up, and additional settlements were established.¹²⁷ The Catholic proportion of the colonial population also increased.¹²⁸

Bishop Serra encountered his own set of problems.¹²⁹ He believed that the future of the local Church lay more with supporting those Catholics who had arrived and settled in the Colony than with the indigenous population. That view contrasted with what had motivated Bishop Brady and those officials in Rome who believed that an important reason for the existence of the Church in Western Australia was to have

¹²³ Serra was one of the two Benedictines that arrived with Brady's group of missionaries. Dom Salvado, who later also became a bishop, was the other Benedictine.

¹²⁴ K. O'Donoghue, "Brady, John (1800–1871)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*.

¹²⁵ D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 34-48.

¹²⁶ The British government approved that request and the first shipment of convict arrived on 1 June 1850. The convict system ended officially in 1868 but endured until 1886.

¹²⁷ E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 11-12; D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 52-53; J. Reilly, *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Western Australia* (Perth: Sands and McDougall, 1903), 271-275.

¹²⁸ Growth in the number of Catholics in the community had been stimulated by the arrival of convicts and the subsequent economic growth that occurred in the colony.

¹²⁹ D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 65.

an outreach project for the Aboriginal people. The difference of opinion was not settled until Martin Griver (1814-1886),¹³⁰ another Benedictine priest, became administrator of the diocese and, following the death of Bishop Brady in 1871, the second Bishop of Perth. The Catholic population by that stage was scattered geographically and he, along with many of his priests, had, as a result, to travel extensively throughout the colony. Often, he found that Church infrastructure was limited or poor in the settlements. Chief among his concerns was how few priests there were in the Diocese. In response, he recruited additional personnel, mostly English-speaking diocesan priests from Ireland. He also managed his resources carefully and gradually established additional Church infrastructure, including schools and orphanages. He also established *The Record*, a local Catholic newspaper.¹³¹

Matthew Gibney (1835-1925) was one of the priests that Bishop Griver recruited for the Diocese of Perth. An Irish born and trained priest,¹³² he arrived in 1863 and 10 years later became Bishop Griver's Vicar General. In 1886, he was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Perth. Then, following the death of Bishop Griver in the same year, he was consecrated as the third Bishop of Perth. However, in 1910, following a Church inquiry into his administration of Church finances, he resigned.¹³³

During his time as Bishop, Gibney expanded the reach of the local Church by recruiting ever more priests and religious to assist with the geographically dispersed and growing Catholic community. In addition to overseeing the building of yet more churches and schools,¹³⁴ he came to the defence of Aboriginal people in the North

¹³⁰ E. Perez, "Griver, Martin (1814-1886)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 9 January 2014, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/griver-martin-3674/text5739>.

¹³¹ D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 93.

¹³² *Ibid*, 99.

¹³³ For the remaining 15 years of his life, he continued to live in Perth.

¹³⁴ *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 15 January 2014, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gibney-matthew-6305/text10873>.

against the excesses¹³⁵ of Europeans who were beginning to explore and settle the area.¹³⁶ Secondly, he divided the Diocese in 1898, by adding the new Diocese of Geraldton.¹³⁷

By that time, the Church in WA had established a Catholic school system that enabled the bishops of Western Australia to “realise their educational objectives with minimum financial resources”.¹³⁸ Congregations of religious men and women were, before and after the loss of State funding in 1895, the backbone of that system. They brought an experience of teaching and a method of organisation to the task of establishing and developing schools in Western Australia, particularly in regional settlements.¹³⁹

The development and expansion of Catholic education and the role that religious congregations played in the task, though, as well as in the overall mission of the Church in Western Australia, was not a cohesive process. McKenna¹⁴⁰ argued that internal tensions played a significant role in shaping, and at times hindering, how matters unfolded. The situation, he concluded, was due to discord between different groups within the Church. Those included successive bishops, from Bishop Brady through to Bishop Gibney, along with clergy, religious and lay people. At the heart of the matter were “divergent and often competing ecclesiastical cultures”.¹⁴¹ For McKenna,¹⁴² accounting for such discord cannot be explained solely in terms of local factors. He argued that with the rise of the Ultramontane movement internationally

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ He took an active interest in the region and helped establish the Beagle Bay mission in the Kimberley region. That became the foundation for the future Broome Diocese.

¹³⁷ That decision effectively divided the ecclesiastical administration of the colony into two, a northern diocese (Geraldton) and a southern diocese (Perth).

¹³⁸ E. McKenna, *The Influence of Ecclesiastical and Community Cultures on the Development of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1846-1890*, 17.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 17-19.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 54.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 7.

¹⁴² Ibid

there was a shift in the way Church leadership was viewed and that led to a centralised form of ecclesiastical authority. Thus, anxious “to preserve the independence of their community individual superiors disputed any extension of episcopal jurisdiction connected with the ongoing centralisation of ecclesiastical authority”.¹⁴³

The early years of Federation: 1901-1920

By 1900, an economically and politically mature Western Australia had emerged.¹⁴⁴ Its politicians participated, sometimes reluctantly in Australian efforts to create a nation.¹⁴⁵ Then, in 1901, they became signatories when Australia became a federated nation, with each of the colonies becoming States.

Bishop Gibney was an active participant in the affairs of both the Colony and the new State of Western Australia. In particular, he was involved in the Western Australian colonial election of 1894. That election, fought and lost over the principle of government aid to Catholic schools, led to the abolition of government grants to Catholic schools in 1895. Probably because of “a need to replace these lost funds”,¹⁴⁶ Bishop Gibney invested in a number of different financial dealings that did not succeed. By 1908, losses resulted in a significant debt (£216,000) for the diocese. An official Church investigation then led to Bishop Gibney’s resignation in 1910.¹⁴⁷

After a period of consultation, a new Bishop of Perth, Patrick Clune, was nominated, appointed, and consecrated as a bishop on 17 March 1911. His first task was to address the financial situation created by his predecessor.¹⁴⁸ By 1913, a

¹⁴³ Ibid, 54.

¹⁴⁴ In 1890 Britain’s colonial administration of Western Australia ended and responsible self-government introduced.

¹⁴⁵ Referenda had been held in each colony on whether to join the new federated nation of Australia (the Commonwealth of Australia). Western Australians’, for a range of political reasons, had been reluctant to join, but in 1901 a majority voted to join.

¹⁴⁶ V. Callaghan, “Gibney, Matthew (1835–1925),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*.

¹⁴⁷ D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 193.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 192.

significant portion of the debt had been repaid and the finances of the diocese were in reasonable shape. In that same year he went to Rome for his first *ad limina* visit.¹⁴⁹ While he was away, and when travelling in Ireland, he was informed that his diocese had become an archdiocese and he was now the Archbishop and Metropolitan¹⁵⁰ of Perth.¹⁵¹ That elevation was both recognition of his work and the growing importance of the Church in Western Australia.

In 1914, as in many parts of the British Empire, Australia became involved in World War One. For Catholics who were part of the Western Australian community the experience of that war, of its hardships and its challenges meant, much the same as it did for people living in Australia and other parts of the world. Archbishop Clune¹⁵² and a number of his priests served as military chaplains and his service, along with that of his fellow priests, earned him considerable respect within the State's community. On the matter of conscription, Archbishop Clune, unlike Archbishop Mannix in Melbourne, also supported a 'Yes' vote in the two associated referenda.¹⁵³ However, after the War, the reverse occurred on the matter of the 'Irish Troubles'. Archbishop Clune now agreed with Archbishop Mannix but was strongly criticised in Western Australia for the position he adopted.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Canon Law requires each bishop every 5 years to visit the Pope and report on their work. "Ad Limina Apostolorum," *Catholic Dictionary, Catholic Culture*, 26 February 2021, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=31666>.

¹⁵⁰ Until that appointment the Archbishop of Sydney and then the Archbishop of Adelaide had been the Metropolitan for the Western Australian Church.

¹⁵¹ D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 194.

¹⁵² He served both at Gallipoli and for a period of time on the Western Front.

¹⁵³ More Western Australian Catholics supported the introduction of conscription than in other parts of the country. D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 195-197.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 197-199.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an historical overview of the Roman Catholic Church as an institution since 1870 in four sections. The first section outlined a rationale for beginning the overview at 1870. The second summarised the history of the Church internationally from 1870, and the third summarised the history of the Australian Church since 1870. The final section presented an historical overview of the WA Church. Together the four sections of the chapter provide an understanding of the historical context in which each of the periods in which religion as a subject, in Western Australian Catholic schools, were constructed. The study, across six chapters, now addresses each of the three sub periods identified by the theoretical framework. The first of those chapters, Chapter Four provides an outline of how religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools was constructed during the first of these periods, 1929-1962.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGION AS A SUBJECT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: 1929-1962

Introduction

Several important elements contributed to the construction of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools from 1929-1962. The associated developments are presented across two chapters. The first, this one, is in two sections. Section one provides an overview of the broad historical context in which religion as a subject was constructed, the focus being on international and Australian developments in society, in the Church and in education. It is followed by an outline of developments in the construction of the subject itself in Western Australia for Catholic schools during the period 1929-1962. The next chapter, Chapter Five, elaborates on and discusses those developments.

Historical Context

A range of important international developments occurred during the period 1929-1962 that were significant at the time in relation to the study reported here. Warfare, on a scale never seen before was one hallmark of the period. Ideological conflict was another. Associated with that was Communism which was of particular concern to the Catholic Church.

Significant advances in industrial and consumer culture and practice also occurred during the period. Relatedly, technological advances led to the advent and development of such electronic modes of communication as radio and television. By contrast, the Great Depression created great hardship and dislocation for many in the early part of the period. Yet, after World War Two, many Western countries experienced a long period of economic prosperity. The post-war period also led to a

range of issues arising that created significant turmoil, hardship and unrest across the world. They included the mass movements of peoples, decolonisation, and the division of the world into essentially two ideological camps during the Cold War, that was made even more tense with the perpetual risk of nuclear warfare erupting.

As in many other parts of the world, Australians experienced in their own way much of what occurred globally during the period. The experiences during both World Wars and the Great Depression¹ in particular had a direct impact upon the lives of many. Australian society also underwent significant change. Still considered a Dominion of the British Empire, citizens increasingly came to see themselves as members of an independent nation with its own sense of identity. Further, while retaining ties to the United Kingdom, Australia underwent a significant political and cultural shift towards a new strategic ally, the United States. The nation also underwent significant social transformation. While in 1929, for example, society was predominately white and made up of those of Anglo and Celtic backgrounds, by end of the period, largely due to post-war migration, Australian society had irreversibly begun the process of diversifying its ethnic and cultural mix.²

Turning specifically to Western Australia, between the wars, particularly from 1920 until the outbreak of war again in 1939, demographic change took place. Several developments contributed to that. First, governments looked for ways to manage returning soldiers. That led to the 'Group Settlement Scheme' whereby small, undeveloped plots of land were allocated to returning soldiers and their families. Another development involved the Western Australian government supporting the

¹ Western Australia was hit particularly hard by the Great Depression.

² A desire to expand Australia's population and large numbers of displaced people in Europe led the Australian government to develop a program of migration which resulted in a rapid rise in Australia's population. Many of those new arrivals were refugees from non-English speaking European countries and were Catholic. As those people settled in Australia, they began to have an impact upon the character, composition and practices of Australians and the Australian Catholic Church.

expansion of a local dairy industry that involved further opening up land and to diversifying agriculture. A further development was a general increase in the population brought about by the 'Empire Migration Scheme'. Promoted by the national government and in keeping with the nation's White Australia policy, the aim of that assisted migration scheme was to increase the population of Australia by supporting the migration of people from England and Scotland. Of those migrating to Western Australia, many were not Catholics.

Church developments

For much of the period under consideration,³ the Catholic Church was led by two popes, Pope Pius XI (1922 - 1939) and Pope Pius XII (1939 - 1958). Both faced a variety of challenges. Those included the trauma experienced during and after the two global wars and the Spanish Civil War, anti-clericalism in Spain and Mexico, and the Soviet Union's hostility towards religion. As an institution the Church remained defensive, hostile to the principles of the modern world and avidly anti-Communist. The rise of Communism and Fascism also presented significant challenges and resulted in a variety of responses from Church officials. Some of those compromised the Church's moral authority and its standing in society.⁴

The Church also began to operate at a global scale⁵ and became a highly centralised⁶ institution. The Vatican established an increasing number of diplomatic missions. It also encouraged Catholic missionaries to continue or extend their work⁷

³ In 1958 a very different person was elected to the Papacy, Pope John XXIII (1958-1963).

⁴ For example, the 1929 Lateran Treaty with Italy's Fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, and the 1933 Concordat with Nazi Germany.

⁵ For example, Papal encyclicals and the Vatican's use of radio and newspapers.

⁶ P. Elliott, "Vatican I and the doctrine of papal infallibility," *Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Media Blog*, 23 December 2019, <https://mediablog.catholic.org.au/vatican-i-and-the-doctrine-of-papal-infallibility/>; M. Biliniewicz, "Reception and implementation of the First Vatican Council," *Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Media Blog*, 23 December 2019, <https://mediablog.catholic.org.au/reception-and-implementation-of-the-first-vatican-council/>.

⁷ For example, Japan and China.

and it promoted the installation of local bishops in missionary countries. Separately from the Catholic Church, but with the active support of many other Christian denominations, serious steps to facilitate ecumenical dialogue were initiated. While keeping a keen eye on those developments,⁸ leaders of the Church remained very aloof and at times hostile.⁹ There was also a renewed popularity amongst the faithful to personal and communal devotions, particularly Marian devotions.¹⁰

Leaders and members of the Australian Catholic Church grappled with several important domestic issues too during the period under consideration. Some of those echoed developments and debates occurring in other parts of the world, with the rise of Communism, as indicated already, being a major concern. For example, both before and after World War Two, Communist sympathies within trade unionism and the Labor party was very evident.

For many Australian Catholics, the Labor party was a ‘natural’ political home. However, the Church’s hostility towards Communism first disrupted and then tore apart the relationship that many Catholics and their leaders had with Australian trade unionism and the Party. That occurred most dramatically with the 1954 party split and the subsequent formation of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP).¹¹ The Australian Catholic community also began to experience greater success than previously in society, much of that due to education. That success can be seen in the increased social mobility of Australian Catholics, a developing tradition of lay intellectual life and increased lay activism both within and outside the Church.¹²

⁸ It was only with the election of Pope John XXIII (1958), and most importantly during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), that leaders of the Catholic Church began to embrace Ecumenism.

⁹ Pope Pius XI tended to hold a negative attitude towards non-Catholics and the Ecumenical movement. His encyclical *Mortalium animos* (*The Minds of Mortals*, 1928) reflects that attitude.

¹⁰ Church leaders encouraged and supported those devotions.

¹¹ That party was strongly anti-communist.

¹² P. O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History* (Kensington: University of New South Wales Press, 1985), 381-387.

In Western Australia, with an increase in the population and the opening up of new settlements, Church leaders had to expand the presence of the Church and the provision of services. One initiative taken to help address that situation was the development of the 'Bushies Scheme', which is treated in more detail later in this chapter.¹³ At the same time, the proportion of the State's population that was Catholic declined. Furthermore, there was an increasing trend towards urbanisation, particularly in Perth. That meant that more parishes and schools needed to be established. From 1921 until his death in 1935, Archbishop Clune oversaw much of the associated expansion.¹⁴ The onset of the Great Depression though, severely reduced the capacity of the Catholic community in Western Australia to expand Church infrastructure and support its ongoing work.

In 1933, due to ill health, Archbishop Clune chose Redmond Prendiville as his Coadjutor Archbishop.¹⁵ Archbishop Prendiville, an Irish born and Irish trained priest, took over much of Archbishop Clune's administrative work.¹⁶ When Archbishop Clune died on 24 May 1935, Archbishop Prendiville, now aged 35, became the second Archbishop of Perth.

During Prendiville's years as Archbishop (1935-1968), the WA Church faced several challenges and underwent significant change. Chief among those was the Great Depression. In the early stages of that economic crisis, he acted with caution.¹⁷ First

¹³ D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia* (Perth: Archdiocese of Perth, 1979), 202; P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008* (Inglewood: Victor Publishing, 2008), 165-172. ; D. Bourke, "Clune, Patrick Joseph (1864-1935)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 19 January 2014, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clune-patrick-joseph-5689/text9615>.

¹⁴ D. Bourke, "Clune, Patrick Joseph (1864-1935)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*.

¹⁵ K. Massam, "Prendiville, Redmond (1900-1968)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 19 January 2014, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/prendiville-redmond-11453/text20415>.

¹⁶ D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 208.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 209.

as Coadjutor and then as Archbishop of Perth, though, he was less cautious. He initiated building programs and sought additional priests for the Archdiocese. He also located and organised the resources needed to build and support Church facilities. Central to his approach was a policy of financial ‘self-help’. That required members of parishes instead of the Archdiocese itself having to take responsibility for building their own facilities. That approach enabled the Church to undertake an extensive building program.

As Archbishop, Prendiville also supported, expanded and developed various existing and new lay movements, associations and organisations.¹⁸ For him, such organisations were important because they formed and supported Catholics in their religion and supported their participation in the wider community.¹⁹ A centrally informing notion in the development was the Belgium system of Joseph Cardijn²⁰ formulated in the late 1920s. Regarding that, several young priests from Western Australia had studied in Europe and developed an interest in and an understanding of it. When they returned, they set up similar groups in Western Australia, including the *Young Christian Students’ Movement*, *Catholic Girls’ Movement*, the *National Catholic Rural Movement* and the *Young Christian Workers Movement*.²¹ Unlike in some Australian dioceses, Archbishop Prendiville, like the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Gilroy, was wary of those movements though as he considered that they could lead members to become partisan politically.

¹⁸ K. Massam, “Prendiville, Redmond (1900-1968),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*.

¹⁹ Many lay groups already existed in the WA Church. D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 213-214.

²⁰ Joseph Cardijn developed a model for how Catholics, lay and cleric, could contribute towards social change and address inequalities in society.

²¹ *Ibid*, 215.

The events of World War Two, much like those of World War One, also had a dramatic impact upon the lives of Western Australians, both directly through enlistment and indirectly through the effects on a nation supporting the efforts of total warfare. Unlike during World War One, however, Australia feared invasion by the Japanese. For members of the WA Church, the War also meant lost lives, church buildings being requisitioned for the War effort, chaplains being recruited to the armed services, and only limited access to some of the resources needed for continuing the work of the Church being available.

Following the War those in Australian society experienced changes that altered its fabric. The years immediately afterwards saw a dramatic growth in the nation's population, including in Western Australia. In particular, there was a significant increase in births, a 'baby boom'. That meant that additional services to support families and their children were required. Secondly, as indicated earlier, the Australian government began an extensive immigration program as part of a national agenda to increase the population of the nation and to alleviate the suffering of displaced Europeans. Many of the immigrants who arrived were non-English speaking Europeans. In Western Australia, about a third of those were Catholics.²²

For the Catholic community, adapting to the shifts in population meant that additional resources were required to support schools and parishes. It also resulted in the Catholic community in Australia having to negotiate a shift in its cultural outlook. Since settlement, Anglo and Celtic cultural foundations had dominated the outlook of many Catholics in Australia. Now, with a new wave of migration, a more multicultural institution began to develop. Church leaders in Western Australia responded by

²² D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 251.

recruiting priests from Europe familiar with the languages and cultures of the various groups arriving in the State.

Archbishop Prendiville also recruited 21 new religious orders to work in the Archdiocese.²³ Furthermore, he mobilised local Catholic communities to continue supporting the task of building and staffing Catholic parishes, schools and services.²⁴

On that, Bourke²⁵ stated:

The impact of this increase in population upon the Archdiocese was enormous. Facilities and personnel had to be found on a large scale and quickly. As soon as the main building restrictions were eased, churches and schools began to appear, some of them obviously make-shift and temporary, but built with a sense of urgency. Many of them were built, at least partially, by the personal labour of parishioners, who themselves were busy with establishing their own homes at the same time.

A further sign of growth in the Western Australian Church was the creation of a new diocese; in 1954 the Diocese of Bunbury was created from land excised out of the south west region of the Archdiocese. The first bishop of that diocese was Bishop Launcelot Goody.²⁶

Developments in education

For some time now, mass compulsory education sponsored or supervised by the state in various countries required teachers to teach students from a wide range of age groups with many abilities and aptitudes. By the first decades of the 20th century, educators were also increasingly considering the needs of the child within the

²³ K. Massam, "Prendiville, Redmond (1900–1968)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*.

²⁴ Archbishop Prendiville's approach to managing his Archdiocese was not new. However, he developed a more systematic approach and institutionalised a practice of building a school first, then a church followed by a presbytery or a convent. In the growing suburbs of Perth that approach was an effective means for keeping up with population growth. D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, 253-254.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 252.

²⁶ Launcelot Goody was born in England (1908) and migrated to Australia as a child in 1916. His family had been Anglican but became Catholics soon after their arrival. He was considered a local bred priest who represented several important "firsts" in the Western Australian Church. In 1951 he was consecrated a Bishop and became the Archdiocese's first auxiliary bishop.

schooling process. Both within Church-based and state-run schools, educators were being informed too by new philosophies such as existentialism and phenomenology. Psychology, a relatively new discipline, also played an important role in shaping how educators understood knowledge and the process of learning, particularly in terms of pedagogy.²⁷

The beginning of the 20th century saw several important developments in education in Australia.²⁸ Chief among those was the ‘new education’ movement.²⁹ That gained traction because of a general desire to see reform in education. In that regard Campbell and Proctor stated:³⁰

In the developing public education systems, it was often difficult to introduce new ideas in the face of the system’s grind. Towards the end of the [nineteenth] century, the criticisms grew, and the ‘New Education’ found support. Disenchantment with the pupil-teacher system and payment by results helped the process along... Public schools ‘trained’ rather than educated; they closed off rather than enabled higher education; they failed to meet the demand for much-needed technical education – their conception of the child learner was narrow. Teachers were poorly paid labourers confined by harsh regimes that controlled and punished rather than encouraged. At least, that is how critics portrayed the systems. The standard narrative then continued in a positive vein. Under the influence of New Education ideas, public education systems were reformed by the new directors of education.

The ideals and reform of the new education movement were grounded in progressive education and found expression in two distinct ways.³¹ The first of those focused on the philosophy of education, with proponents seeking to reform the thinking and practice of educators.³² The second focused on the application of the social sciences

²⁷ A. Gellel, “Putting Catholic religious education on the map,” *Revista Pistas* 9, no. 3 (2017), 705.

²⁸ By the late 19th Century, each state had established a system of elementary education for all children. Those systems relied on teachers trained using pupil-teacher apprenticeship model, the monitor system. By 1900, there was a desire for reform and developments in Australian education. That resulted in several changes: an expanded curriculum; additional material to supplement textbooks and support examinations; teachers began to be trained at teachers’ colleges; and the ideas of educational theorist became more influential (e.g. Herbart, Froebel and Montessori). For detail see C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 106-142.

²⁹ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 107.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 100.

³¹ *Ibid*, 107.

³² *Ibid*, 135.

to the management of schooling in order “to transform the work of children, teachers and the schools in ways that would maximise personal and collective potentials”.³³ In each state in Australia the associated work was led by new directors of education.³⁴ Those individuals shifted the focus of school inspections from an examination of pupils to the inspection of teachers. They also began to recruit university graduates as inspectors.³⁵ Catholic schools, on the other hand, “operated without any form of a State aid, relied upon a diverse network of religious communities supervised by some form of diocesan supervision”.³⁶

By the 1920s, the process of reform across the nation had led to a range of developments.³⁷ Those include providing for children with disabilities, adopting a more distinctive or discrete approach to the education of adolescents,³⁸ encouraging teachers to make decisions in their own classroom, and having a greater focus than previously on the pedagogical practice of teachers and on the preparation of teachers at teacher colleges. There was also a new focus on the ‘socially useful school’ and on the streaming of children based on intelligence, ability and aptitude. The purpose of schooling too was seen to go beyond learning the ‘three R’s’ and to involve passing on culture, building character and developing citizenship. Ensuring there was equality of opportunity in education, particularly for students in rural areas, also became important.³⁹

³³ Ibid, 107.

³⁴ Cyril Jackson (Western Australia), Frank Tate (Victoria), Peter Board (New South Wales), Alfred Williams (South Australia), William Neale and William McCoy (Tasmania), and John Story and Reginald Roe (Queensland). C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 106; K. Tully, *State Secondary Education in Western Australia: 1912-1972* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia, 2002).

³⁵ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 110-111, 144.

³⁶ Ibid, 145.

³⁷ Ibid, 148-149.

³⁸ Ibid, 111, 167.

³⁹ Ibid, 146.

In each of the remaining decades of the period being considered a range of distinctive challenges arose for schooling in Australia. The 1930s was a time when educationists had to deal with the impact of the Depression.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the desire for education reform was maintained, albeit with limited resources being available.⁴¹ For example, in 1937, a series of conferences held across the country were attended by a wide range of educators, including Catholic educators.⁴²

Developments in curriculum and teaching also occurred. For instance, the subjects history and geography were incorporated into a civics-focused social studies courses during the 1930s. The Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) introduced educational broadcasting through its network of radio stations. Health and fitness were addressed through the addition of new approaches to physical education.⁴³ Some also argued for the introduction of an explicit programme of sex education.⁴⁴ However, on those developments overall, Campbell and Proctor⁴⁵ commented:

Schools and school systems varied in their capacity to imagine and implement school reform. As many responses to the Depression showed, even the universalisation of secondary schooling was not quite accepted as orthodoxy in the period. It was not universally believed, for example, that most of a young person's adolescence should be spent in a school. As we have seen, educators of this period were not short of innovative ideas in terms of new kinds of schools, teacher training and curriculum reform, but the Depression and then the new war were obstacles around which it was difficult to negotiate. One of the most significant legacies of this period for the near future of schools and schooling would be the teacher shortage. It had been too easy to close and restrict entry to teachers' colleges. There would be another schools emergency, despite the want of a new depression or a significant outbreak of 'hot' as opposed to 'cold' world war.

Further challenges were presented for Australian education in the 1940s. The first of those, and the most dominant, arose out of the impact of World War Two. The second

⁴⁰ Ibid, 149-153.

⁴¹ Ibid, 161.

⁴² Ibid, 161-162.

⁴³ Ibid, 172-173.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 174.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 176.

challenge was the impact that migration began to have upon the provision of education in the nation. A third challenge involved adapting to and addressing the education demands required in a post-war Australia.⁴⁶

In the 1950s some attention was given also to the matter of standards in education. Concerns were expressed in the media about falling standards in teacher quality and some conservative educators argued that progressive education was infecting the curriculum. At the same time, Australian education at the time, was “something of a dead period [located] in between the energy and ambition of post-war reconstruction and the new dawn of the 1960s”.⁴⁷ Critics focused on a range of issues such as “artificial hierarchies”, a reliance on external examinations, “unimaginative and narrow” curricula, the status of subjects, a lack of excitement in learning and inadequately trained teachers.⁴⁸ Freeman Butts,⁴⁹ writing in 1957 after visiting Australia from the US, argued for energising and reinvigorating the nation’s public schools “through decentralisation, local community engagement and parent participation, and the reform of curriculum, pedagogy and teacher training”.⁵⁰

Catholic education in Australia

Catholic education in Australia in the period under consideration conformed broadly to a pattern found in Catholic systems around the world in a number of ways.⁵¹ First, it tended to follow the same structure operating in state systems, especially in distinguishing between two distinct phases of schooling, namely, primary and

⁴⁶ Ibid, 168-171.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 183; W. Connell, *Reshaping Australian Education 1960-1985* (Australia: (ACER) The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd, 1993).

⁴⁸ Ibid, 183-184.

⁴⁹ In 1957, Butt’s was Professor of Education at the Teachers College, Columbia, New York.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 184.

⁵¹ T. O’Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-speaking World, 1891-1965* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 95-101; T. O’Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia, 1922-65* (New York: P. Lang, 2001), 71.

secondary. Primary schooling had already been established for some time, but a secondary level of education only emerged and developed during the period.⁵² Secondly, to maintain and conform to public expectations the syllabi prescribed for state schools in each particular state was used in Catholic schools in the nation. Thirdly, Catholic school teachers relied upon many of the same teaching methods used by teachers in state schools. For example, rote learning was common in both Catholic and State schools, as was the emphasis on the three-R's in primary schools and upon preparing students for public examinations in secondary schools.⁵³

The adoption of state school models of education boosted public confidence in Catholic education. It also enabled Catholics to compete in society for positions dependent upon the standard of education provided in state run schools.⁵⁴ Further, for Australian Catholics, their meeting of state-set examination standards aided their social mobility.⁵⁵

Catholic education in Australia also had a number of distinctive features.⁵⁶ First, Catholic schools were private institutions.⁵⁷ That occurred because of a lack of state aid and a desire within the Catholic community to maintain an independent system of schooling.⁵⁸ In turn, that led each Catholic diocese in each state, including in Western Australia, to establish its own system of education.⁵⁹ Secondly, Catholic

⁵² P. Tannock, "Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979," in *Education in Western Australia*, ed. W. Neal (Nedlands: University of WA Press, 1979), 147; K. Tully, "State secondary education in Western Australia 1912-1972," *Education, Research and Perspectives*, 1-141; J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2008), 77-79.

⁵³ T. O'Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-speaking World, 1891-1965*, 95-96.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997* (Perth, W.A.: Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Australia, 1996), 37-38, 47-49.

⁵⁶ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 240-241.

⁵⁷ However, not all Catholic schools in other parts of the world were private.

⁵⁸ C. Suart, *Nurturing Faith within the Catholic Home: A Perspective from Catholic Parents Who Do Not Access Catholic Schools* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Notre Dame Australia, 2007), 24; A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 49.

⁵⁹ A loose network of parochial and order-owned schools, not a centralised or coordinated system. J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 74.

schools were staffed largely by members of religious orders.⁶⁰ That ensured the existence of a cheap and trained labour force that could be relied upon to maintain the Catholic nature of the schools.⁶¹ Thirdly, the structure of the Catholic education system was distinctive.⁶²

Religion for Catholic Schools: The Subject

By 1920, religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools, in common with the situation in other parts of the country, had developed a number of identifiable features.⁶³ Known as religious doctrine,⁶⁴ it operated according to a broad understanding of how the Catholic faith should be taught in Catholic schools.⁶⁵ Three interrelated processes contributed in that regard.⁶⁶ The first involved the actual teaching of Catholic religious knowledge and practices in the daily religion class. Learning in that regard too was not restricted to the classroom or even to the school. Rather, it was supported by a range of other extra-curricular sessions sponsored and organised by the wider Catholic community.

⁶⁰ P. Tannock, "Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979," in *Education in Western Australia*, 144.

⁶¹ C. Suart, *Nurturing Faith within the Catholic Home: A Perspective from Catholic Parents Who Do Not Access Catholic Schools*, 24; T. O'Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-speaking World, 1891-1965*, 96; T. O'Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia, 1922-65*, 71.

⁶² T. O'Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-speaking World, 1891-1965*, 95-120.

⁶³ M. Leavey, *Religious Education, School Climate and Achievement: A Study of Nine Catholic Sixth-Form Girls' Schools* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Australian National University, 1972), 94-97.

⁶⁴ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)* (Perth: John Muhling, 1924), 1.

⁶⁵ Rummery refers to the 'catechetical ideal', by which he means "religion is integral to education" and "penetrated all aspects of the formal teaching and learning situation". G. Rummery, "The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools, 1872-1972," *Journal of Religious History* 9, no. 3 (1977), 302.

⁶⁶ T. O'Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-speaking World, 1891-1965*, 96

The second education process to be considered involved the maintenance of a particular religious environment.⁶⁷ The purpose of that was to both reflect and support the formation and life of those responsible for providing education in the schools. The third education process involved ensuring that the school year and the daily life and rhythms of the school were permeated by a pervasive religious atmosphere.⁶⁸ Together, all three processes reinforced, modelled and made tangible both the abstract and formulaic learning provided in the formal religion classroom.

Another identifiable feature of religion as a subject was its dependence upon the use of a catechism as the chief source and instrument for instruction.⁶⁹ Catechisms were used as a manual for learning⁷⁰ and were the central if not the only text used in the classroom.⁷¹ The content found in them was the goal of learning. Teaching relied upon rote learning and recall of content was considered important.⁷²

The dominant pedagogical approach used in classrooms also relied upon a question-and-answer format that reflected the structure of the catechism. Moreover, the use of a catechism and its associated teaching methods tended to remain constant across different year levels or grades.⁷³ Over time, it also became an intergenerational experience.

⁶⁷ A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846* (Northbridge: Vanguard Press, 1992), 379-380.

⁶⁸ For example: frequent, daily prayer; the daily life and routines of the religious; time spent in the chapel for mass and benediction; regular participation in retreats, sodalities, processions, and other devotions. A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 176-180.

⁶⁹ The 'Green Catechism' or 'Penny Catechism' was in use in Australia Catholic school. That catechism was approved in 1905 by the Third Plenary Council of the Australian Hierarchy and was based on the 1875 Maynooth Catechism. The Fourth Plenary Council in 1937 reaffirmed that decision. J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 73.

⁷⁰ P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 242; M. Buchanan, "Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education," *Religious Education* 100, no. 1 (2005), 21-23.

⁷¹ C. Suart, *Nurturing Faith within the Catholic Home: A Perspective from Catholic Parents Who Do Not Access Catholic Schools*, 24.

⁷² *Ibid*, 18.

⁷³ Different dioceses did develop various syllabi documents. Those documents provided teachers with guidance about how they might use the catechism to instruct students in different year levels or grades.

Diocesan Inspector of Religious Doctrine

A significant Western Australian development early in the period under consideration was the creation of a position⁷⁴ known as the Diocesan Inspector of Religious Doctrine.⁷⁵ In 1921 Archbishop Clune appointed John Thomas McMahon (1893-1989), a newly ordained priest from Ireland, to that new position. Rev. McMahon was not only a cleric but also a university-trained educator.⁷⁶ In his role he undertook several tasks. He regularly visited Catholic schools and parishes throughout the Archdiocese where, as inspector,⁷⁷ he met students and teachers, conducted examinations of student learning and counselled teachers of religious doctrine. He also prepared written reports for his superior, the Archbishop. Some of those reports he had published for the benefit of those involved in and responsible for Catholic education in the Archdiocese. In taking that action he added a layer of accountability, promoted his own approach to the teaching of that subject, and instructed those involved in the teaching of it.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Archbishop Clune approached the Premier of the State and requested, unusually, that the State take over the inspection and examination of Catholic schools. Pental viewed that decision as a cost cutting measure taken at the very beginning of Archbishop Clune's tenure and at a time when diocesan finances were in a poor state. P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 156, 159-162.

⁷⁵ McMahon uses that title in 1924 but by 1931 he is referred to as the Diocesan Inspector of Schools. Later, from 1941 to 1950, he is referred to as Director of Catholic Education. Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*; P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 165; C. Mulcahy, "McMahon, John Thomas (1893–1989)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 3 March 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcmahon-john-thomas-15007/text26196>.

⁷⁶ By the time McMahon accompanied Archbishop Clune to Perth in 1921 for his first appointment as a priest, he had completed his seminary training (1919), a Bachelor of Arts (1915), Honours in his Diploma of Education (1917) and a Master's in Education (1920). Later, taking leave from his Perth duties, he undertook postgraduate studies at Catholic University of America, Washington DC (1926-1928). This study enabled him to complete his doctoral thesis, *Some Methods of Teaching Religion* (1928) through the National University of Ireland. J. McMahon, *Some Methods of Teaching Religion: A Survey* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, National University of Ireland, 1928).

⁷⁷ That pattern of inspection reflected the practice of school inspection in Western Australian State schools. C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 110-111.

⁷⁸ For an example, see, Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*.

Christian Doctrine Syllabus

In 1924, in addition to publishing his report as Diocesan Inspector, Rev. McMahon published a syllabus for the classroom subject, religious doctrine.⁷⁹ About both, *The Catholic Press* at the time wrote:⁸⁰

McMahon has the useful suggestion that, “as a stimulus, to the subject, so essential to the modern youth attending our Universities, or pursuing, any professional career, we should have an inter-collegiate examination in Christian apologetics.” In the matter of Church music, “The English speaking world has accepted the Reformation’s heirloom of silent services,” and Father McMahon recommends that the children be taught the music of the Benediction service, as well as the Gregorian chant of the ‘Missa’ de Angelis.’ Another useful suggestion is that the senior pupils should be taught, at least in outline, the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the great industrial and economic issues of the day. He says that “a personal acquaintance with some problems which our own country provides would be a training for the growing minds of the children.” The course of instructions should be based on some of the Encyclicals of Leo XIII. Father McMahon notes that those schools show the best results in the various departments of study where the local priest lends a helping hand to his teachers. Father McMahon’s report is a weighty and thoughtful document.

Considered together, the two publications presented several elements considered important for the teaching of the subject. First, it was to be treated in the same way as other subjects in the school. Secondly, a model for teaching and progressing the learning of students at all ages was outlined. Thirdly, specific approaches for teaching that subject to particular age groups, including suggestions for teaching secondary school students were identified. The fourth element was a listing of the topics and specific content that those in each age group were to study. The syllabus’ fifth element suggested a wide range of recommended texts that could be used by teachers to support their teaching. The sixth element outlined for teachers of the subject was the type of attitude they needed to develop to be successful in the classroom. Rev. McMahon’s

⁷⁹ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*.

⁸⁰ Archdiocese of Perth, “Report of the Diocesan Religious Inspector,” 1 May 1924, *The Catholic Press* (Sydney, NSW: The Catholic Press, 1895-1942), 17 October 2019, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article106405477>.

final element explicitly linked the religious doctrine syllabus with the examination he set as diocesan inspector of student learning.

Divini Illius Magister (1929)

In 1929 an important papal encyclical on Catholic education, *Divini Illius Magistri* (*That Divine Teacher*),⁸¹ was published. In it, Pope Pius XI addressed the theme of the Christian education of youth. That became the first and only Papal encyclical issued during the period to address education specifically and substantially.

The aim of the encyclical⁸² was to provide “a clear and definite idea of Christian education”⁸³ and articulate foundational principles⁸⁴ for understanding Catholic education.⁸⁵ Several important aspects of education were also addressed, including the following:⁸⁶

... who has the mission to educate,⁸⁷ who are the subjects to be educated,⁸⁸ what are the necessary accompanying circumstances,⁸⁹ what is the end and object proper to Christian education according to God's established order in the economy of His Divine Providence.⁹⁰

An important principle underpinning much of the associated argument was based on an understanding of the “end and object proper to Christian education”.⁹¹ That in turn

⁸¹ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), 3 March 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html.

⁸² R. Rymarz, L. Franchi, J. Harford, T. O'Doherty, and T. O'Donoghue, *Catholic Teacher Preparation: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Preparing for Mission* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2019), 54.

⁸³ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), par 10.

⁸⁴ T. Hunt, “Historical sketch of the official teaching of the Catholic church on moral education in schools,” *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 1, no. 2 (1997), 203.

⁸⁵ Newman Society Staff, “Principles Church documents for Catholic school teachers: Annotated bibliography,” 3 February, (2017), *The Cardinal Newman Society*, 3 March 2021, <https://newmansociety.org/church-documents-for-catholic-school-teachers-annotated-bibliography/>.

⁸⁶ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), par 10.

⁸⁷ Ibid, par 11-57.

⁸⁸ Ibid, par 58-69.

⁸⁹ Ibid, par 70-92.

⁹⁰ Ibid, par 93-99.

⁹¹ Ibid, par 11.

was based on a conviction that all education is a “preparation for eternal life”⁹² and therefore is, and needs to be, a religious education. On it Pius XI stated:⁹³

The proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian... For precisely this reason, Christian education takes in the whole aggregate of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social, not with a view of reducing it in any way, but in order to elevate, regulate and perfect it, in accordance with the example and teaching of Christ. Hence the true Christian, product of Christian education, is the supernatural man who thinks, judges and acts constantly and consistently in accordance with right reason illumined by the supernatural light of the example and teaching of Christ.

In terms of who should educate, *Divini Illius Magistri (That Divine Teacher)* also examined educational rights and responsibilities. In doing so, it focused on the role and relationship between the family, the state, and the Church in education.

Regarding those who were to be educated, the encyclical emphasised the importance of good pedagogical practice being adopted while also opposing the influence of what it called “Naturalism”⁹⁴ in teaching, stating:

Hence every form of pedagogic naturalism which in any way excludes or weakens supernatural Christian formation in the teaching of youth, is false. Every method of education founded, wholly or in part, on the denial or forgetfulness of original sin and of grace, and relying on the sole powers of human nature, is unsound. Such, generally speaking, are those modern systems bearing various names which appeal to a pretended self-government and unrestrained freedom on the part of the child, and which diminish or even suppress the teacher’s authority and action, attributing to the child an exclusive primacy of initiative, and an activity independent of any higher law, natural or divine, in the work of his education.

When examining the “necessary accompanying circumstances” of education, there was a focus too in *Divini Illius Magistri* on the environment in which education took

⁹² G. Grace, “Vatican II and new thinking about Catholic education: Aggiornamento thinking and principles into practice,” in *Vatican II and New Thinking about Catholic Education: The Impact and Legacy of Gravissimum Educationis*, ed. S. Whittle (London: Routledge, 2016), 13.

⁹³ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), par 94-96.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, par 60.

place. Included in these circumstances was the ‘Christian family’, the Church, the school and the state.

The nature of the curriculum was also considered. That included giving support for the “arts and sciences”⁹⁵ while also advocating for the Christian nature of any curriculum, the teaching methods employed and the critical role of the teacher. Regarding those matters overall it was stated:⁹⁶

In this connection Christian teachers should keep in mind what Leo XIII says in a pithy sentence: Greater stress must be laid on the employment of apt and solid methods of teaching, and, what is still more important, on bringing into full conformity with the Catholic faith, what is taught in literature, in the sciences, and above all in philosophy, on which depends in great part the right orientation of the other branches of knowledge. Perfect schools are the result not so much of good methods as of good teachers, teachers who are thoroughly prepared and well-grounded in the matter they have to teach; who possess the intellectual and moral qualifications required by their important office; who cherish a pure and holy love for the youths confided to them, because they love Jesus Christ and His Church, of which these are the children of predilection; and who have therefore sincerely at heart the true good of family and country.

Pius XI also addressed several aspects of education that limit or pose a threat to a Christian education. For example, for those places where there were different religious beliefs, he insisted on the rights, supported by the state, of the family and the Church to determine the system of education best suited to the education of a child. Further, in those circumstances where no state resources were provided, the state, he decreed, should at least not oppose that right.⁹⁷

Christian Doctrine Through the Liturgy

In 1931 Rev. McMahon issued a new Christian Doctrine Syllabus.⁹⁸ Included in it were two discrete programs for teaching religion as a subject in Catholic schools. One,

⁹⁵ Ibid, par 56.

⁹⁶ Ibid, par 88.

⁹⁷ Ibid, par 80-81.

⁹⁸ “Christian Doctrine Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth, Western Australia” (1931), *The Record Press*, (Perth, WA).

was a development of his earlier work on a Christian doctrine syllabus. The other, the centre piece of the document, was a new program entitled *Christian Doctrine Through the Liturgy*. That was designed for the teaching of religion as a subject based on the liturgy and it was developed further in 1934 and 1937 in a publication entitled *Liturgy for the Class-room*.⁹⁹

About the 1931 document, a local newspaper, *The West Australian*¹⁰⁰ reported the following:

The aim is to teach children in the schools the reason for everything they do and see done in the Church in order that when they take part in the services they may have a fuller understanding of and a deeper interest in the ceremonies. The booklet also contains an annotated bibliography outlining the most useful books for the teaching of religion to children in every grade of the primary and secondary schools. There are also lists of books on character training; of school plays and dramas suitable for school concerts; of pictures and teachers' references; and of educational periodicals. A summary of a scheme, founded and directed by Dr. McMahon, by which children living in the back-blocks receive instruction in religion is included in the publication.

For Rev. McMahon, the rationale for the program was twofold. First, it was to help students to better understand the 'why' of their religion. Secondly, it was to foster within students an enthusiasm for the practices of their faith.

Rev. McMahon's new program was a discrete and separate program of study designed to complement his religious doctrine syllabus. It was to be taught for one lesson a week. Many of his suggestions on how to teach it focused on providing a range of pedagogical strategies for teaching different age groups. Those included direct instruction, object lessons, storytelling, dramatization and engagement in reflection. The program also contained encouragement and suggestions for the use of a range of different texts, including biblical ones. The missal too was to be a key text, an essential tool to aid learning.

⁹⁹ J. McMahon, *Liturgy for the Class-room* (Sydney: Pellegrini, 1934).

¹⁰⁰ "Religious instruction," 8 July 1931), *The West Australian* (Perth, WA: 1879 – 1954), 18 August 2019, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32359403>.

Included in Rev. McMahon's program also were suggestions about how teachers could organise and develop their teaching of the program during the year and across different age groupings. Those suggestions were that first, there should be a focus on preparing children for the Sunday Mass. Next, the teacher should organise learning around the particulars of the Liturgical Year. A third suggestion Rev. McMahon made involved encouraging teachers to explain various elements of the ritual involved in liturgy. Similarly, he suggested that teachers should explain 'ordinary' prayers. Fifthly, he argued, an active relationship between the life of the parish and the life of the school should be fostered. Finally, Rev. McMahon encouraged teachers to ensure they were educated and 'formed' in the liturgical life of the Church.

'Pray the Mass': A classroom text

In 1935 Rev. McMahon published a textbook entitled *Pray the Mass*.¹⁰¹ It was written for use by teachers and students inside and outside of the religion classroom. The majority of the first of two parts made clear the detail of each step in the Mass. Each described what the priest did, why he did it and "the dispositions of mind and soul suitable to each step of the Mass".¹⁰² It then ended with two short chapters entitled "Preparing the Altar for Mass" and "Watching the Priest Vesting".

The second part of *Pray the Mass* was written for secondary school students¹⁰³ and was presented in four sections. The headings of those were 'The Story of Sacrifice', 'The Sacrifice of the New Law', 'Devotion to the Mass' and 'Let Us Offer'. To teachers, Rev. McMahon proposed adopting a concentric plan of teaching, with the

¹⁰¹ "Pray the Mass", 24 January 1935, *The Catholic Press* (Sydney, NSW: 1895 - 1942), 30 August 2019, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article104510131>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ The second part was also considered suitable for converts to Catholicism.

final section being deemed the most important. As with the first part, it was also presented and written in a style designed to be appealing for students. Unlike the first part though, in which images were used, it also included several diagrams.

The Bushies' Scheme

Under the leadership of Rev. McMahon, another important element of religion as a subject was that it was taught to some in a program that came to be known as the Bushies' Scheme.¹⁰⁴ That was intended specifically for teaching religion to children unable to attend Catholic schools. Often they lived in smaller rural and remote settlements in the 'bush'.¹⁰⁵

The Scheme had several features. First, a small number of female religious coordinated and ran it under Rev. McMahon's leadership. Secondly, the program of learning was provided through correspondence.¹⁰⁶ To supplement that learning, another feature was the introduction and use of residential schools during school holidays. These 'schools' were organised for students, termed 'Bushies', because they lived in 'the bush', hence the term 'Bushies' School'. A fourth feature was that families from Perth metropolitan parishes were invited to 'adopt' a bushy family and to correspond with each other about a range of areas of life, but especially religious matters. Another feature included regular publication in *The Record*, the local weekly Catholic newspaper, of a column called *Aunt Bessy's Corner*. In that column, children's questions and responses to questions asked by actual children about Catholic faith, were detailed.

¹⁰⁴ Also known as 'Religion by Post'.

¹⁰⁵ P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 166-172.

¹⁰⁶ Hence why it was first titled 'Religion by Post'.

Finally, after the Second World War, a sixth feature was added to the Bushies' Scheme. That was known as the *Motor Mission*.¹⁰⁷ It involved a few nuns travelling by car to country districts for extended periods. The purpose of their travel was to spend time in the homes of 'bushies' and their families, especially those in remote and isolated areas of the state.¹⁰⁸ A related feature of the scheme involved Rev. McMahon in his capacity as diocesan inspector of schools visiting country parishes and the families of 'bushies'.

Conclusion

For the period, 1929-1962, religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools underwent significant development. The chapter, presented in two sections, first provided an overview of the context in which the subject was constructed in Western Australia during the period. That overview focused on international and Australian developments in society, Church and education. The second section of the chapter provided an outline of developments in the subject for the period, 1929-1962. The chapter that now follows elaborates upon and discusses those developments and provides an analysis of key issues associated with the construction of religion as a subject in Western Australia during that same period.

¹⁰⁷ From the 1960s, the Motor Mission assumed a more significant role in the religious instruction of children in rural and remote areas. A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 354.

¹⁰⁸ P. Pandal *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 208.

CHAPTER FIVE

RELIGION AS A SUBJECT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1929-1962: THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview of the construction of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools for the period 1929-1962. This chapter now elaborates on the construction process itself. It does so through the exploration of several themes that emerged from an analysis of the construction process during the period under consideration.

Elaboration on the Construction Process

In relation to this section several major themes are examined. These are ‘a shared Catholic culture’, ‘a standardised approach’, ‘catechisms’, ‘apologetics’, ‘Diocesan Inspector of Religious Doctrine’, ‘religious orders’, ‘teacher preparation’, ‘the modern catechetical movement’, ‘Christian Doctrine Syllabus’, ‘Christian Doctrine Through the Liturgy’, ‘the application of recent theory and practice in education’, ‘liturgical catechesis’, ‘the Bushies Scheme’, ‘features of the Bushies Scheme’, and ‘Motor Missions’. Each is now considered in turn.

A shared Catholic culture

In Western Australia, as in other parts of Australia, the teaching of religion in Catholic schools during the period under consideration operated within and relied upon a shared Catholic culture.¹ That culture found expression in the nature of the Catholic family, parish and school. Specifically, within each school, religion was ever present including

¹ J. Stafford, “An analysis of the fundamental shift in Catholic secondary religious education during the long sixties, 1955-1973,” in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education* 18 (2017), 32.

through the nature of routines and rituals as instituted by the religious order in charge.²

Regarding Loreto Catholic schools in Western Australia, for example, Carter³ stated:

Pre-Vatican II years marked a period in which the Catholic Faith was accepted, unexplained and unquestioned, its divine mysteries considered too sacred to undergo any tortuous attempt at unravelling by the untheological lay-person. So, religion teaching reflected that norm – the catechism was learnt ‘by heart’ and by rote, while the questions it asked and the answers it provided were not explained. Study of Scripture was restricted to the New Testament and only the most respectable aspects of Church History were expounded. Authority, held by priests, bishops and ultimately the Pope, was extolled, while the place of the Catholic laity was seen to be that of worship, acceptance and obedience to the authority of God expressed through His ordained ministers. Religion classes at Loreto were characterised by all those components with the addition of pious devotion.

At the same time, there was variation from school to school. Moreover, on that, it cannot be said that all Catholic families lived their faith in the same way. Further, matters of wealth, location, employment and gender shaped how people lived within families, experienced education and participated in Church life.

The nature of the Catholic culture in each Catholic school varied especially depending on the religious community responsible for it.⁴ The diversity that resulted contributed to the emergence of a plurality in relation to what was understood by a ‘particular religious environment’. For one thing, schools were operated by religious communities whose members were either female or male⁵ and whose recruits often came from different parts of the world at different points in history.⁶ The type and experience of teacher preparation each community provided for members also varied.

² A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997* (Perth, W.A.: Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Australia, 1996), 176-180.

³ Ibid, 176-177.

⁴ M. MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia* (Darlinghurst, NSW: Crossing Press for Australian Catholic University, National Research for the Study of Women's History, Theology, and Spirituality, 2002).

⁵ P. Tannock, “Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979,” in *Education in Western Australia*, ed. W. Neal (Nedlands: University of WA Press, 1979), 157-158.

⁶ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 85, 135.

Religious communities also established and operated Catholic schools in a diverse range of places and catered for a range of families within the Catholic community of Western Australia. Furthermore, each operated out of various motives, spiritualities, ecclesiologies and sense of ‘mission’.⁷ In addition, within each religious community there was variation in the roles played by those appointed as leaders and in the impact that factions and strong personalities had through the prevailing systems of governance.⁸

The culture of Catholic schools and Catholic education in Western Australia for the period under consideration therefore cannot be considered as having been monolithic. Instead, both across and within the schools there were shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions. That position is consistent with Goodson’s⁹ work and the first hypotheses detailed in Chapter One of this study.

Another important influence was the extent to which the teaching of the religion as a subject was considered an official part of the Catholic school curriculum. It is likely it was not taken seriously by teachers in all schools. Further, the importance attached to it by teachers in different schools may also have varied during the period under consideration. On that, Rev. McMahon,¹⁰ early in his tenure, stated:

My verdict is that there is a general improvement on the work presented in the first year. This advance may be noticed in the subject matter done and the manner in which it was taught; in the teacher’s attitude to the subject, and

⁷ A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846* (Northbridge: Vanguard Press, 1992).

⁸ Tannock details the diversity in the religious communities that operated in Catholic schools in Western Australia. P. Tannock, “Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979,” in *Education in Western Australia*, 144-157; Carter explains challenges the Loreto Sisters, an enclosed community of religious, had to contend with when considering the staffing needs of Catholic schools in Western Australia operated by that community of religious. A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 183-186; McLay examines how Mercy Sisters in Western Australia negotiated their individual and collective identities, and the autonomy of the community in the face of episcopal politics. A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 252-300.

⁹ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum* (New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1983).

¹⁰ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, (Perth: John Muhling, 1924), 1.

finally in the children's increasing interest in the examinations. The chief result of this year's work lies in the tradition that has already been created, that Religious Doctrine is worthy of a secure footing in the school curriculum. It has now obtained equal rank with the other secular subjects. This may not seem a great boast to make, but when we remember that two years ago Religious Doctrine had no such place in our Catholic schools, we will see the tremendous achievement that has been made. Then it was not considered seriously by training or pupils; now its claim on the attention of both has been definitely accepted. Of course, we are not satisfied to have Religious Doctrine on an equal footing with the other subjects. Our ideal is to make it the dominant subject of every Catholic school. The first step on the road to the attainment of that ideal has been taken this year. This year the teachers knew and taught what was to be expected from them, what form the examination would take and consequently they were better prepared. A greater attempt to follow the programme has also been made. Many schools did the whole course as prescribed. Books were more plentiful and more suitable. Attention has been given to the difficult problem of grading. To place the misfits will always be a worry, and there is no general prescription that will cure all cases. In this matter each superior of a school must work out her own salvation.

The lack of seriousness Rev. McMahon was referring to here could have been due to teachers in certain schools relying upon the presence of a Catholic culture inside and outside of the school community to alone educate the child in the Catholic faith. That situation could in turn, have been the result of teachers in those schools having to devote their attention to the demands of the existing State curriculum. If so, then that too is consistent with Goodson's¹¹ notions and particularly his hypothesis that certain subjects (in this case religion in Western Australian Catholic schools) were not afforded the status some would have preferred because they were influenced by wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory.

A standardised approach

Many of the features associated with how religion was constructed as a subject in Catholic schools prior to the period under consideration, reflect those of the first stage

¹¹ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum*.

in Flynn's¹² three-stage linear model, namely 'traditional catechesis'.¹³ Those features include a teaching technique that relied on a question-and-answer format that mirrored the structure of a Catechism textbook. Further, in Australia, that standardised approach to the teaching of religion stipulated that the 'Penny Catechism' be the textbook.¹⁴

The features in question, when seen as a whole, also suggest that the way religion as a subject was constructed in the 19th century related to what Beeby¹⁵ considered the 'Dame School Stage'. Little was expected of the classroom teachers of the subject who relied upon a prescribed catechism text to identify the content to be taught and the methods to employ in the religion classroom. By the 1920s, however, teachers were being provided with a basic training, either on the job or in separate training institutions operated and supervised by a religious order. Likewise, Rev. McMahon, in his early years in Western Australia in the 1920s, also paid particular attention to the preparation of teachers of religion.¹⁶ Taken together, all of those developments indicate that by the beginning of the period under consideration, Beeby's 'Stage of Formalism' characterised the development of religion as a subject.¹⁷

From the 1920s through to the late 1950s, however, individuals and groups, including Rev. McMahon and other Catholic education leaders endeavoured to further develop religion as a school subject. Their attention focussed on the quality of teaching provided in the religion classroom, on the resources used by teachers and on deepening

¹² M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Pauls, 1993).

¹³ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools* (Brisbane: Lumino Press, 2013).

¹⁴ C. Suart, *Nurturing Faith within the Catholic Home: A Perspective from Catholic Parents Who Do Not Access Catholic Schools* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Notre Dame Australia, 2007), 24.

¹⁵ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

¹⁶ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 118-119; J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister* (Perth: Alpha Print, 1969), 91.

¹⁷ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

teachers' understanding of the subject. The associated efforts, therefore, indicated a stage of development mirroring Beeby's third stage, the 'Stage of Transition'.¹⁸

To support the later assertion, it is instructive to note that who critiqued the 'Penny Catechism' and how teachers used that text in the classroom¹⁹ identified limitations and provided suggestions for the improvement of practice.²⁰ For example, Buchanan²¹ illustrated how, as early as in the late 19th century, some Marist Brothers in Australia viewed the use of the catechism as

... limiting as a learning resource and suggested reforms in terms of presentation and layout. The educational goal was to make the catechism more appealing to young people. They emphasized the importance of colour and relevant pictures to engage students in the learning process (Doyle, 1972, 641).

In general, those expressing such dissatisfaction with the use of the catechism by teachers and their reliance upon that text to provide the content taught and the method of teaching employed were complaining that the religious formation of young Catholics was being hindered.²²

Some, during the first half of the 20th century, were cognisant of new approaches to teaching and learning in education and recognised that those had a lot to offer both teachers and students of religion. They also indicated they appreciated that dissonance could occur as both the teacher and the student experienced different and even contrasting approaches to learning provided across various subjects, including religion. For some theorists and practitioners, and increasingly so towards the end of the period under consideration, there was a growing sense too that the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ C. Howell, "The new German catechism," *The Downside Review* 74, no. 236 (1956), 114-115.

²⁰ G. Rummery, "The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools 1872-1972," *Journal of Religious History* 9, no.3 (1977), 302-317.

²¹ M. Buchanan, "Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education," *Religious Education* 100, no. 1 (2005), 22.

²² G. Rummery, "The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools 1872-1972," *Journal of Religious History*, 302-317.

certitudes and authority contained within the catechism and use of that text by teachers in the classroom were becoming less viable than previously in a changing world.

About that, Buchanan stated:²³

The dogmatic, authoritarian, and pedagogical approach associated with teaching religious education via the catechism lost credibility (Jungmann 1957, 27–64; Lovat 1989, 6–7; Ryan 1997, 29–33). Different approaches to studies in religion began to materialize in many countries, including Australia.

According to Massam,²⁴ though, “reservations about the catechism centred on its limitations for keeping children interested, not in its basic approach”.

While deficiencies were recognised, many teachers and students still continued to value the simplicity, clarity and certitude that came from learning by rote through the question-and-answer format of the catechism. Thus, it was believed, students would be equipped to “triumph in didactic debate”.²⁵ On that, Massam,²⁶ referring to Rev. McMahon, wrote:

McMahon pointed out the problems in 1925, and his assessment of the catechism as ‘a very poor learning device’ was echoed by oral sources from the period. But even while he argued that ‘we ought to be less keen to impart information than to give our pupils power...to turn out boys and girls who can put what they know to use’, the assumption was that the catechism, if they knew how to consult it, would provide the right answer to each religious question.

Others, however, claimed that when challenged or placed in a challenging situation, traditional approaches provided little guidance and left teachers struggling to adapt.²⁷

²³ M. Buchanan, “Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education,” *Religious Education*, 23.

²⁴ K. Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1996), 44-45.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 44.

²⁶ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 6.

²⁷ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 52-53.

As early as 1922, a Christian Brother, Michael B. Hanrahan, argued that “the formal catechism” was “nothing less than a millstone tied around the necks alike of teacher and child”.²⁸ Ryan summarised similar criticisms, stating:²⁹

Traditional Catechesis constrained the freedom of teacher and student, was unimaginative in its presentation of material and often did not match student’s conceptual abilities ... a prime cause for young people abandoning the practice of their faith.

Amongst the arguments of those concerned were that the catechism as a text was not well suited to modern developments in society,³⁰ education³¹ and theology.³² Rev. McMahon,³³ for instance, in *Liturgy for the Class-Room*, elaborated by drawing a distinction between what he referred to as the ‘catechism way’ and the ‘liturgical way’. In explaining that distinction and why it was important, he provided a detailed critique of the limitations of the catechism. In particular he identified three chief issues. First, he said, the ‘catechism way’ had created a dependence upon a manual of theological formulae not designed for the classroom. Secondly, he argued that the way students learned was disconnected from the “life of Jesus Christ” and was joyless; ‘joy’, for Rev. McMahon, was essential for learning and “a most important pedagogical factor in moral development”³⁴. Thirdly, a reliance on the catechism had not, in his view, “succeeded as a means of character formation” and how to apply what was taught was not necessarily “obvious to the children”³⁵.

²⁸ G. Rummery, “The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools 1872-1972,” *Journal of Religious History*, 309.

²⁹ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 62.

³⁰ A. Gellel, “Putting Catholic religious education on the map,” *Revista Pistas* 9, no. 3 (2017), 704-5.

³¹ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1992), 74.

³² M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 62.

³³ J. McMahon, *Liturgy for the class-room*, (Sydney: Pellegrini, 1934), 13-14

³⁴ *Ibid*, 13.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 14.

Catechisms

Responding to such concerns,³⁶ attempts were made to construct a more appropriate text. However, arriving at agreement on how best to proceed was difficult. Noting that serves to support the third hypothesis proposed for this study at the outset, namely, that much of the debate which occurred about religion as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian Catholic schools can be interpreted in terms of wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory. For example, in the 1920s the Australian bishops gave some consideration to the writing of a new text. On that the Coadjutor Archbishop of Sydney, Michael Sheehan (1922-1937) made the following comments in retirement³⁷ in 1937:³⁸

At a meeting of the Bishops of Australia and New Zealand, held soon after my coming to Sydney, I was commissioned by them to produce a book which would take the place of the catechism then in general use. They said that the catechism, as it was, was too difficult for children, and that something simpler should be substituted.

In similar vein, in 1930, Father Matthew Beovich,³⁹ working in Melbourne, obtained permission⁴⁰ from his Archbishop, Daniel Mannix, to draft a simpler catechism more

³⁶ Moon's thesis comments on changes to the modern teaching of history that began in UK in 1950s. That thesis suggests there is evidence that shifts and changes to curriculum in particular disciplines had an effect upon debates about the curriculum and teaching in other disciplines. A. Moon, *The Introduction of Document Study to the Western Australian Ancient History Course and its Implications for Pedagogy*, (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Curtin University, 2013), 18.

³⁷ Although appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Sydney with right of succession in 1922, Archbishop Sheehan's retirement made it possible for the first Australia born cleric, Norman Gilroy, to become Coadjutor Archbishop of Sydney in 1937. He succeed Archbishop Kelly (1911-1940) in 1946. V. Regis, "The Archbishop of Sydney who never was," *Vexilla Regis*. <https://vexilla-regis.blogspot.com/2011/12/archbishop-of-sydney-who-never-was.html>.

³⁸ M. Sheehan, "Some remarks on the catechism problems," *ACR* 14, no. 3 (1937), 182. Quoted by J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2008), 84.

³⁹ Matthew Beovich was appointed 'Diocesan Inspector of Religious Instruction' for the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 1924 and by 1936 was the 'Director' of the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne. In 1940 he became Archbishop of Adelaide. J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*; J. Laffin, "Beovich, Matthew (1896–1981)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 6 April 2021, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/beovich-matthew-12198/text21871>.

⁴⁰ J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 83.

suiting to younger children.⁴¹ Then, in 1934,⁴² Archbishop Sheehan published a textbook, *A Child's Book of Religion*. However, it did not receive official support from the bishops in the Australian Church and as a result received mixed responses.⁴³

In 1936 a national Catholic Education Congress of “sixteen priests and inspectors in charge of Catholic education”⁴⁴ was held in Adelaide. Rev. McMahon being one of them.⁴⁵ An aim for those present⁴⁶ was to analyse Pope Pius XI's 1929 encyclical, *Divini Illius Magistri* (The Christian Education of Youth).⁴⁷ Several recommendations were then made to the Australian bishops for consideration. On two of those Laffin⁴⁸ wrote:

One ... was that, in accordance with the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Religious (November 1930), “religious be required to revise, during their novitiate, their knowledge of Christian Doctrine, adding there to a study of the methods of teaching religion, and be required to satisfy the Bishop or his delegate that they are competent before being admitted to the schools”. Another recommendation was that an official catechism be retained, but with the content revised and simplified and the format improved. Beovich was nominated as the one who would collate various suggestions and prepare a draft for the hierarchy. The bishops approved the recommendations at their national meeting later in the year.

However, while work on producing a new national catechism followed, acceptance and approval by the bishops were not forthcoming.⁴⁹ On that, Laffin⁵⁰ argued that the

⁴¹ Ibid, 82.

⁴² Archbishop Sheehan had already written the widely used senior text, *Apologetics and Christian Doctrine*.

⁴³ It was not well received by Rev. Beovich in Melbourne, but a range of other Catholic educational leaders were satisfied such as M. B. Hanrahan (Christian Brothers), M. M. De Sales (Good Samaritan), M. M. Frances Frewin (Loreto) and M. M. Angela (Dominican Sisters). *Australian Catholic Education Congress, Adelaide, 1936* (Melbourne: Advocate Press, 1937), 101, 425,434,438; J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 83-84.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 85.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 86.

⁴⁶ Laffin stated, “According to McPhee, Beovich and Mannix wrote the agenda for the meeting”. J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 333. See also, R. McPhee, *Daniel Mannix: A Study of Aspects of Catholic Education Policy in Victoria* (Melbourne: Monash University, 1980), 149.

⁴⁷ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), 3 March 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html.

⁴⁸ J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 85-86.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 86-92.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 86.

“authority structures of the Catholic Church did not favour a national approach” because “there was no national primate, and individual bishops guarded their independence”.

What did eventuate was the production of two ‘new’ catechisms. The first was the *Catechism of Christian Doctrine Adapted for Australia by the Second and Third Plenary Councils*.⁵¹ It was the only catechism approved for use in New South Wales dioceses and was accompanied by a small publication, *Notes on the Catechism of Christian Doctrine Adapted for Australia by 2nd and 3rd Plenary Councils*.⁵² The latter included 26 brief lesson outlines, each of which followed the same simple structure and had brief notations added. The structure in question began with a catechism point like “On God and the Creation of the World”⁵³ being stated. That was followed by a few ‘main facts’ about the catechism point and then by ‘catechism notes’ where definitions and short explanations of key words included in the catechism statement were outlined. The final part of each lesson structure included brief notes under the heading ‘additional facts for senior pupils’.

The second catechism produced, the *Catechism for General Use in Australia Issued with Episcopal Authority on the Occasion of the Fourth Plenary Council 1937*,⁵⁴ was written by Rev. Beovich and approved for use by Archbishop Daniel Mannix in Melbourne.⁵⁵ Later, the Australian bishops convened a committee to consider revisions. That committee met irregularly between 1954 and 1970. Rearranging and clarifying the meaning of the text were the foci of the committee’s

⁵¹ Catholic Church, *Catechism of Christian Doctrine: Adapted for Australia by 2nd and 3rd Plenary Councils* (Sydney: Catholic Church Sydney, 1937).

⁵² Catholic Church, *Notes on the Catechism of Christian Doctrine Adapted for Australia by 2nd & 3rd Plenary Councils* (Sydney: Pellegrini, 1939).

⁵³ *Ibid*, 9.

⁵⁴ Catholic Church, *Catechism for General Use in Australia: Issued with Episcopal Authority on the Occasion of the 4th Plenary Council, 1937* (Melbourne: Australian Catholic Truth Society, 1938).

⁵⁵ J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 89.

work, rather than addressing the existing style and approach. Many of the ideas put forward came from French, German, Swiss and Dutch catechisms. Furthermore, while problems were identified regarding the use of the catechism, the committee did not address them.⁵⁶

Recognising limitations of the catechism and debate about its use was a feature of the discourse amongst Australian Catholic educators and bishops at the time. Massam,⁵⁷ however, concluded as follows:

Oral evidence supports the view that such changes as did occur in religious education in Catholic schools before 1962 were a variation on the established theme of making available clear doctrine within a defined world-view. Some new books and teaching methods were introduced to supplement the catechism as more resources became available, but the fundamental pattern was not disturbed.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to completely dismiss the work of the ‘catechetical movement’ in the country. Originating in Europe, by 1900 it could be said that it “had come into being”⁵⁸. On that movement Howell⁵⁹ has stated:

It was concerned above all with the search for better methods of teaching the catechism; it laid ever increasing stress on understanding, and sought to diminish the burden on mere memory. Until about 1920 the prevailing method was that now usually described as the ‘text-explaining method’. The Questions and Answers were read out first; then these were expounded, illustrated and applied in turn; and each answer had to be memorised by the children. But gradually there came into favour what is called the ‘text evolving method’; instead of starting from the text, the teacher is to ‘evolve’ it, by leading up to it as a conclusion. He first appeals to the senses or imagination of the children by some vivid story or description which leads their minds to the subject which has to be understood; then he explains it and impresses it on their intellects; finally, he shows its consequences in life in such a way as to move their wills. Then only do the pupils turn to their books, wherein the text will act as a summary of what they have been taught. This reverse procedure, championed principally by Willmann and Stieglitz of Munich, became known as the ‘Munich method’ and gradually won favour from the other which was now judged to be ‘good exegesis but bad catechetics’. It was not long before another point became clear; the Munich method needed a different kind of book from

⁵⁶ A. Finn, *Parents, Teachers and Religious Education: A Study in a Catholic Secondary School in Rural Victoria* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2009), 58.

⁵⁷ K. Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962*, 44.

⁵⁸ C. Howell, “The new German catechism,” *The Downside Review*, 115.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 115-116.

the Question-and-Answer type hitherto in use. Much discussion in journals and Catechetical Congresses gradually brought into being a new sort of catechism consisting of a series of 'Lessons'. Each has descriptive, explanatory and pragmatic paragraphs which are then summed up in the absolute minimum of questions with answers. These alone have to be memorised. As the advantages of the Munich method were seen, country after country deserted the old kind of book, and adopted new books, attractive in appearance, well printed, full of interest, expressed in language intelligible to the children, and usually adorned with illustrations. This happened in Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Austria, Spain, Italy and America.

According to Howell,⁶⁰ leaders of the Catholic Church in England and Ireland though retained the question-and-answer catechism which remained dull in appearance, lacked illustrations, was filled with abstract concepts and “expressed in the technical language of dogmatic and moral theology totally unsuited to the mentality of children”. Australia was no different. Although the work of Rev. McMahon and Rev. Beovich indicated that at least it was being considered.

Apologetics

With Australian education leaders beginning to place a higher priority on secondary school education than previously after World War One,⁶¹ the type of curriculum provided for adolescents received new attention, including in relation to the teaching of religion. That in turn led to apologetics⁶² being recommended for use with senior students in Catholic secondary schools. The development was considered necessary⁶³ for providing “a training ground for good argument against attacks on the Catholic position”⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 116.

⁶¹ K. Tully, *State Secondary Education in Western Australia: 1912-1972* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia, 2002).

⁶² Apologetics refers to a systematic defence of Catholic beliefs. For detail see A. Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (New York: Corpus, 1971).

⁶³ According to Carter, apologetics also aimed to equip students with the ability to defend the credibility of the Church against Protestantism, and by the 1950s, Communism. A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 175.

⁶⁴ K. Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962*, 45.

Specifically, on that, Massam stated:

The ‘point, counter-point method’ of apologetics reflected a Catholicism which by its ‘very definition... included the rejection of Protestantism as an erroneous and thus inferior religion’. The blend of defensiveness and unabashed assumptions of righteousness are intriguing and typical features of the Catholic world-view at this time... There was a similar lack of ambiguity about matters of faith in the question-and-answer newspaper columns which flourished from the late 1930s. A clear and definite line between right and wrong was a feature of the Catholic world view in twentieth-century Australia.⁶⁵

Rev. Sheehan’s *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine*⁶⁶ became the standard text used in many Australian religion classrooms, including in Western Australia. For forty years it was used in Australia and in several other countries, with “over 450,000 copies”⁶⁷ sold.

The author of *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine*⁶⁸ was Archbishop Michael Sheehan (1870-1945), an Irish-born and Irish-trained cleric.⁶⁹ About his work in education, Colquhoun stated:⁷⁰

[His work] was constant, energetic and thorough. He organised and addressed annual conferences for Catholic school teachers. But his magnum opus was *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine*, which became a standard work throughout much of the English speaking world in upper secondary religious education, adult education and the instruction of converts as well as general readership.

As a priest, he taught at the national seminary in Maynooth⁷¹ (1909-1919) before being appointed that institution’s Vice-President in 1919.⁷² His involvement in education,

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ First published in 1918. M. Sheehan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine, Volumes One and Two* (Dublin, M.H. Gill & Son, 1918).

⁶⁷ R. Colquhoun, “Book review: Sheehan’s apologetics,” *St Thomas More Society*, 5 May 2014, <http://www.stms.org.au/media/book-review-sheehan-s-apologetics>.

⁶⁸ M. Sheehan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine, Volumes One and Two* (Dublin, M.H. Gill & Son, 1918).

⁶⁹ P. O’Farrell, “Kelly, Michael (1850–1940),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 17 March 2021, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kelly-michael-6920>.

⁷⁰ R. Colquhoun, “Book review: Sheehan’s apologetics,” *St Thomas More Society*.

⁷¹ Ireland’s main Roman Catholic seminary and an important training centre for many of the priests who were recruited and trained in Ireland for work in Australia.

⁷² R. Colquhoun, “Book review: Sheehan’s apologetics,” *St Thomas More Society*.

however, went further than training priests and publishing a student text on apologetics. In 1922, he was appointed Coadjutor Archbishop for Sydney, a position he held until his retirement in 1937.⁷³ There he played an important role in how Catholic education in New South Wales was administered and led. He also contributed at a national level to the educational work of the Australian bishops and, as already discussed above, to national debates about the teaching of religion.⁷⁴

One response to his influence was pointed out in 1923 at a Western Australian Catholic Teachers' Conference, when Rev. McMahon reported that senior schools run by the Church within his constituency had courses in apologetics. Further, in 1924⁷⁵ he included apologetics as part of the syllabus he developed.⁷⁶ According to Pental,⁷⁷ that was to "equip pupils as laypeople to help others understand, and perhaps embrace, their faith, emphasising the importance of starting guilds or associations for students who had recently left school, so that they could have the advantage of studying social questions".

To support the program of learning in senior religion classrooms Rev. McMahon also recommended the use of Rev. Sheehan's book on apologetics and that secondary students who studied that text should also sit a state-wide examination. He argued thus:⁷⁸

⁷³ P. O'Farrell, *Catholic Church and Community in Australia: A History* (Kensington: University of New South Wales Press, 1985), 361.

⁷⁴ For detail see B. Maher, "Thompson, John Christopher (1893–1958)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 17 March 2021, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/thompson-john-christopher-11848>; V. Regis, "The Archbishop of Sydney who never was," *Vexilla Regis*.

⁷⁵ Laffin writes about a similar approach adopted in Melbourne. Her comments indicate Rev. McMahon's work predates similar efforts by Rev. Beovich in Melbourne. J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 74.

⁷⁶ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008* (Inglewood: Victor Publishing, 2008), 168.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 6.

As a stimulus to this subject ... we have an Inter-Collegiate Examination in Christian Apologetics. The examination be open to any school which includes Apologetics in its curriculum, but each College or Convent is quite free to present candidates or not. The course will be outlined, the examination set and corrected by someone not connected in any way with the schools. Prizes of books would be given to the first three candidates.

While his suggestion for a State-wide examination did not eventuate, by the 1970s a prize was being awarded to top students in senior religion classes.

Diocesan Inspector of Religious Doctrine

A second hypotheses adapted from Goodson's⁷⁹ work proposes that in the process of establishing religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic one. In considering the progression of that process for the period under consideration, Archbishop Clune's recruitment of Rev. McMahon to work as a priest in his Archdiocese was a critical first step. Subsequently, he was appointed to several key education positions within the Archdiocese of Perth, specifically, Diocesan Inspector of Religious Doctrine⁸⁰ (1921-1941) and, Director of Catholic Education and Chairman of the Diocesan Council of Education (1941-1950).

Rev. McMahon also had other Church and education interests and took on a variety of associated roles throughout the course of his adult life.⁸¹ Moreover, the

⁷⁹ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum*.

⁸⁰ Later he was referred to as the Diocesan Inspector of Schools

⁸¹ Pioneered University Sunday in WA; Recipient of many awards for distinguished service to the community; Parish priest of St Columba's (South Perth) 1932-1979; Prolific author of 30 books on religion, travel and his experience of life plus many pamphlets on a wide range of subjects; Appointed domestic prelate to Pope Pius XII in 1947 (Monsignor); First priest in Australia to be honoured with the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in 1961; Elected a Fellow of the Australian College of Education in 1962; Awarded the Order of the British Empire for services to education in 1970. "Obituary - Mgr John McMahon" *The West Australian*, 21 January 1989, 14; J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister* (Perth: Alpha Print, 1969); C. Mulcahy, "McMahon, John Thomas (1893-1989)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 22 March 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcmahon-john-thomas-15007/text26196>.

focus of his work shifted over to time to broad concerns,⁸² particularly during the late 1940s and 1950s when some serious challenges⁸³ were presented for Catholic education in Western Australia. Chief among those was to try to ensure the survival of Catholic education itself:

... the period 1950 to 1970 was in some respects an extremely difficult and potentially disastrous one for Catholic education in Western Australia. The situation in the Catholic school system deteriorated so rapidly towards the end of this period that it took the intervention of governments and the resumption of large-scale state aid to prevent it from virtual collapse. The immediate cause of this pressure on Catholic schools was the great increase in the school-age population of the state. This was a product of the post-war 'baby-boom', the influx of migrants, and the higher retention rates in secondary education, which in turn was closely related to the much greater availability of tertiary education opportunities and rewards. Accompanying this increase in school-age population was the rapid development of new suburbs in the metropolitan area.⁸⁴

Given the situation as portrayed above, it is hardly surprising that many of the innovations that Rev. McMahon brought to the teaching of religion as a subject in Western Australia were initiated prior to World War Two when he was Diocesan Inspector of Religious Doctrine.

Archbishop Clune's decision to appoint Rev. McMahon to the latter position was enlightened.⁸⁵ The latter held many of the qualities found in leaders and administrators of State-based education systems in Australia.⁸⁶ He was a professional who was university educated in the latest education theory and practice. When

⁸² P. Tannock, "Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979," in *Education in Western Australia*, 157-158.

⁸³ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 208, 212.

⁸⁴ P. Tannock, "Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979," in *Education in Western Australia*, 158.

⁸⁵ Archbishop Clune, a strong supporter of Catholic education, established a mostly cooperatively working relationship with many non-Catholic leaders in Western Australia. Rev. McMahon likewise established cooperative working relationship throughout his career including with many leaders of State education. J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*.

⁸⁶ P. Tannock, "Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979," in *Education in Western Australia*, 145.

compared to many other Australian dioceses,⁸⁷ that situation was quite unusual in the 1920s.⁸⁸

Born in Ennis, County Clare, Ireland, Rev. McMahon was proud of his Irish heritage. Growing up, he was a good student and by the time he accompanied Archbishop Clune to Perth in 1921 to take up his first appointment as a priest he was an experienced and well qualified educator.⁸⁹ He had a Bachelor of Arts degree (1915), a Diploma of Education (1917) with honours, and seminary training. He was ordained a priest in 1919 and received first-class honours in his Master of Arts in Education degree in 1920. Later, he undertook further postgraduate studies at the Catholic University of America, Washington DC (1926-1928).⁹⁰ Those studies prepared him to complete his doctoral thesis, *Some Methods of Teaching Religion*⁹¹ (1928) through the National University of Ireland.⁹²

Rev. McMahon's thesis reflected his desire to put his education ideas into practice. On that, he recounted the following:⁹³

In 1921 I was eager to try out my ideas on teaching religion. With the approval of the Archbishop, I taught Christian doctrine each week in the schools of the cathedral parish ... I really enjoyed those visits to the classrooms and I think the children were pleased with the break from ordinary class work. I tried to teach rather than talk at them. Homework was prescribed and this I checked on my next visit. I got children doing things rather than sitting and listening. I appealed to head and heart, instruction and devotion, to know their faith and to practice it, for it is a poor preparation for life to have an instructed head and a cold heart ... I introduced object lessons which pleased pupils and teachers. Baptizing a doll, preparing a table for the Last Sacraments.

⁸⁷ For example, Archbishop Sheehan in Sydney and Rev. Beovich in Melbourne.

⁸⁸ J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 72.

⁸⁹ In addition to his theological training, he undertook tertiary studies in education and taught in local Catholic schools. J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 52-70.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 52-70, 143-188.

⁹¹ J. McMahon, *Some Methods of Teaching Religion: A Survey* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, National University of Ireland, 1928).

⁹² C. Mulcahy, "McMahon, John Thomas (1893–1989)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*.

⁹³ J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 76-77.

This example, along with many others, illustrates Rev. McMahon's efforts to constantly apply the latest education theory to classroom practice in the teaching of religion as a subject in an effort to improve the quality of associated learning.

Several influences shaped the education thought and practice of Rev. McMahon. Those included his family life in Ireland.⁹⁴ His own education was extensive and brought him into contact with a variety of religious personnel who were teachers.⁹⁵ His autobiography fondly recalls all those teachers he admired, including teachers he worked with and met in Western Australia.⁹⁶ One of the most formative teachers in his life, he claimed, was Rev. Timothy Corcoran S.J., the first Professor of Education at University College, Dublin (1909-1942).⁹⁷

Rev. McMahon also learnt during the period of time he spent studying in the United States⁹⁸ and in particular at the School of Education at the Catholic University of America. There he learnt from Professor McCormack about the history of education, Professor Jordan on the philosophy of education, Professor Johnson on method, and Professor Pace on the teaching of religion. At the university he was exposed too to Catholic education thought and practice and was able to gain access to the academic resources that university had at its disposal. He particularly expressed an indebtedness to the work of Thomas Edward Shields who was seen by the university

⁹⁴ Ibid, 3-14.

⁹⁵ He was educated by Mercy Sisters (Convent of Mercy, Ennis), Irish Christian Brothers (Christian Brothers School, Ennis) and Vincentian Priests, in high school (St Vincent's College, Castleknock) and in the seminary (All Hallows College, Dublin). J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 52-70.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Corcoran taught and supervised Rev. McMahon during his education studies and the five years of post-graduate studies. Corcoran was influential in early Irish education history writing, particularly in terms of his work on Irish hedge schools. B. Titley, "The historiography of Irish education: A review essay," *Journal of Educational Thought* 13, no. 1 (1979), 66-77.

⁹⁸ J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 144-161.

as a pioneer in religious education,⁹⁹ particularly in relation to ‘inner character’¹⁰⁰ and Christ as the model teacher.¹⁰¹

Rev. McMahon, like Archbishop Clune who was a strong supporter of Catholic education, established good working relationships throughout his career with many State leaders of education, both Catholic and non-Catholic.¹⁰² For example, he lectured on education at The University of Western Australia and was a member of that university’s Senate. In his autobiography, he also recounts many professional and personal friendships within the State and his extensive network of education contacts inside and out of Australia.¹⁰³

Religious orders

Critical to the success of Rev. McMahon’s work were members of religious orders, particularly those in communities of female religious. Some, like those who ran the ‘Religion by Post’¹⁰⁴ program supported and assisted him.¹⁰⁵ Others adopted his ideas and put them into practice within their schools.¹⁰⁶ Others yet again participated in and supported his efforts to improve the preparation of teachers of religion, both at conferences and training camps.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ Ibid, 154.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 152-154.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 155.

¹⁰² A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 336.

¹⁰³ J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 129-144.

¹⁰⁴ Another name given to Rev. McMahon’s Bushies Scheme and referred to a key component of that program whereby learning was provided through a program of correspondence.

¹⁰⁵ A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 164, 180, 232; A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 121-122.

¹⁰⁶ J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 78-80; A. Whenman, “Religion by post: Religious education as ministry: Pastoral initiative in provision of religious education for Catholic children outside Catholic schools,” *Journal of Religious Education* 56, no. 1 (2008), 7.

¹⁰⁷ R. Rymarz and L. Franchi, *Catholic Teacher Preparation: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Preparing for Mission* (Bingley, U.K: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2019), 35; P. Tannock, “Catholic Education in Western Australia 1829-1979” In *Education in Western Australia*, 145; J. McMahon, “The Irish Renaissance in Christian Doctrine,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 6, no. 4 (1929), 305–; J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 74-75, 83.

During the period 1929-1962, whether in a Catholic school or along the lines developed by Rev. McMahon, teachers of religion were overwhelmingly members of religious orders. That, however, does not negate the hypothesis adapted from Goodson's¹⁰⁸ work, namely, that Catholic schools and Catholic education in Western Australia for the period under investigation was not a monolithic entity, but shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions. The reason is that those who constituted the religious were not monolithic. Rather, they belonged to many different religious orders, each of which had a particular set of traditions and cultures that influenced the way they lived and worked. As teachers, the character and disposition of each religious also played an influential role in how the subject was taught.¹⁰⁹

The lifestyle and habits of the religious were in fact considered essential for giving instruction.¹¹⁰ On that, O'Donoghue¹¹¹ stated:

The official position of the Catholic Church was that in all countries in which Catholic schools operated a major emphasis should be placed not only on religious instruction, but also on ensuring that the climate of schools would be one in which religion would be all-pervasive. A particular way in which this was meant to happen was through the promotion of Catholic viewpoints when teaching the various subjects on the curriculum. On this, Pope Pius IX declared that all branches of learning should "expand in closest alliance with religion", Pope Leo XIII spoke of "every discipline being thoroughly permeated and ruled by religion", and Pope Pius XI advocated that "all the teaching, the whole organisation of the school...its teachers, syllabus and text books in every branch" should be regulated by the Christian spirit. Thus, it is not surprising that many of those who attended brothers' schools during the period under consideration have recalled that they seemed to be constantly doing projects with an element of God, or a picture of God, in them.

¹⁰⁸ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum*.

¹⁰⁹ T. O'Donoghue and S. Burley, "God's antipodean teaching force: An historical exposition on Catholic teaching religious in Australia," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 24, no. 1 (2008), 180-189.

¹¹⁰ J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 85.

¹¹¹ T. O'Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-Speaking World, 1891-1965* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 119.

Religious as teachers also tended to be well regarded within the Catholic community. In some cases that was due to teaching competence shown by certain individuals.¹¹² In other cases, the regard relied upon a respect, even an aura, Catholics had learnt from a young age to attach to the 'religious'. In others yet again, as O'Donoghue¹¹³ points out, it was due to the authoritarian nature of both the Church and the religious life, which in turn generated a mixture of fear and respect within the faithful.

Teacher preparation

For the period under consideration, providing teacher preparation for religious was an issue of concern for those leading Catholic education in Western Australia. Included within that concern, especially for Rev. McMahon and his Archbishops, was specific preparation for the teaching of religion as a school subject.¹¹⁴ That concern about the quality of teaching and a desire to better prepare teachers beyond their basic training further suggests that there was a desire to progress developments to a situation mirroring Beeby's third stage, namely, the 'Stage of Transition'.¹¹⁵ It also supports yet again the hypothesis, adapted from Goodson's¹¹⁶ work, that in the process of establishing religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic tradition.

¹¹² After 1905 teachers needed to be qualified. A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 117.

¹¹³ T. O'Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-speaking World, 1891-1965*, 99-118; T. O'Donoghue and S. Burley, "God's antipodean teaching force: An historical exposition on Catholic teaching religious in Australia," *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 184-185; T. O'Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia, 1922-65* (New York: P. Lang, 2001), 71.

¹¹⁴ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 118-119; 185-188; J. Collins, *One of a Kind: A Social History of the Catholic Institute in Western Australia 1975-1999* (Perth, W.A.: Catholic Institute of Western Australia, 1999), 9-10; J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 91.

¹¹⁵ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

¹¹⁶ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum*.

To support teacher preparation, religious communities in Western Australia for many years provided their own teacher programs and institutions, both for preservice and ongoing preparation.¹¹⁷ However, the approach taken, how extensive it was, and the quality of the programs offered varied both according to each religious order and at what point in time they were provided.¹¹⁸ For example, writing about the period 1930-1960 Carter¹¹⁹ stated in relation to the local Loreto order communities:

In terms of teacher effectiveness it could be said that the Loreto schools...were resting on the laurels of past success, but flaws soon became obvious, as the 'shelter' of the older nuns' experience disappeared with their illness or their death. Not until some anxious and discerning parents made representations to the Provincial Superior in the early 1960s, was a move made to alter the situation.

Moreover, only some of the teacher preparation, including through institute and summer courses, was directed towards the practice of teaching religion. Some religious communities permitted a few of their members to study at state run colleges and at universities. The number involved, however, tended to be small and the commitment of the various religious orders to this level and type of teacher training varied both from community to community and during the years between 1929 and 1962.

In 1938, Mater Dei Teachers' Training College was opened in Perth as a residential college located at the premises of the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria Square.¹²⁰ Archbishop Prendiville initiated that development and Rev. McMahon supervised the training provided by the Mercy Sisters there for members of the five

¹¹⁷ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 118-119; 185-188; J. Collins, *One of a Kind: A Social History of the Catholic Institute in Western Australia 1975-1999*, 9-10.

¹¹⁸ A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 377; A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 185-188.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 188.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 336-339.

different religious female communities.¹²¹ The purpose of that college was stated as being to provide “a training program for religious sisters who wanted to teach in the Catholic schools of Western Australia”¹²² to a standard that reflected the same level of training provided at the State-run Claremont Teachers College. However, the program was abandoned in 1942 because of problems that arose when attempts were made to obtain State recognition.¹²³

The modern catechetical movement

Internationally, the first part of the 20th century saw “modest inroads”¹²⁴ being made in the way Catholic Church personnel taught religion. Gellel¹²⁵ suggests that developments in certain places were driven by “the irreligious character of public schools, the religious indifference of parents and the advancements in the educational sciences”. Rev. McMahon, in his *Christian Doctrine* syllabuses indicated he was influenced by such developments. For example he prefaced syllabus documents with suggestions that teachers should focus on helping students understand the ‘why’ of their religion.¹²⁶ Further, when suggesting the use of a variety of age-appropriate and contemporary techniques for teaching he sometimes referred to challenges from the world outside the school.¹²⁷ Moreover, he stressed the imperative of the involvement of the family in the religious formation of the child, including in the ‘adoption’

¹²¹ Ibid, 335-336.

¹²² J. Collins, *One of a Kind: A Social History of the Catholic Institute in Western Australia 1975-1999*, 9.

¹²³ A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 336.

¹²⁴ A. Gellel, “Putting Catholic religious education on the map,” *Revista Pistas*, 707.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 706-707.

¹²⁶ J. McMahon, *Religious Education: The Perth Scheme of Christian Doctrine* (Perth: Carroll’s Ltd, 1938); Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Christian Doctrine Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)* (Perth: The Record Press, 1931).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

component of his Bushies Scheme¹²⁸ and in his desire to see the work, *Pray the Mass*,¹²⁹ displayed in every home.

From the early part of the 20th century the modern catechetical movement began exploring how best to address many of the issues Catholic teachers of religion encountered.¹³⁰ In response to those shortcomings, those seeking to renew catechetics focused on the child and his or her needs as a learner. That focus led them to pay attention to the work of such educators as Johann Herbart, John Dewey, and Maria Montessori.¹³¹ Rev. McMahon's Christian Doctrine syllabus took account of those developments while also maintaining some aspects of the traditional approach. Certainly, as indicated in an earlier section of this chapter, his curriculum documents reflected established Church practice of framing them around the use of catechisms.¹³² At the same time, a comprehensive application of some of the latest catechetical theory, and especially the Munich Method.¹³³ That meant that he drew on what he referred to as catechetical literature written with teaching in mind and often by teachers

¹²⁸ A program whereby children unable to attend Catholic schools were taught religion.

¹²⁹ A text based on the mass which was developed by Rev. McMahon to aid children's learning.

¹³⁰ B. Marthaler, "The modern catechetical movement in Roman Catholicism: issues and personalities," in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, Vol. 1, ed. M. Warren (Winona, Minn: Saint Mary's Press, 1983), 275-289; M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism* (North Blackburn, Vic: Collins Dove, 1991); C. Sultana, "Catechesis in Europe during the 20th Century," *Sophia - Paideia. Sapienza e Educazione (Sir 1, 27)*, *Miscellanea Di Studi Offerti in Onore Del Prof. Mario Cimosà*, (Roma, 2012); M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*; A. Gellel, "Putting Catholic religious education on the map", *Revista Pistas*.

¹³¹ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*; M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*; A. Gellel, "Putting Catholic religious education on the map", *Revista Pistas*.

¹³² Both the Archdioceses of Sydney and Melbourne published syllabus documents and updated these from time to time. *Syllabus of Studies in Christian Doctrine: Issued by Order of the Hierarchy for Use in All Catholic Post-primary and Secondary Schools in New South Wales* (Sydney: Verity Press, 1947); Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.) and Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Melbourne (Vic.), *Syllabus of Religious Instruction in Primary and Secondary Classes* (Melbourne: The Advocate Press, 1941).

¹³³ C. Howell, "The new German catechism," *The Downside Review*, 113-123.

engaged in catechetics. Moreover, such was his influence that his work featured in a text about teaching religion written in 1939 for seminarians in the United States.¹³⁴

Christian Doctrine Syllabus

Rev. McMahon also took a broad approach to the subject matter to be taught in religion. For example, he organised his 1924 syllabus into sections, each of which was to be viewed both as a discrete entity and as part of an integrated whole, with the overall aim being to help the student understand, appreciate and enjoy the learning.

On that focus he¹³⁵ stated:

Although it is necessary for examination purposes to divide the subject into sections as Prayers, Doctrine, Instructions, Bible History and Liturgy it does not mean that they should be looked upon as water tight compartments within the school. The parts of this subject should be intermingled and made to help each other whenever possible.

A consideration of the section on prayer illustrates his section-based approach. Teachers were encouraged to go beyond recalling and reciting the words of prayers and to give attention to the meaning of each prayer. That was to be achieved through the way the teacher modelled associated meditative qualities as well by taking the time to explain the meaning of words used in each type of prayer.

When attending to the significance of each prayer taught, Rev. McMahon suggested too that teachers should use pictorial representations as aids to provide a full and rich understanding. Most importantly, the ‘doing’ of praying, he said, was not just about saying prayers. Rather, he viewed that approach as essential for the learning process, provided the “doing” gave “due consideration to its mediative aspects”¹³⁶.

¹³⁴ A. Feurst, *The Systemic Teaching of Religion: A Text Book for the Training of Teachers of Religion in the Elementary Schools and for Catechetical Courses in Seminaries; Freely Adapted from the German Work 'Katechetik' with Permission of the Author, Michael Gatterer*, (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1939).

¹³⁵ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 2.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

Rev. McMahon's approach to the catechisms are also noteworthy. Rather than be the sole source of content, they were to be part of a larger vision of the subject's content. In the first part of his syllabus entitled 'Doctrine', he focused on how to use the catechism in the classroom and he directed teachers to explain the meaning of technical words and phrases to students prior to them memorising the text.¹³⁷ Further, those explanations, he said, needed to be age appropriate, with technical words "simplified and translated into words familiar to children"¹³⁸.

Rev. McMahon's approach was motivated by an educational rationale. His aim was to produce "enlightened Catholics"¹³⁹. He insisted that the offering of an explanation of a catechism point had to precede memorisation of it. He emphasised too that teaching catechism points required that the teacher have a good grasp of the theology used in the text while at the same time recognising that teachers could not be theologians. For that reason, he argued, teachers needed to have access to libraries well stocked with catechetical literature that included "explanatory manuals, teachers' aids and popular compendia of theology"¹⁴⁰.

Another section of McMahon's syllabus dealing with the catechism was entitled 'Instruction'. The focus there was on providing full explanations of catechism content. However, he added that there was a need to "vary the programme in this section each year, so as to militate against the monotony of ever doing the same things"¹⁴¹. For that, he proposed that each year a teacher should select a special topic that would become a focus for teaching in each grade. To support that work a pamphlet

¹³⁷ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 3.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Laffin refers to this approach as the "synthetic method of teaching". J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 73.

¹⁴⁰ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 4.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 5.

would be issued, be introduced into the homes, and be used in each school grade such that the children would come to have a knowledge of that content.¹⁴²

‘Bible History’ was also included in the syllabus. That, Rev. McMahon noted in 1924, “is the popular part of the programme” and “should be a delightful change from the hard work of learning the catechism”¹⁴³. His goal was to make the Gospel narrative real for application to life by the child. On that, when teaching parables, teachers were advised to follow a three-step process involving an introduction, a recount of the story in the words of the Scripture, and a treatment of the story’s moral lesson.¹⁴⁴ Once again, Rev. McMahon encouraged the use of such teaching aids as pictures and charts. However, he also noted that the use of Scripture was not common in the Catholic school and home and he wanted to shift practice from just citing Biblical text to a reader paying attention to the context and circumstances of the text.

‘Church History’, for final year students, was “considered too heavy” by some. For Rev. McMahon, however, his was “comparatively a light programme”¹⁴⁵ compared to the situation in Ireland and England. There was a problem though, he conceded, with the text used. He suggested that teachers and their students should write their own Church history. Each work, he argued, should focus on a particular period with a focus on a historical figure and would “with a constant appeal to local colour” become “a great panorama” with “every new scene or incident a vivid coloured picture, fascinating, unforgettable”¹⁴⁶. To illustrate what he envisioned, he referred to mystery plays, guild plays, and Passion plays. He argued also that there

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 4.

¹⁴⁴ When emphasising that point in 1924, Rev. McMahon acknowledged that his advice had been ignored by teachers in the preceding year. Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 5.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 6.

should be a focus on biographies of “modern Churchmen and Catholic statesmen”¹⁴⁷ and he encouraged teachers to use readings from the Catholic Press in their lessons.¹⁴⁸

Rev. McMahon also prescribed the teaching of ‘apologetics’ for those in the senior years. In 1924 he noted that some teachers continued to treat apologetics as “mere memorisation”¹⁴⁹. He, on the other hand, described the aim of the subject as being to develop “a reasoned grasp” rather than “appeal to memory”¹⁵⁰. Further, he stated, “through this subject we endeavour to equip our pupils as members of the lay apostolate, apostles of light fully competent to help others to see that light”¹⁵¹.

Rev. McMahon also made other suggestions about pedagogy. For instance, for the senior grades he suggested that the nature of the subject matter best suited the use of a lecture format. The teacher, he held, should deliver the content of the lesson and students should take notes in notebooks that would result in a major written record of their classroom learning. From his perspective too, notetaking was a skill that needed to be explained and taught to students.¹⁵²

Rev. McMahon also encouraged the teaching of what he titled, ‘Social Study’ in senior classes. Distinct from a social science course, the focus would be on a religious study of social issues.¹⁵³ The aim was to “give an indication of the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the great industrial and economic issues of the day”¹⁵⁴. For teachers, he suggested that they have several components to be delivered in a short series of lectures. These were to be on such Church teaching as in Pope Leo XIII’s

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid, 7.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 8.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*.¹⁵⁵ His vision was that student awareness of some social issues in Australian society would be raised and that the learning would be supported with the formation of such student guilds as the Society of St. Vincent De Paul.¹⁵⁶

Rev. McMahon also advocated the use of drama in the teaching of the subject, referring to examples from Church tradition such as the St Francis' use of the Christmas Crib on how to instruct. He encouraged the use of class-dramatisation of Bible stories and found some teachers, but not all, welcomed that. He added that an educational perspective, the use of drama in the classroom, could have three positive outcomes. First, drama presented the opportunity to bring together all aspects of the learning involved in religion as a school subject. Secondly, use of drama in the classroom by teachers would present them with opportunities for casual instruction. Thirdly, he argued, learning better "sticks" in the mind of the children when "it is connected with something they are doing"¹⁵⁷.

Rev. McMahon also articulated an education vision that involves the use of music in the classroom. While learning the words and singing hymns well was important, he held, there was more to the task; children needed to learn how to interpret the meaning of the hymns they sang and why singing in a congregation was important. To reinforce that learning, he encouraged the practice of children singing during Benediction and at Sunday masses.¹⁵⁸ On that, as O'Donoghue¹⁵⁹ has observed, his ideas reflected both the work of contemporary theorists about the liturgy and ideas that

¹⁵⁵ Pope Leo XIII, "Encyclicals," The Holy See, 26 February 2021, <http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals.index.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 8.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

¹⁵⁹ T. O'Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia, 1922-65*, 74-80.

prefigured developments that were to become central to Church thought about the liturgy early during the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council in 1962.

Rev. McMahon also divided his programme of study into three stages, each related to a specific age range. Each stage “covered the whole ground of Religious Doctrine but from a different angle”¹⁶⁰. That model of spiral learning meant that the same content was covered but the method employed at each stage varied. For each stage, McMahon also offered a list of books written by a range of different authors that would support the teaching of the subject.¹⁶¹

The first stage, The Story Stage, was for 5-8 year old’s. The purpose in that stage was to have the teacher stimulate through the use of play in the classroom, the imagination of the child with the “story of God and His Church”¹⁶². It was for two grades, namely, that for children under 7 years of age and the First Confession and Holy Communion Class for 7-8 year old’s. That for the latter was designed to meet Church requirements concerning the age when children should receive those sacraments.¹⁶³

The second stage, the ‘Catechism Stage’, was for 8-13 year old’s. The teacher was to focus on helping the child to learn and remember facts. To that end, Rev. McMahon identified the characteristics of the child¹⁶⁴ and the method¹⁶⁵ appropriate for use in the stage.¹⁶⁶ Throughout, prayers, catechism, instruction and sacred scripture were addressed.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 11.

¹⁶¹ For detail see, Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 12-19.

¹⁶² Ibid, 11.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 12.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 13.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Grade I (8-9 years), Grade II (9-10 years), Grade III (10-11 years), Grade IV (11-12 years), Grade V (12-13 years), Grade VI (13-14 years). Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 13-15.

The third stage, 'The Apologetic Stage', was for 13-18 year old's. The task of the teacher was to develop the student's ability to reason and to apply Catholic doctrine to his or her life. Rev. McMahon identified the characteristics of the adolescent and appropriate teaching methods.¹⁶⁷ The teaching of prayers, sacred scripture and Church history were common to all grades. The 'Sub-Junior' grade was the only grade in which catechism was to be taught. The syllabus for both the 'Junior Leaving' and 'Leaving' grades listed apologetics and sacred liturgy, while social studies was only included for the Leaving grade.¹⁶⁸

By 1938, Rev. McMahon's approach to the teaching of religion had evolved into three separate but related programs of learning, namely, *Religious Education – The Perth Scheme*, *Liturgy for the Classroom* and the program of learning included in the 'Bushies Scheme', which is considered in more detail later in the chapter. The first of those incorporated, expanded upon and added to what he had originally outlined in his 1924 syllabus. His aim was that children would learn to think in religion. He wanted teachers to encourage their students to "ask the why and wherefore of all he does and see done in Church, of all he studies in prayers, doctrines, liturgy, history, and practice"¹⁶⁹. For that task, teachers were encouraged to be less dependent upon textbooks, to make use of a large variety of teaching aids and to develop in their own way "the skeleton courses prescribed"¹⁷⁰.

Teachers were required to put into practice four ideas. The first idea was to be that those leaving school at the age of 14 or 15 should be seen as a special class to be prepared for living and working in the world outside of the school. Secondly, the

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 15.

¹⁶⁸ Grade VII (Sub-Junior, 13-15 years), Grade VIII (Junior Leaving, 14-16 years), Grade IX (Leaving and onwards. Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*, 16-17.

¹⁶⁹ J. McMahon, *Religious Education: The Perth Scheme of Christian Doctrine*, 9.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

teaching of the Mass was to be seen as a separate task that involved the use of specialist textbooks and methods.¹⁷¹ Thirdly, teachers were to teach the religion lesson during two sessions each day. The first of those was to be about 10 to 15 minutes in duration in the morning. In that session, students would recall and learn essential content. Later in the day, a second session of about 30 minutes in duration was to be conducted. Teachers were encouraged to make that a “very interesting lesson”¹⁷² in which students would have the opportunity to develop an understanding of what they had been learning. A fourth idea Rev. McMahon promoted was that a school’s library teaching resources and equipment to aid the teaching and learning process be developed.¹⁷³

Christian Doctrine Through the Liturgy

First in 1924,¹⁷⁴ then in 1931¹⁷⁵ and later in 1934¹⁷⁶ and 1937,¹⁷⁷ Rev. McMahon proposed and then developed a separate, but complementary program of teaching religion focused on liturgy. In a 1937 publication, he identified several sources of inspiration and support for that work. First, there was the work of Dr Pasch “an acknowledged fountain head of the liturgical movement in Austria”¹⁷⁸. Secondly, there was Dom Beauduin, who pointed to “a contrast between the catechism way and the liturgical way”¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷¹ The inspiration for that focus was drawn from the then current pope, Pope Pius XI. Rev. McMahon refers to the pre-Reformation liturgical approach to education where Catholic faith was learnt through the ‘language’ of the liturgy, “the great school of the people until the so-called Reformation”. J. McMahon, *Religious Education: The Perth Scheme of Christian Doctrine*, 10.

¹⁷² Ibid, 10.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Religious Instruction: Report of the Diocesan Inspector and Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth (Western Australia)*.

¹⁷⁵ Archdiocese of Perth Catholic Church, *Christian Doctrine Syllabus for the Archdiocese of Perth*.

¹⁷⁶ J. McMahon, *Liturgy for the Class-room*.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 11.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 18.

Another, source of inspiration and support was the papal teachings of Pope Pius X and Pope Pius XI. Both were strong supporters of those paying attention to the liturgy and catechesis. They also advocated strongly for a more active participation by the laity in the Mass.¹⁸⁰ Rev. McMahon, in support of the papacy's desire for more active participation in the liturgy argued that the Mass should be viewed as a corporate action of "priest and people"¹⁸¹. As part of his argument, he referred to Catholic Action, stating:¹⁸²

The present Pope has merited the title of the "Pope of Catholic Action". We religious teachers form the vanguard in that march ... The Mass is the powerhouse of Catholic Action.

Pope Pius XI also promoted what Rev. McMahon referred to as the "Parable method",¹⁸³ stating:¹⁸⁴

The present Holy Father asks for a return to that manner of teaching, and considers the liturgical year as the framework into which Christian Doctrine may be most effectively cast.

Pope Pius XI further emphasised the educational value of the Church's liturgy in his 1929 Papal encyclical, *Divini Illius Magistri (That Divine Teacher)*.¹⁸⁵

A fourth source of inspiration referenced by Rev. McMahon was the work of Abbe Spiritus. That work recommended the use of object lessons on the Mass and promoted a notion of a need for a shift from private devotion to corporate worship.¹⁸⁶ Finally, Rev. McMahon also referenced his own book, *Some Methods of Teaching Religion*, that was the result of his doctoral studies.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 21.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 24.

¹⁸² Ibid, 23.

¹⁸³ The Parable method, like the stories told by Jesus, was a way of teaching religion that associated religious concepts and terms with everyday things. J. McMahon, *Liturgy for the Class-room*, 15.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 9.

¹⁸⁵ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, par. 72.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 27.

¹⁸⁷ J. McMahon, *Some Methods of Teaching Religion: A Survey*.

The application of recent theory and practice in education

Rev. McMahon's work on teaching religion through having a focus on the liturgy illustrates several innovations evident in the corpus of his work. Many of those demonstrate an application of the latest education theory and practice present in both Australian education circles and in the catechetical reform movement.¹⁸⁸ For example, he argued for a focus on the missal as an aid to learning in the classroom during the teaching of religion because it included commentaries that provided explanations of liturgical "language",¹⁸⁹ and could be likened to the use of a program in a concert presented in a "foreign tongue"¹⁹⁰. He also encouraged teachers to make learning concrete by connecting abstract concepts to the life and experience of the student.¹⁹¹ He wrote too about activating the senses as both a pedagogical and as a theological principle.¹⁹²

Another important aspect of Rev. McMahon's work was the differentiated pedagogy he suggested for those in different age grouping. For example, for younger students up to 9 years of age, he wanted teachers to encourage their curiosity. That, he considered, was best done by having students ask questions and observe actions, especially in relation to Sunday Mass.¹⁹³

For students aged 9-12, Rev. McMahon encouraged what he called the 'action method'. That would involve students making, collecting, dividing, categorising, sequencing, grouping, representing, dramatising, and using colour.¹⁹⁴ In particular, he

¹⁸⁸ R. Rummery, *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1975), 7-10.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 29.

¹⁹⁰ Rev. McMahon likens a missal to a program that would be used in a concert in a 'foreign tongue'. J. McMahon, *Liturgy for the Class-room*, 30.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 14.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 15.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 31.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

recommended that teachers make use of the Montessori card system for teaching the structure of the Mass.¹⁹⁵

For students 12 years of age and older Rev. McMahon promoted the use of what he referred to as the ‘missal habit’. That involved laying down the foundation for using the missal by learning how to locate and use such key references as the ordo, readings of the Mass and structure of Mass. Students were also to be shown how to use a missal through practice, explanation and use during Mass. He also suggested as follows: “If you will have the same children for two or three years, plan your lessons in concentric cycles, covering the Mass each year, but giving more detailed instructions on the parts each successive year”¹⁹⁶.

Working with scripture, Rev. McMahon argued, should also be a key focus. Students were to read the scriptures, in relation to the Mass readings and commentaries about passages and to search out the meaning of those. About that focus, he¹⁹⁷ stated:

This indirect approach to Holy Scripture may succeed in bringing the pupils to a better knowledge of and love for the written word, where our direct appeal in the Scripture lesson fails ... Through the Mass we can lead the people back to the Scriptures ... Our catechism way has failed largely because it has minimized the Scriptures. And to ignore the Scriptures is to ignore Christ. A more extensive use of the Missal will achieve this object.

For him, the missal was not to be just read but was also a tool for learning and meditating both for all teachers of religion and their students.

Liturgical catechesis

By 1937 Rev. McMahon’s focus in relation to the teaching of religion and where he placed his emphasis was on the liturgical way; “If we adopt the liturgical way, then the Mass becomes the centre and core of all our work as teachers of religion”¹⁹⁸. By

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 33.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 23, 35.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 22.

then he was a parish priest, who in that capacity was required to place the liturgy and liturgical catechesis at the centre of his ministry. On that he stated:¹⁹⁹

The Mass may be looked upon as the core of instruction. It has been in the past the medium through which the Church educated the people. Mysteries and dogmas, Scripture and tradition, history and symbolism may be taught to the people through the Mass.

The position held by him on the catechetical function of the Mass also reflected that coming from the Vatican and was consistent with the movement for liturgical and catechetical reform picking up pace at the time.

Rev. McMahon textbook, *Pray the Mass*, was designed to accompany the use of the missal, to be a guide for learning, and to be a source amongst young Catholics for engaging in devotion. Writing about it in 1935 *The Catholic Press*²⁰⁰ stated:

In the Introduction, the author suggests that teachers devote one religion period weekly to instruction on the Mass. By adopting this plan, and by placing this little book “Pray the Mass”, in the hands of the pupils during the weekly lesson, the children would surely become, as the author hopes, active participants in the Holy Sacrifice.

In explaining the title Rev. McMahon referred to the work of Pope Pius X and Pope Pius XI,²⁰¹ both of whom urged Catholics to participate actively in the Mass. He added:²⁰²

It is the Mass that matters in the homes with the parents, in the schools with teachers and pupils, and in the Church from the pulpits. In every visit to the schools during the years that I inspected them, I brought in the Mass and gradually built up in the minds of teachers and pupils the importance of knowing, appreciating, loving and living the Mass.

The fact that many editions over many years were published and that it was used widely across Australia suggests that text was successful and considered to be “a very

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ “Pray the Mass,” 24 January 1935, *The Catholic Press* (Sydney, NSW: 1895 - 1942), 14, 30 August 2019, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10451013>.

²⁰¹ J. McMahon, *Pray the Mass: A Text-book on the Mass* (Thirteenth edition revised), (Sydney: Pellegrini & Co, 1959), 58.

²⁰² J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 77.

helpful and practical treatment of the ceremonies of the Mass”²⁰³. It was designed to appeal to students and was attractively set out with simple and clear instructions. Short paragraphs were written with headings that stood out.²⁰⁴

The Bushies Scheme

Rev. McMahon’s willingness to translate theory into practice was at times motivated by personal experience and the circumstances in which he found himself.²⁰⁵ Those included working as a hospital chaplain soon after his arrival in Perth and at a time when he was feeling quite homesick and unsure of himself as a priest. In the hospital he came across several sick Irishmen who had worked in remote bush and mining camps. Those men, although Catholic, were not much interested in him and in religion. After having cogitated that issue for himself, he commented on how the experience helped him develop his education approach:²⁰⁶

The seed of understanding and sympathy for all exposed to the perils of isolation and lack of means to practice their religion was sown in me, and this eventually blossomed into the Bushies’ Scheme.

That lesson was further reinforced by an oft recounted story of his about a lay Irishman he met when visiting a small country centre in 1922. There he was challenged to make sure those living in country areas were provided with an education in the faith.²⁰⁷

Those experiences soon led him to begin what became known as the Bushies Scheme.

In Western Australia prior to 1921, religious instruction occurred within the context of family and parish life, and, for those able to attend, in the Catholic school.

However, despite a Church injunction for Catholics upon the pain of sin to send their

²⁰³ “Pray the Mass,” 24 January 1935, *The Catholic Press*.

²⁰⁴ It was inexpensive, became a national text, and was published over many years –160,000 copies being sold. J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 77.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 75.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 76.

²⁰⁷ J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 89; A. Whenman, “Religion by post: Religious education as ministry: Pastoral initiative in provision of religious education for Catholic children outside Catholic schools,” *Journal of Religious Education*, 2-8.

children to a Catholic school, not all Western Australian Catholic families could gain access for their children to one for geographical²⁰⁸ and financial reasons. That began to change after the arrival of Rev. McMahon. Soon after his arrival, he produced programs that, throughout his career, enabled religion as a subject to be taught to children not attending Catholic schools throughout the State.²⁰⁹ About that development, Suart²¹⁰ stated:

Despite all efforts made by the bishops, two large groups of Catholic children were not receiving any form of religious instruction. These were children who for whatever reason were attending the state schools and those who lived in isolated areas. Priests were asked by the bishops to provide catechists to undertake the religious instruction of these children. As this catechesis became difficult some bishops suggested that the families take on the role of catechist and educate their own children. In Western Australia in 1923 Fr J.T. McMahon initiated a correspondence course known as 'Religion by Post' for children living in isolated areas.

The development in that regard of the Bushies Scheme pioneered new ways to teach religion²¹¹ through remote and distance education approaches.²¹²

The introduction and development of the Bushies Scheme found its lead to some extent, in what was happening more broadly in the Western Australian State education system.²¹³ Up to 1918, the education authorities there engaged in several innovations that went some way towards addressing the educational disadvantage of many children who lived outside of major population centres.²¹⁴ Those included the

²⁰⁸ For much of the 20th century Western Australia had few centres with large populations, and those living outside of those centres tended to be located in sparsely populated rural and remote communities.

²⁰⁹ J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 72-80.

²¹⁰ C. Suart, *Nurturing Faith within the Catholic Home: A Perspective from Catholic Parents Who Do Not Access Catholic Schools*, 25.

²¹¹ Rev. McMahon later saw parallels between his Bushies Scheme and a similar, contemporaneous religion program of learning for rural children in Oklahoma known as 'Extension'. For detail, see F. Kelley, *The Story of Extension* (Chicago: Extension Press, 1922); J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 86.

²¹² The program developed by Rev. McMahon was used and adapted in other parts of Australia and the world. J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 101, 106.

²¹³ C. Mulcahy, "McMahon, John Thomas (1893–1989)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*.

²¹⁴ E. Lopes, T. O'Donoghue, and M. O'Neill, *The Education of Children in Geographically Remote Regions through Distance Education: Perspectives and Lessons from Australia* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub., 2011), 78.

use of part-time teachers,²¹⁵ the use of ‘tent schools’²¹⁶ and the development of ‘one teacher schools’.²¹⁷ Some schools in rural centres were also consolidated to ensure that “better teachers, better curriculum coverage, and better facilities”, were provided.²¹⁸

In 1918, a comprehensive response to the peculiar demands for education created by the geography of the State was commenced with the creation of the *Western Australian Correspondence School*.²¹⁹ Those responsible recognised that the provision of correspondence education required the provision of specific learning materials and techniques and teachers required “a high degree of teaching skill, initiative, imagination, insight, sympathy and thoroughness”²²⁰. In addition, it was recognised that parents needed support as they supervised much of each child’s learning.²²¹ Therefore, they were provided with guidelines and support in the form of instructions.²²² Further, additional teaching support was given to the needs of “physically handicapped and chronically ill students”²²³. Access to supplementary learning resources like library books, magazines, school tours and camps was also made available.²²⁴

In 1935 an additional, significant development occurred. That involved the introduction of lessons by radio broadcasts to complement correspondence lessons.²²⁵

²¹⁵ A teacher would spend part of each week working in one school and the rest in another.

²¹⁶ These schools catered for shifting and scattered populations. For example, on a goldfield’s settlement or a logging camp.

²¹⁷ Those schools catered for very small numbers of children from a range of age groupings. Catering for that diversity in the classroom required much of the teacher.

²¹⁸ E. Lopes, T. O’Donoghue, and M. O’Neill, *The Education of Children in Geographically Remote Regions through Distance Education: Perspectives and Lessons from Australia*, 79.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 80-81.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 83.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 82.

²²² *Ibid*.

²²³ *Ibid*, 86.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, 89.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 90.

Another important innovation was the introduction in 1946 of an Itinerant Teacher Service.²²⁶ With the creation in 1959 of the Schools of the Air in Western Australia, provision of that service came to an end in 1967.²²⁷

Developments at the State level influenced Rev. McMahon in his design of the Bushies Scheme. It was a multi-faceted program of religious instruction that evolved over time, often in response to changing needs and capacity. In 1923, in its first iteration it was called *Religion by Post*.²²⁸ Then, in 1925, the *Pioneer Bushies Scheme* was introduced. That evolved in 1928 into a program called *The Perth Plan*.

In 1931, *The West Australian*²²⁹ newspaper reported the following details about Rev. McMahon's scheme²³⁰ as it was by then conceived:

Questioned on the scheme, Dr. McMahon said yesterday that it was started in 1923 and was now catering for about 1,500 children in the bush. It was organised in three departments. Holiday schools were conducted in country boarding convents. The children spent three weeks at convenient centres during the summer holidays. The forenoons were devoted to instruction in religion and the afternoons and evenings to sport and entertainments. Last year these summer schools were held at Esperance, Manjimup, Bridgetown, Busselton, Albany, Wagin and Narrogin, and some had as many as 60 boys and girls drawn from isolated farms and group settlements. The second method of catering for the children of the bush, continued Father McMahon, was by correspondence classes. The classes were conducted by sisters from various centres. Every month a personal note was written to each child. This was accompanied by typed instructions, catechism, assignments, Bible history stories, pictures and religious objects. The third method was known as the 'adoption movement'. People in the cities were asked to 'adopt' families living in the country and to send to them regularly Catholic periodicals. This movement had grown to such an extent that applications for the names of

²²⁶ Ibid, 91-224.

²²⁷ Ibid, 93-94.

²²⁸ Rev. McMahon's initiative began at an annual Catholic Teachers' Conference in Perth in February 1923. There, he asked for volunteers and three religious sisters responded: Mother M. Augustine (Loreto), Mother Mary Ignatius (Mercy, West Perth) and Sister Mary Ligouri (Mercy, Victoria Square). Other religious sisters also shared in that work as the scheme grew, becoming responsible for putting many of his ideas into practice.

²²⁹ "Religious instruction," 8 July 1931, *The West Australian* (Perth, WA: 1879-1954), 3, 18 August 2019, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32359403>.

²³⁰ Anglicans in Western Australia also implemented a similar, but less extensive, program. "Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (1929)," *Diocesan Archives*, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia; "Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (1939)," *Diocesan Archives*, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia; P. Wellock, *God in School: The Roles of Church and State in the Provision of Religious Education in Western Australian Government Schools from 1829-1976* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Murdoch University, 1977).

families living in isolation were now continually coming from the Eastern States, and many children in England and the United States of America had been put in correspondence with the children of the West Australian bush. A complete account of the scheme for ministering to outback children is contained in another of Dr. McMahon's books, 'The Perth Plan'.

Further refinement of the program occurred over the next three decades and elements of it were still being used by religious who taught religion in schools during the 1960s and 1970s.²³¹

Features of the Bushies Scheme

One key feature of the Bushies Scheme was that the program of learning functioned through correspondence.²³² Another, was that its operation relied upon the efforts, expertise, and experience of female religious from different religious orders.²³³ About some of the related work, Carter²³⁴ stated:

Each sister (3) wrote a monthly letter to each child in her region along with instructions and assignments. Letters were expected to be addressed to each child, not a circular, chatty, friendly and affectionate. Areas of instruction covered Prayers, Catechism, Bible, History and the Mass. The Bushies Scheme lasted until the end of WWII.

Residential schools for 'Bushies' was a third feature of the scheme. Those took place during holiday breaks in the school year.

'Holiday schools' developed into programs that were resourced by the Catholic community, were staffed by nuns, and were supported by parish priests. Rev. McMahon instituted them because, by 1925, he felt that the quality of learning using the correspondence method had been patchy and unreliable. About that, Carter²³⁵ wrote:

²³¹ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 211-212; A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 354-355.

²³² Hence why it was first titled *Religion by Post*.

²³³ J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 86-107.

²³⁴ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 122.

²³⁵ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 121.

As a result of his frequent travels around the Archdiocese Father McMahon realised that the correspondence scheme lacked a vital element – it was impersonal. The Sisters who wrote the letters and sent the instructions needed to meet their pupils, a tall order given [1700] pupils were enrolled in the correspondence scheme by 1925.

A response was the institution of the ‘Adoption System’, whereby a family from a Perth parish ‘adopted’ a country family. Those families corresponded with each other about a range of areas of life but especially about religious matters. The activity was described as being apostolic work and drew its inspiration from the Catholic Action movement. Those who ‘adopted’ the family of a bushie was encouraged too, to share information about the faith found in publications such as *The Record* and those produced by the Catholic Truth Society. Those publications, already promoted in parishes, now were circulated through the mail to the families of ‘bushies’.

Another feature of the Bushies Scheme was ‘Aunt Bessy’s Corner’ published in *The Record* between 1931 and 1939. That local Catholic newspaper provided, at that time, a valuable and regular source of information about Catholic faith and life. As editor, Rev. McMahon invited a nun, Sister Lucius,²³⁶ to assume the persona of Aunt Bessy. In her column she posed children’s questions and responded to questions sent into her by children about Catholic faith. The answers provided not only added to the content of learning but provided a valuable source of feedback about student learning. By soliciting questions from children, Aunt Bessy captured the type of issues children had about church and faith. These, in turn, further informed Rev. McMahon’s in adapting strategies.

Another feature of the scheme involved Rev. McMahon in his capacity as Diocesan Inspector of Schools. Through that role he was able to keep in touch with students and keep an eye on progress, directly and indirectly. He visited families and

²³⁶ J. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, 104.

parishes to see how learning was progressing. He supervised and supported the work of the nuns. He paid attention to what parish priests had to say about the quality of student learning and observed for himself the progress of children. He also encouraged and supported his fellow priests in that work.

Motor Missions

Another development grew out of the ongoing need to provide some form of religious instruction for those children unable to attend a Catholic school. Typically, within that category were two distinct groups.²³⁷ The first group included Catholic children who attended State-run schools. Provision of some form of religious instruction for those took place during school hours or in a local parish facility. Local clergy, religious and, in some cases volunteers, undertook the task of providing the instruction.²³⁸ The second group were those who either did not have access or have available to them the option of a parish-based form of religious instruction. Initially, the Bushies Scheme was developed to provide for them. By the late 1950s, however, changed circumstances contributed to the introduction and development of ‘motor missions’ in Western Australia.²³⁹

On the new circumstances, McLay stated:

As [Catholic schools] began to be closed from the 1960s on, in areas where population decrease and shortage of religious as teaching staff made their continuance no longer viable, Motor Missions assumed a significant role in the continuation of religious instruction.

Likewise, Tormey,²⁴⁰ writing about teaching orders in Western Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, stated:

²³⁷ A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955-1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, University of Western Australia, 1976), 28.

²³⁸ A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 354.

²³⁹ A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions*, 28, 83.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 83.

The expansion of this state in recent years, in the city with its suburban growth, and in the developments to the north of the state, have made it essential for orders to re-think their role in terms of mobility and adaptability. The re-deployment of personnel particularly in motor-missionary activities has also been necessary in rural areas, because of the shift of population, and the consequent closure of many schools.

Whenman,²⁴¹ on the other hand suggested that the ongoing lack of State-aid for Catholic schools combined with increased pressure on the limited resources of those schools created:

[a] climate of crisis in Catholic education in the mid 1950s that the hierarchy and some of the clergy in Catholic dioceses across Australia realised the necessity of providing for the religious education of Catholic children who found themselves, for whatever the reason, to be outside the Catholic School system of education.

Pendal,²⁴² offers a different perspective yet again, identifying the Sisters of Saint Joseph²⁴³ as the first religious order to begin a motor mission in Western Australia in 1959. He suggested that it was begun because of “a seemingly endless supply of religious teachers”²⁴⁴ during a strong period of growth experienced by the Church in Australia in the 1950s. It was only in the 1960s that, according to Pendal,²⁴⁵ a decline in the number of teaching religious forced Catholic schools in smaller country centres to be closed by religious orders.

Concurrently, the need for motor missions became amplified.²⁴⁶ Those were a Catholic Apostolate that developed in Australia. According to Whenman,²⁴⁷ they were

²⁴¹ A. Whenman, *In Good Faith: A Historical Study of the Provision of Religious Education for Catholic Children Not in Catholic Schools in New South Wales: The CCD Movement 1880-2000* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2011), 126.

²⁴² P. Pendal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 206-208.

²⁴³ Founded by Mary MacKillop.

²⁴⁴ P. Pendal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 208.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ R. James, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia, 1891-1991* (Mosman Park, W.A.: Congregation of the Presentation Sisters of Western Australia, 1996), 523.

²⁴⁷ A. Whenman, *In Good Faith: A Historical Study of the Provision of Religious Education for Catholic Children Not in Catholic Schools in New South Wales: the CCD Movement 1880-2000*, 123.

... a uniquely Australian response to the need to provide religious education to Catholic children not attending Catholic schools. The unique circumstances of the Catholic Church in the Australian cultural and physical environment were the impetus for such a response. Originating from the pastoral response of the clergy and religious ministering to the families in the isolated areas of the Australian outback, the name, Motor Mission, was derived from the need in this apostolate for a motor vehicle, as the distances to travel from school to school for weekly lessons, visiting homes and conducting sacramental programmes were significant. The activity of the Motor Mission is part of the history of many of the metropolitan and rural dioceses of Australia.

The work had grown out of the pastoral practice of the Church in Australia during the 19th century and early 20th century and was an extension of the religion-by-post schemes that operated by the 1950s, in several different Australian dioceses. Further, as Whenman²⁴⁸ has stated:

With the improvement of transportation networks, from the 1950s the correspondence lessons were supported by another uniquely Australian pastoral response in the form of the “Motor Missions”. The correspondence lessons were to provide the foundation material for the development of teaching programs for the catechists who were recruited to teach in the State schools during the 1960s.

Whenman²⁴⁹ also indicated that the inspiration for the development of the Motor Missions owes much to the work of Mother Mary MacKillop, who, during the 19th century, responded to the needs of people in isolated and rural communities in Australia.

Based on the example of Mary MacKillop a priest, Father John Wallis from the Archdiocese of Hobart was inspired to establish a congregation of religious sisters in the 1940s. They were named the Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady (The Rosary Sisters).²⁵⁰ His vision was that the work of those sisters would focus on going out to people in isolated and rural communities; “their mission would be to enable people to deepen their faith and know they were an integral part of the wider Church community

²⁴⁸ A. Whenman, “Religion by Post: Religious education as ministry: Pastoral initiative in provision of religious education for Catholic children outside Catholic schools,” *Journal of Religious Education*, 7.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 123.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 124.

and supported in their commitment to their families”²⁵¹. During the 1950s, similar ‘missionary work’ that was designed to address the same area of concern was commenced in other dioceses.²⁵²

In Western Australia, several different female religious orders undertook Motor Missions.²⁵³ Mother Mary MacKillop’s Sisters of Saint Joseph opened a Motor Mission centred in Tambellup in 1959.²⁵⁴ From that base “the Sisters travelled to outlying areas providing religious education to children in remote places and support to their families”²⁵⁵. A group of Sisters of Mercy focused their attention on three other areas centred “in the areas of York-Toodyay, Bridgetown-Donnybrook, and the Eastern Goldfields”.²⁵⁶ Similarly, several Presentation Sisters were active in the Eastern Wheatbelt region, around the Bruce Rock and Narembeen districts.²⁵⁷

From the various centres noted and other centres too, small numbers of religious travelled by car throughout surrounding districts. Later on, they travelled to some districts, by plane. Often, because of the distances travelled and the work required, they spent extended periods of time ‘on the road’. They stayed in the homes of ‘bushies’ and their families, especially when visiting in remote and isolated areas in the State. In addition to teaching religion, they provided an important pastoral

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid, 125-126.

²⁵³ A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions*, 40-41, 48, 74.

²⁵⁴ A small town located in the south of the State.

²⁵⁵ That centre operated until 1989. Other centres included Nannup, New Norcia, Esperance, Perth, Trayning/ Wyalkatchem, Cranbrook and Margaret River/Augusta. In the 1970s, Pilbara townships, in the north of the State, were also included. “125 years of Josephite ministry in Western Australia,” *Latest News, Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart*, 9 August 2016, <http://www.sosj.org.au/newsevents/viewarticle.cfm?id=1062&loadref=7>.

²⁵⁶ A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 354.

²⁵⁷ R. James, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia, 1891-1991*, 523, 527.

service to the whole family and the community to which they belonged during the visits.²⁵⁸

Conclusion

This and the previous chapter provided an outline and analysis of the construction of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools during the period 1929-1962. This chapter expanded upon the outline provided in the previous chapter by elaborating and discussing several themes that emerged from an analysis of the construction process during the period. The next two chapters that follow now repeat that process for the second period under consideration, 1962-1971.

²⁵⁸ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 211-212; A. McLay, *Women Out of Their Sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, 354-355.

CHAPTER SIX

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGION AS A SUBJECT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: 1962-1971

Introduction

Religion as a subject internationally and in Australia underwent significant change during the period 1962-1971. The associated developments are presented in the next two chapters. This chapter opens by providing an overview of the broad historical context within which the construction of the subject occurred. The second section then outlines specific developments in relation to the process. Chapter Seven, the next chapter, then provides an elaboration and discussion of the developments detailed and an analysis of associated key issues specifically in relation to Western Australian Catholic schools.

Historical Context

Internationally, the period 1962-1971, saw a continuation and intensification of the Cold War. Decolonisation also continued and aided by the two superpowers of the day, often led to armed conflict in countries emerging from colonisation. Technological advances contributed too to substantial social and economic change, particularly in Western countries. They included increased travel by jet planes, widespread use of televisions, and the contraceptive pill.

The political and technological developments of the period prompted, supported, and interacted with significant movements for social and economic change. Examples include the emergence of a variety of distinct but related rights' movements focused on issues of race, gender and class.¹ Further, growing affluence amongst

¹ These movements fed into popular unrest and protest, particularly in 1968.

some, mostly in the Western world, led to increased production and consumption of consumer goods. Connected to that was the spread amongst the ‘baby-boomer’ generation of a youth culture.² Furthermore, a range of interacting social phenomena individually and collectively contributed to significant changes in societal values. According to Stafford,³ those included increasing secularism, cultural pluralism, growing affluence, a youth and a consumer culture, and individualism.

Australia, while exposed to many of the above detailed phenomena remained relatively stable in various respects during the period. The nation experienced good economic growth and the national government continued to be led by conservative political parties. However, as the 1960s drew to a close, consensus in society on certain matters began to break down, particularly over Australia’s commitment to supporting the USA in the Vietnam conflict.⁴

The structure of Australian society also continued to undergo change. Migrants, mostly from Europe, continued to arrive and settle in the country. Parallel to that was an increase in births. In general, the population boom that resulted created both opportunities and challenges. For instance, while the need to provide extra infrastructure, especially housing, schools and hospitals led to economic growth, there was concurrently, increased pressure upon existing resources. Integrating recent immigrants from non-Anglo and non-Celtic backgrounds into Australian society also continued to present challenges.

² C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 181.

³ J. Stafford, “An analysis of the fundamental shift in Catholic secondary religious education during the long sixties, 1955-1973,” in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education* 18 (2017), 28-52.

⁴ Australian government use of conscription was an important catalyst for opposition to the war.

Church developments

The period 1962-1971 was especially significant for the Catholic Church. In 1962 Church leaders from around the world gathered in Rome to commence the first session of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Their deliberations during the course of four sessions⁵ soon gained momentum. They focused on a wide-ranging review of Church life and how the Church related to the beliefs and values of non-Catholic peoples from around the world.⁶ The associated positive energy generated within the Church, the scale of change envisaged,⁷ and the experience of social change occurring in the wider society also contributed to confusion, concern and resistance⁸ within various groups soon after the Council concluded its deliberations in 1965.⁹

Two developments, both culminating in 1968, became defining moments in how the post-Second Vatican Council Church evolved. The first was an internal debate about contraception. Contrary to what many expected, Pope Paul VI, when he issued *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life)¹⁰ on 25 July 1968, re-affirmed Church teaching on married life and rejected the use of any form of artificial contraception. A second development saw a wave of social unrest and protest in society intensify in 1968.¹¹ Some Church leaders witnessing that began to question the wisdom of changes taking place. On that, Leavey¹² commented:

⁵ Each session of the Council took place during the Autumn months of each year.

⁶ J. Stafford, "An analysis of the fundamental shift in Catholic secondary religious education during the long sixties, 1955-1973," in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, 40-41.

⁷ The task of absorbing and implementing the Second Vatican Council tended to be disruptive and difficult. For details see J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2008), 259-303.

⁸ Some lay Catholics and Church leaders questioned the merit of the Council. That sentiment grew into open resistance and hostility. Many others supported what had been achieved.

⁹ J. Stafford, "An analysis of the fundamental shift in Catholic secondary religious education during the long sixties, 1955-1973," in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, 28.

¹⁰ Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (1968), 3 April 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/paulvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

¹¹ T. Gourlay, and D. Matthys, *1968 - Culture and Counterculture: A Catholic Critique* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020).

¹² M. Leavey, *Religious Education, School Climate and Achievement: A Study of Nine Catholic Sixth-Form Girls' Schools* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Australian National University, 1972), 98.

The reasons for these various crises, even if one could define them accurately, are beside the point here. What is of importance is the general upheaval that has characterised religion and religious life. As it happens, the upheaval has generated a great deal of creative theology and philosophy of religion, and many attempts at structural reform and innovation. I will return to this positive aspect in my conclusion; for the present, I intend to concentrate on what might be called the negative aspects – the confusion and the dichotomies in the life of the Catholic Church – though my rather mild treatment suggests nothing of the startling rapidity and dramatic reversals of life style, that have characterised and accompanied these changes. Examples like the Dutch Church apparently in near schism, the opposition to *Humanae Vitae*, the large scale exodus from priestly and religious life, the involvement of religious in violent demonstrations and possibly in sedition, the current debates on practically every question in theology have all occurred within the last ten years.

Splits soon emerged within the Church as positions hardened into battlelines between reform and conservative forces.¹³

In Australia,¹⁴ Catholics in general, along with many other groups, were experiencing a growing sense of prosperity and social advancement. Further, Catholics were increasingly occupying positions of leadership, with some, like B.A Santamaria and members of the DLP (Democratic Labor Party) becoming key political powerbrokers. In Western Australia, Dr Prendiville's long period as Archbishop of Perth (1935-1968) continued. After establishing a policy of 'self-help', he tended to leave clergy and religious to get on with their work. About that Massam¹⁵ has stated:

The archbishop's policy of financial 'self-help' in parishes galvanized the support of the increasingly affluent Catholic population in postwar Western Australia. Institutions were staffed and often separately funded by religious orders, including the twenty-one new communities invited to Perth during his years in office... In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (1962-63), he "ceaselessly encouraged" a network of organizations of Catholic laity, both devotional and activist, and handed over responsibility to priests and people in the parishes. ... [Therefore] under the motto, *da anima cetera tolle* ('nothing else matters except the salvation of souls'), he aimed for, and achieved, a

¹³ O. Putz, "I did not change; they did!" Joseph Ratzinger, Karl Rahner and the Second Vatican Council," *New Wineskins* 2, no.1 (2007), 11-30.

¹⁴ By the 1960s, there was an extensive network of Catholic parishes, schools, hospitals and welfare bodies. Dioceses were also well staffed by priests and religious recruited from overseas and locally. Many new immigrants were Catholic. Sectarian rivalries were less virulent.

¹⁵ K. Massam, "Prendiville, Redmond (1900-1968)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, 28 December 2020, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/prendiville-redmond-11453/text20415>.

strong institutional framework of specialist Catholic associations to expand traditional activities in the archdiocese.

By the 1960s, however, he was in ill health and nearing the end of his long tenure. While active in his early years as Archbishop, his capacity to exercise his duties was now quite limited.¹⁶ Increasingly, while still overseeing his Archdiocese, he relied upon those to whom he delegated responsibility.¹⁷

Growth in the Archdiocese led to its southern portion being excised to become the new Diocese of Bunbury in 1954. To assist Archbishop Prendiville, auxiliary bishops were appointed. That began with Bishop Goody (1951-1954), who later in 1954 became the first bishop of Bunbury. He went on to replace Archbishop Prendiville in 1968. In 1966 a new Diocese of Broome,¹⁸ located in the far northern Kimberley region of the State, was also established with John Jobst¹⁹ as its first bishop.

Developments promoted by the Second Vatican Council took some time to filter through to Australian Catholics.²⁰ Most of the nation's bishops, upon returning from Rome, welcomed them. However, as in other parts of the world, many Australian Church leaders began to struggle with the task of interpreting and implementing various positions put forward as change began to effect local churches.²¹

Bishops from Western Australia along with other members of the Catholic hierarchy in the nation attended and participated in some or all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council. However, implementation of its recommendations presented

¹⁶ Prendiville had two strokes in 1946 and suffered ill-health thereafter. K. Massam, "Prendiville, Redmond (1900–1968)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*.

¹⁷ J. Nestor, *Archbishop Redmond Prendiville (1993 - 1968)*, 26 December 2020, <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~marydan/archbish.htm>.

¹⁸ Previously it had been an area of mission known as the Apostolic Vicariate of Kimberleys.

¹⁹ Jobst was a Pallottine missionary priest originally from Germany.

²⁰ A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Western Australia, 1976), 29.

²¹ For details see J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 259-303.

many challenges locally. For example, the bishops of Western Australia, including Archbishop Goody of Perth, had to try to deal with associated matters that tended to divide the Catholic community. Concurrently there was some erosion in a confidence only relatively recently acquired amongst Catholics in how they saw themselves and their place in Australian society.

In considering the latter, it is useful to recall that at the beginning of the period under consideration Catholics in Australia largely held a clear and distinctive set of views about the Church and its place in the world. Included was a Catholic sense of certitude and of difference, and a strong focus on sin and salvation.²² By the end of the period, however, many of those views were challenged, had unravelled, or were undergoing significant change.²³ Of that shift within the Church both internationally and within Australia, O'Donoghue²⁴ has concluded:

By the late 1950s, it seemed as if nothing short of a great shock would be required to shift it out of its authoritarian, hierarchical, and dogmatic approach in its dealing with both the laity and those in religious life. The shock came, however, when Pope John XXIII announced the convening of the Second Vatican Council.

The result he stated, “was nothing short of revolutionary, profoundly affecting virtually every aspect of Catholic life”.²⁵

Developments in education

After World War II, expectations grew within Australian society that education would help facilitate the achievement of the aspirations of families for their children,

²² K. Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1996), 33-53.

²³ J. Stafford, “An analysis of the fundamental shift in Catholic secondary religious education during the long sixties, 1955-1973,” in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, 28-52; J. Laffin, “‘Sailing in stormy waters’: Archbishop Matthew Beovich and the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide in the 1960s,” *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 3 (2010), 291-293.

²⁴ T. O'Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-Speaking World, 1891-1965* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 121.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

contribute to economic growth of the nation, and eliminate poverty.²⁶ However, they were tempered by the reality of schooling, a matter on which Campbell and Proctor²⁷ have commented as follows:

With the largest increases in child populations since the nineteenth century, school systems were under strain. The baby boom and massive post-war immigration meant that schools were filled to bursting point during the 1950s and 1960s. The number of students enrolled in the primary and secondary schools rose from 975 000 in 1945 to 2 839 000 in 1971 ... There were shortages of teachers, of buildings, of school materials.

Awareness of the latter challenges helped create public interest in schooling, create more demand for secondary education, increase teacher unionisation, further expanded teacher training, and lengthened pre-service teacher education.²⁸ The challenges also contributed to the national government²⁹ becoming interested in a major way in schooling.³⁰ Soon, national politicians began to use the fiscal resources at their disposal to effectively reintroduce 'State aid' for non-government schools. That development was particularly important for Catholic schools which by the 1960s were close to collapse.³¹

During the period under consideration coeducational comprehensive secondary schools were also established.³² That development opened up secondary schooling to the masses, with Western Australia being one of the first states to experience the phenomenon.³³ However, the introduction of such schooling did not

²⁶ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 186.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 178-9.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 193-194.

²⁹ In Australia's federal system of government, education is the responsibility of state governments. Since World War Two the national government has increasingly used fiscal measures to intervene in education matters. C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 208.

³⁰ K. Tully, *State Secondary Education in Western Australia: 1912-1971* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia, 2002), 1-2.

³¹ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 180.

³² *Ibid*, 187-188.

³³ K. Tully, *State secondary education in Western Australia: 1912-1971*.

resolve questions on what subjects should be taught and how best to cater for different levels of aptitude, interest, and post-school destination.³⁴

The introduction of comprehensive secondary schools in Western Australia in the early 1960s enjoyed strong support nationally. Several factors accounted for that. First, the introduction helped to address concerns in the community about access to and equity in education. It also meant that there was no need to test young children to determine their academic pathways. Moreover, operating larger schools enabled cost savings to be made, transportation infrastructure to be rationalised, and all members of the one family to attend the same school. Finally, the introduction of comprehensive secondary schools contributed to the process of assimilating large numbers of new migrants into Australian society.³⁵

However, not all sections of society were supportive.³⁶ Catholics in particular were concerned about providing the new type of schooling because it would place additional stress upon a system already struggling to be adequately maintained by the community without government assistance. Another important concern was their coeducational nature at a time when coeducation was still being frowned upon by Church leaders.

Educational practice also underwent change in the period.³⁷ Greater focus than previously was given to child-centred learning. Primary school classroom teachers began to promote creativity and use new learning aids, “experimental music, improvisational drama, discussions and hands-on activities”.³⁸ Syllabi and textbooks

³⁴ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 188.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 190.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 190-191.

³⁷ Many of those changes were inspired by international developments in education that promoted the ideals of progressive education, pedagogical reform, and curriculum renewal. C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 195.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

began to be rewritten in order “to build reasoning, understanding and explanation around the content matter of both new and traditional subjects”.³⁹ Campbell and Proctor⁴⁰ have concluded on the overall movement as follows:

... it is difficult to avoid a narrative for this quarter-century of progress from the staid and unenlightened 1950s to a heady post-1968 progressivism. Such an approach would be a considerable oversimplification, but there is some truth to it. There were two broad strands of reform. The first was about what went on inside schools as progressivism made an impact not seen since before World War I. The second addressed social and economic inequality.

They added that “four groups in particular were the targets of attention: Indigenous children, non-English background migrant children, girls; and working-class children”.⁴¹

Catholic education in Australia

Leaders of the Australian Catholic Church faced two main challenges during the period under consideration. First, the Catholic community had insufficient resources to meet the growing size of its membership. Secondly, there was a corresponding increase in demand for the education services provided by the Church.⁴² Complicating those challenges for Church leaders was the need for them to find ways to provide and sustain an effective school system while also meeting a growing demand for new schools in newly established suburbs and an increased need to provide Catholic secondary school education.⁴³ A further concern for various Catholic education leaders was that the establishment of secondary schools also required the provision of expensive resources such as science laboratories and libraries.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 203.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² P. Tannock, “Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979,” in *Education in Western Australia*, ed. W. Neal (Nedlands: University of WA Press, 1979), 158-165, 175-167.

⁴³ Ibid, 159.

While Church leaders and members tried to keep up with demands made of them,⁴⁴ increasingly they became unable to do so.⁴⁵ The resulting pressure pushed the Catholic school system to its limits.⁴⁶ On the related challenges in Western Australia, Tannock⁴⁷ stated:

The period 1950 to 1970 was in some respects an extremely difficult and potentially disastrous one for Catholic education in Western Australia. The situation in the Catholic school system deteriorated so rapidly towards the end of this period that it took the intervention of governments and the resumption of large scale state aid to prevent it from virtual collapse.

Leaders of the Church in Australia along with the Catholic community in general responded by renewing their campaigning across the nation for the reintroduction of State aid for Catholic schools. Events such as the ‘Goulburn Strike’⁴⁸ and concerted political campaigns gradually led to governments, both state and Federal, reintroducing some forms of State aid for Catholic schools:⁴⁹

In all respects, the momentum could not be halted. By February 1967 the Australian Catholic Bishops had agreed to establish a National Catholic Education Commission which would help unify Church efforts to the maximum extent possible. Within a year, Western Australian’s Monsignor Bourke, who had been spiritual director to the influential Knights Education Committee and who had been Archbishop Prendiville’s Director of Catholic Education in Perth, would be relocated to Canberra to head the new national office.⁵⁰

In Western Australia, significant energy and resources from within the Catholic community were directed towards the various local campaigns over an extended

⁴⁴ J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography*, 80-82.

⁴⁵ P. Tannock, “Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979,” in *Education in Western Australia*, 159; A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions*, 1-27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 159-165.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 159.

⁴⁸ In 1962, local Catholic families in Goulburn, New South Wales, went on ‘strike’. For details see, C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 196-197.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 199.

⁵⁰ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008* (Inglewood: Victor Publishing, 2008), 222.

period.⁵¹ Instrumental in them were three distinct groups, the *Parents' and Friends' Association of Western Australia* (P&F),⁵² the *Order of the Knights of the Southern Cross* and the bishops of Western Australia.⁵³ Members of all three groups worked together. They also interacted with a range of local and national individuals, institutions and other organisations across Australia sharing similar interests.

Another development during the period was the declining capacity of religious communities to staff Catholic schools. Across Australia, there was both a decline in recruitment and a significant increase in those opting to leave religious life.⁵⁴ That situation exasperated the crisis affecting Catholic education in Western Australia, like elsewhere. There were several contributing factors. First, traditional sources of recruitment from Ireland, the eastern states of Australia and locally, went into decline. Secondly, values and attitudes were changing in society. Thirdly, the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council led to different ways of looking at the Church, the world, and religious life. Fourthly, “the enormous physical strains and pressures to which so many religious were subjected in Catholic schools in the 1950s and 1960s”⁵⁵ made their way of life unattractive. Fifthly, many religious communities involved in education had an aging profile that contrasted with that of staff in government schools,⁵⁶ a matter that further contributed to the lack of appeal of the religious way of life.

⁵¹ For details of how those campaigns developed in Western Australia, see P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 213-222.

⁵² The official position promoted by members of the Federation was that the issue of State-aid was a matter of concern between parents and government, not Church and government. D. Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia* (Perth: Archdiocese of Perth, 1979), 262-264.

⁵³ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 213-222.

⁵⁴ P. Tannock, “Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979,” in *Education in Western Australia*, 160.

⁵⁵ P. Tannock, “Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979,” in *Education in Western Australia*, 160.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Employing lay teachers was proposed as one solution to the crisis of recruitment experienced by Catholic schools during the 1950s and 1960s. However, two impediments existed. The first was the limited capacity within the Catholic education system to pay the salaries of lay teachers. The second impediment related to an institutional bias that developed after the withdrawal of State aid, namely, a belief within the Catholic community that the religious were essential for the success of Catholic education. On that issue in relation to Western Australia, Tannock⁵⁷ observed several related developments and issues:

The number of lay teachers began to increase between 1950 and 1970, but slowly, and mainly at the secondary school level. This was a matter of both tradition and economics. The Catholic community had grown accustomed to the education of its children by members of religious orders. There was a strong reluctance to accept any diminution in this practice. More children in a school with the same number of nuns or brothers usually meant larger classes rather than the employment of lay teachers – even if the latter, in a period of severe teacher shortage in Australia, were available. Western Australia, unlike other states, had no Catholic teachers' colleges. The Claremont and Graylands Teachers' Colleges were overwhelmingly geared to the 'production' of bonded teachers⁵⁸ for service in government schools during most of this period, so no relief could be looked to from this quarter. This traditional reliance upon the religious orders to staff and conduct Catholic schools also meant that priests in charge of rapidly growing new parishes, faced with the probability that no nuns would be available to operate a parish school if it were initiated, often allowed the opportunity to lapse. Little consideration by many parishes or the orders was given to the possibility of establishing new Catholic schools largely or even totally staffed lay teachers: during these decades the assumption was made that they would not be true Catholic schools.

He concluded by saying that the “reluctance to employ lay teachers and to use them as a basis for developing new schools was also a matter of economics”.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 159-160.

⁵⁸ G. Burke, “The economics of Bonded Service: The case of graduate secondary teachers in Victoria, Australia,” *Higher Education* 5, no. 1 (1976), 35.

Religion for Catholic Schools: The Subject

The *My Way To God* books were the most noticeable feature of religion as a subject in Catholic schools in Australia during the period 1962-1971. They were a series of four primary school texts developed by the leaders of the Australian Catholic Church.⁵⁹ The intention was that they would be used by children in Australian Catholic primary schools and homes, and for parish-supported religion lessons in government schools.⁶⁰ Each of the four books was meant to be used with a specific age grouping or primary school ‘grade’. The first book was for Grade One students and the final book was for Grade Four students. All four books were first published in 1964, were sold at an affordable price,⁶¹ and were to be used in all Australian Catholic schools.⁶²

Each book in the series was written as a ‘child’s book’ and was referred to as a ‘religion text’. Teachers were not meant to see or use the books as catechisms or lesson books. Rather, they were to see each as a child’s story book from which each could learn about “God’s own message to the children”.⁶³ Each was also written at a level intended to match the comprehension and capacity levels of the children using it. Furthermore, each was presented in a large format, with font sizes varying according to grade level, and colour, graphics, songs, biblical texts, and prayers were included. Summaries of what was taught in a particular grade and activities, questions, and illustrations that teachers could use with their students were also provided. As

⁵⁹ Those publications were developed for the leaders of the Australian Church and printed in Australia by Australians with an Australian audience in mind.

⁶⁰ Government schoolteachers across Australia were legally unable to teach denominational religion lessons, commonly referred to as ‘special RE’. However, religion in a general sense could be taught, known as ‘general RE’. For more detail see, W. Nott, *Religious Education in the Government Schools of Western Australia: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Religious Education in the Government Schools of Western Australia, Under the Chairmanship of W.E. Nott, Perth, July, 1977* (Perth: Education Department, Western Australia, 1977).

⁶¹ Australian Bishops’ Committee for Education, *My Way to God One: Teacher’s Book* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1964), iv; M. Ryan, “My Way to God: The birth and early demise of the kerygmatic renewal in Australian religious education,” *Journal of Religious Education* 49, no. 1 (2001), 4.

⁶² *Ibid*, 4.

⁶³ Australian Bishops’ Committee for Education, *My Way to God One: Teacher’s Book*, 3.

religion texts, the books were designed to promote the active participation of the child not only in the learning but also with the central message presented always with its implications for one's future life as a committed Christian.⁶⁴

Overall, the series aimed to develop a range of ideas and themes. Chief among those was a central purpose, namely, to share "God's own story"⁶⁵. That purpose in turn had several important features. First, the texts aimed to proclaim the basic message of the Christian kerygma,⁶⁶ "the story of God's plan of salvation"⁶⁷. Secondly, there was a strong emphasis upon the needs of the child and a desire to transform him or her through that learning. Thirdly, in addition to the nature of the content, the use of story as a metaphor suggested an approach to pedagogy. About all of those matters the Teacher's Book⁶⁸ stated:

It is a true story, the story of God's plan of salvation. Children naturally love stories, and seem to love them still more when they are assured that they are true stories. In this case the true story is not just something that excites their curiosity and appeals to their imagination. It is a story that reveals God to the children. Through it God Himself is speaking to them; through it He is calling them, assuring them of His all-embracing fatherly love and protection. His call will evoke a response from the child, a response from mind, will, imagination, senses, the whole child acting as one.

Furthermore, while the structure of the text in each of the four books varied, they all followed a similar pattern and dealt with more complex material as one moved from grade one through to grade four.

Each book was broken up into short chapters. Each also typically began with the presentation of a biblical story and its message. The particular story presented, or

⁶⁴ Australian Bishops' Committee for Education, *My Way to God, Book Four: Teacher's Book* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1964), 3.

⁶⁵ Australian Bishops' Committee for Education, *My Way to God One: Teacher's Book* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1964), 3.

⁶⁶ G. Holohan, *What is the Relationship between Religious Education and Catechesis? In Australian Religious Education - Facing the Challenges: A Discussion on Evangelisation, Catechesis and Religious Education Questions Raised for Parishes and Catholic Schools by the General Directory for Catechesis* (Canberra: National Catholic Education Commission, 1999), 16.

⁶⁷ Australian Bishops' Committee for Education, *My Way to God One: Teacher's Book*, 3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 3.

the message of that story was then usually summarised or retold in more contemporary terms. Key ideas for learning were stated and children were invited to ‘do’ and ‘know’ things. Those ideas were also often reinforced through a brief set of suggested activities, prayer or song.

The *My Way To God* series was part of a ‘package’ developed for Australian use. That ‘package’ included the *My Way To God* series, two *Catholic Catechisms*, accompanying teaching manuals for all six books, and *The Small Child’s Way to God* manual for parent and teachers. Considered together all those resources came to be seen as part of a whole program of learning rather than a collection of separate or discrete programs of learning.

New Catholic catechisms

In addition to the *My Way to God* series, two new catechisms were produced, namely, *Catholic Catechism Book One*⁶⁹ and *Catholic Catechism Book Two*.⁷⁰ Both were published in 1962, two years before the *My Way to God* series appeared.⁷¹ The intention was that they be used by students in grade 5 and grade 6, with each accompanied by a teacher’s book.⁷²

Like the *My Way to God* series, the catechisms were heavily influenced by the work of kerygmatic theologians. For example, the first book began with a brief letter from “your Bishop” to the student. The content of that stated:⁷³

Dear Children, Your Father in heaven loves you so much that He sent His own Son down to save you. Jesus set up His Church to give you the truth and the life that He had brought down from His Father. You were brought into His Church by your Baptism, and in His Church you know and love God and live

⁶⁹ Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book One* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1962).

⁷⁰ Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book Two* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1962).

⁷¹ Both were published in 1962, two years earlier than the *My Way to God* series. That matter is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

⁷² Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book One Teacher’s Book* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1962); Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book Two Teacher’s Book* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1964).

⁷³ Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book One Teacher’s Book*, v.

as His children. This book comes to you from the Church; it will give you Christ's truth so that you may know your Father more fully. It will show you how you are to live as Christians and grow in love of Him. The Holy Spirit lives always in the Church and guides it to teach God's truth. He will guide your parents and teachers when they are teaching you. He will give you the light to use this book to come to know God better. He will give you greater love through using this book, so that you may live more and more as children of God, and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. May Mary Help of Christians help you and all her Australian children to remain faithful soldiers of Christ the King. Your Bishop.

Each book consisted of several small chapters. In total, there were 105 of them in Book One and 127 in Book Two. Each book also opened with a few brief introductory chapters. Those were followed by a series of chapters organised into parts that reflected the traditional structure of a catechism. That structure included the profession of faith or creed, liturgy and the sacraments, the Church and the moral life, and the "last things".⁷⁴ Each book also had a collection of prayers at the end.

Each chapter in a book began with a title that succinctly stated a specific Catholic belief or doctrine. The content of each chapter was then organised according to a common pattern. First, there was a brief 1-2 page narrative or exposition that explained the belief and why it was important. That often began with some reference to scripture that tended to be presented in the format of short biblical quotations, paraphrased accounts, or some reference to a Bible account.⁷⁵ Secondly, a short set of catechism-style questions and answers was provided. In Book One "For My Life", for example, that was followed by a short statement that applied that Catholic belief to the life of a student. A brief example from the "Prayer of the Church" was then provided. Then, a short Scripture verse was presented, followed by a set of revision questions related to the chapter. The last part of a chapter included 'Things to do'. It provided

⁷⁴ Book one's final part, Part 10, is titled 'The Completion of the Kingdom'. It has five brief chapters: Christian Death, Home in Heaven, Cleansing in Purgatory, Eternal Loss and The General Judgment. Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book One Teacher's Book*, x.

⁷⁵ A chapter may also include a combination of those formats.

suggested activities for students that could include personal reflection, prayer, or a written task.

When launching Australia's new catechism in 1962, the Australian bishops stated:⁷⁶

The new Catechism will differ in approach from the texts that have been in general use. Instead of the exclusively question and answer form of present texts, the new Catechism will, in each of the 105 chapters, first expound simply the doctrine of a specific topic. This exposition is summarised in question and answer form. Then follow scriptural and liturgical excerpts reinforcing the doctrine, and a series of revisionary questions. Each chapter closes with a set of suggested activities. The order of doctrine in the new Catechism follows that of the Catechism of the Council of Trent... Parts 1 and 2 present the doctrine of God, the Creation, the Fall, and the sending of the Son of God to redeem man by His sacrifice. Parts 3 to 7 present the doctrine of the Holy Spirit sent to and remaining in the Church to share the truth and life of God through teaching and sacraments. Parts 8 and 9 give the rules of Christian life, the Commandments. Part 10 treats of the Last Things as "The Completion of the Kingdom".

They concluded by pointing out that the bound catechism, which was affordably priced, contained coloured illustrations and provided answers to 145 questions.

A series of teacher manuals

Accompanying each of the two 1962 *Catholic Catechism* books and the four 1964 books in the *My Way To God* series were teacher manuals.⁷⁷ A fifth manual, *The Small Child's Way to God*,⁷⁸ was published in 1965. All were written under the direction of Father Kelly from the Melbourne Archdiocese, who supervised the work on behalf of the Australian Episcopal Conference.

Several common features were incorporated in the structure and content of each of the nine manuals produced. Three key areas were addressed. First, each

⁷⁶ "Pastoral Letter of Bishops of Australia, 1 April 1962," *The Newcastle and Maitland Catholic Sentinel: The Official Organ of the Diocese of Maitland* 30, no. 7 (1962), 103.

⁷⁷ Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book One Teacher's Book*; Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book Two Teacher's Book*; Australian Bishops' Committee for Education, *My Way to God: Teacher's Book*, Books 1-4, (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1964).

⁷⁸ Bishops' Committee for Education, *The Small Child's Way to God: For Parents and Teachers of the Pre-grade One Child* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1965).

manual provided a rationale for the approach to the subject. That included articulating the underlying kerygmatic theology and message. Each also included an explanation of the subject's aims, what was expected of the teacher, and the role that parents were to play. Advice about how the needs of the child in each grade were to be understood and treated when teaching the subject was also provided.

Secondly, each manual provided a detailed exposition of the content taught in each grade. That included outlining the structure of the content. It also included giving explanations designed to help teachers better understand what they were to teach.

Thirdly, each manual offered detailed suggestions on how the subject could be taught in both school and parish settings. Those were attentive to the age, gender and circumstances of the child in the classroom. Each manual also offered suggestions for teachers that incorporated and explained a range of contemporary pedagogical strategies. Furthermore, teachers were provided with sample lesson plans, teaching programs, and suggestions on how content could be sequenced for different school settings and situations.

In each of the teaching manuals for the *Catholic Catechism*, the features detailed above were presented in three parts. 'Part 1' included 12 chapters, each addressing general principles⁷⁹ associated with the rationale and approach required for teaching the subject. 'Part 2' provided a commentary on the content included in each catechism. 'Part 3' included suggestions or "plans" on how to teach that subject.

The teaching manuals for the *My Way To God* series addressed also the features detailed above and in four parts. The first dealt with the rationale of the *My Way To God* series and the nature of the child in the relevant grade. The second part presented

⁷⁹ Ch 1: Christ the teacher; Ch 2: Christ's Teacher; Ch 3: General aim of Christian Doctrine; Ch 4: The spirit and the pattern; Ch 5: The Scriptures; Ch 6: The Liturgy; Ch 7: Prayer; Ch 8: Planning a course; Ch 9: Planning the lessons; Ch 10: Aids; Ch 11: Activities; Ch 12: Memorization.

a suggested “programme of work for the teacher in the Catholic school”.⁸⁰ The programs in question were not designed to be a substitute for a teacher’s own planning and preparation, but rather as support material for him or her.

The third part of the manuals consisted of several chapters that offered a series of suggested programs relating to the conduct of meetings with parents. Those typically focused on common themes or topics. For example, the manual for those in grade one focused on beginning the school year, the “psychology of the Grade One child”, “training for purity” and “prayer”. The manuals for those in other grades also included details on what to do about the reception of particular sacraments in specific meetings. The fourth part of each manual provided a course of lessons for catechists to use in religion classes conducted in government schools or in a parish-based afterschool program.

In addition to the four manuals developed for each of the four *My Way To God* books a fifth manual, *The Small Child’s Way to God*,⁸¹ was written. Unlike in the other manuals in the series, there was no “issuing of a pupil’s book for the children of this age group”.⁸² Further, that fifth manual was directed towards parents as well as teachers and catechists of the pre-Grade One child.⁸³ About that focus the preface stated:⁸⁴

If parents read the whole set of lesson plans for any of the topics suggested they will find a line of approach and a vocabulary suitable to the five year old. If their children are in a Catholic school they will be able to understand and supplement the lessons being given them and join in their activities. If their children are at a Government school, or not at school at all, they will find in these lessons the basis of their instructional work with their children.

⁸⁰ Australian Bishops’ Committee for Education, *My Way to God One: Teacher’s Book*, vii.

⁸¹ Bishops’ Committee for Education, *The Small Child’s Way to God: For Parents and Teachers of the Pre-grade One Child*.

⁸² *Ibid*, ix.

⁸³ The preface notes: “In some States the educational system begins with Grade One; in others there is a pre-Grade One (called Kindergarten in New South Wales and Preparatory in Victoria)... (roughly the five-year-old)”. Bishops’ Committee for Education, *The Small Child’s Way to God: For Parents and Teachers of the Pre-grade One Child*, ix.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, ix.

Like the other manuals in the series, *The Small Child's Way to God* was divided into four parts. However, those parts varied from other manuals. The first part was directed towards parents, teachers and catechists, and the chapters within it provided advice and suggestions about the message taught to the child “we are forming”,⁸⁵ and suggestions for parent meetings. That manual's second part provided a course of lessons for teaching to children in the pre-grade one school year in Catholic schools. The course presented three units of work, one for each of the three ‘terms’ in a school year. Each unit also included a series of chapters, with each chapter treating a weekly topic.

The third part of the manual provided pre-grade one lessons for catechists to teach in parish-based classes and in government schools. The final part provided a series of chapters about monthly assemblies for ‘junior grades’. Each suggested assembly theme was religious in nature. Two examples are ‘St Joseph’ and ‘Easter’.

The design of the subject, taken as a whole and across the range of materials developed, reflected a spiral curriculum model. Those in each grade were deemed to be located at a specific stage of learning. Teaching suggestions were also informed by contemporary knowledge in psychology indicating the learning and developmental needs of the child in each grade.

All of the manuals developed on behalf of The Bishops’ Committee for Education included detailed suggestions for progressing the learning of the child. To that end, each book and its corresponding teaching manual in the series included several elements deemed essential for the task. Those include an outline of a teaching scope and sequence and a prescribed set of texts for students to use. Those responsible

⁸⁵ Ibid, v.

for the teaching were also provided with detailed manuals about how to best teach the child.

Teachers were also encouraged to plan their year's work around weekly programs of learning and daily lessons. To support them in the task, teaching programs and lesson plans for teachers to use were provided. In addition to those teaching resources, teachers were reminded to always maintain a focus on the central message of the learning and to ensure that their teaching contributed to that goal. About that, the following was stated in *The Small Child's Way to God*:⁸⁶

Each of the books in this series presents the story of God's love in a manner suited to the stage of development of the children in the various classes. Each year, children are led to appreciate God's Saving Plan at a deeper level. Each book deals with the plan of salvation from the Creation to the Day of General Judgement. In broad outline the message to be communicated in each school year is – One, I am God's child; Two, We are God's children; Three, We belong to God's Family; Four, We belong to the People of God.

Concluding that statement was a reminder to teachers that unless pupils appreciated the concepts taught in their classrooms, their pupils would not learn “the greatness and goodness of God”.

Teaching religion as a vocation and a ministry

During the period 1962-1971, teachers were expected to play a critical role in the teaching of the subject religion. As ‘heralds’ of God's message, the cleric⁸⁷ and the lay catechist⁸⁸ were considered to hold a privileged position and to carry significant responsibility for trying to achieve the outcomes of the subject. The fundamental task of the teacher, it was held, was to communicate “joyfully” “God's call” and be “the

⁸⁶ Ibid, 5-6.

⁸⁷ The use of this term suggests but does not make explicit an assumption that the person doing the teaching of the subject in Catholic schools is a Religious. Australian Bishops' Committee for Education, *My Way to God One: Teacher's Book*, 3-4; Australian Bishops' Committee for Education, *My Way to God Four: Teacher's Book*, 5.

⁸⁸ This is a specific term that refers to the lay person who teaches religion, typically during parish-based classes or in special religious education classes offered in a government school.

human instrument through whom God evokes” from the child “a response from mind, will, imagination, senses, the whole child acting as one” to “God’s message”.⁸⁹

The teacher of religion was seen to be then more than just a teacher in the conventional sense. They had a special ‘ministry’ within the Church,⁹⁰ it was held, and were to see their work as a ‘vocation’. In that regard the first teachers’ book in the *My Way to God* series stated:⁹¹

God in His goodness has called the religious teacher and the lay catechist to be the privileged messengers of His divine Love, heralds of His divine Message. Those who have been called to be teachers of God’s little ones, particularly those who have the responsibility of giving them their first systematic knowledge of God, have had a divine privilege bestowed upon them, for which they should be deeply humble and grateful. In order to carry out this sublime mission, they must endeavour to acquire the qualities of true heralds of Christ, characteristics of truly apostolic spirituality. Broadly speaking, these qualities are:

- (1) a humble and joyous consciousness of a great vocation;
- (2) close personal contact with Christ;
- (3) diligent cultivation of the specifically apostolic virtues.

Further, in order to be authentic in the task, the teacher of religion, it was argued, needed ongoing personal ‘formation’ and training so that he or she could model ‘Christ the teacher’.⁹² The success of the teacher was also considered to depend on “the spirit of reverent love and joyful gratitude in her own soul, and on the way she uses the book”.⁹³

Teachers of religion were expected too to recognise that their work is part of a broader process of teaching the child. The official position was that they were part of a process that involved the Church, the family, and the school.⁹⁴ Developing and

⁸⁹ Australian Bishops’ Committee for Education, *My Way to God One: Teacher’s Book*, 3.

⁹⁰ Australian Bishops’ Committee for Education, *My Way to God Four: Teacher’s Book*, 4-6.

⁹¹ Australian Bishops’ Committee for Education, *My Way to God One: Teacher’s Book*, 4.

⁹² Australian Bishops’ Committee for Education, *My Way to God Three: Teacher’s Book*, 5-8.

⁹³ Australian Bishops’ Committee for Education, *My Way to God Two: Teacher’s Book*, 3.

⁹⁴ Australian Bishops’ Committee for Education, *My Way to God Four: Teacher’s Book*, 4-6.

supporting practical partnerships with each of those elements was also considered an important task for teachers.

About the required partnership between teachers and parents, the following was stated in the fourth teachers' book:⁹⁵

The school, then, teaches with the authority of the Church. It teaches also with the authority of the parents. The parents in most cases are not equipped, or, if they are equipped, have not the time, to give specialised training that the schools can give; so they ask the schools to help them. Both teachers and parents should remember that the school is only helping the parents, it is not taking the children out of their hands. There are parents who are only too pleased to give the whole responsibility of the Christian education of their child to the school. And there have been teachers who have yielded to the temptation to become the chief educators of the children and to dictate to parents in matters outside the work of the schoolroom. Where both parents and teachers are intended to collaborate friendly contact and understanding are essential. The parent, of course, has to learn that the school exists for the good of all its pupils and must follow a general pattern to achieve that good. The teacher will sometimes have to remind herself that many of the parents of her pupils may be as well educated as she is, that there are parts of life in which she knows little and in which parents know much, parts of life from the knowledge of which she, if she is a religious, is almost excluded. We all know that the religious habit does not give us knowledge and understanding. We know, too, that there is much we can learn from good parents. Hence the importance for both parents and teachers, and ultimately, for the education of the children, of personal contact between parents and teachers, of parents' meetings, if possible, at class level.

The teachers of religion were expected also to be competent as teachers. That meant that they needed to be prepared in the required pedagogical approaches. To that end, each of the teachers' books provided detailed instructions not only about why a course of study was structured the way it was, but also about how to plan and prepare for the teaching of that material in the religion classroom. Accompanying that was a range of classroom techniques, aids, and strategies for planning lessons.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Ibid, 6.

⁹⁶ Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book One: Teacher's Book*, 5-7.

Catechetical journals

In addition to the official classroom texts detailed so far, teachers of religion had access to a range of published material that they could use to support them in their teaching. One type of supplementary text was the catechetical journal. Many were produced in-house by religious orders. Included within them were commentaries and teaching resources.

In Western Australia, the Irish Christian Brothers published a journal entitled *Alpha*.⁹⁷ From the 1950s also, “several lay run Catholic journals”⁹⁸ existed, including *Manna*. In addition, in 1964 Cripac Press, “a lay run Catholic publisher of religious education resources” that became “the de facto national supplier of religious education resources for Catholic schools in Australia”, commenced operating.⁹⁹

Cripac Press was initially based in Ballarat, a rural city in the State of Victoria. Members of the Ballarat Adult Lay Apostolate established that organisation. Their aim was to support adult education and promote a focus on social issues through their publications.¹⁰⁰ With growing success, the Cripac Press moved to Melbourne, eventually becoming Dove Communications.¹⁰¹ About that move and its relevance for the development of catechetical journals, English¹⁰² stated:

Just as Cripac Press was setting up Fr Kevin Murphy, then Director of Catholic Education for the Ballarat diocese produced a series of worksheets based on the My Way to God books and the J. F. Kelly Catechisms recently published by the Australian Bishops. Cripac published Murphy's worksheets. At the same time Garry and Moira Eastman began a new style parish magazine, *The Marian*, in Swan Hill to promote the ideas of Vatican II. This led to Moira Eastman preparing two adult study programs for Easter and Pentecost in 1966. Seeing these, Murphy suggested to the Eastmans who were high school

⁹⁷ Christian Brothers in Western Australia. Religious Education Sub-committee, *Alpha* (Perth, W.A.: Religious Education Sub-committee of the Christian Bros. in W.A).

⁹⁸ G. English, “Highways, byways and dead ends: School textbooks in Australian Catholic religious education,” *Journal of Religious Education* 53, no. 2 (2005), 40.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 40-41.

teachers in the state education system, that they produce a magazine for Catholic students in state high schools. With the support of Fr Frank Martin at the Catholic Education Office Melbourne an editorial committee was set up and Cripac began publishing a small journal, *Move Out* in 1967. Garry Eastman was recruited to work for the Catholic Education Office later in 1967 and became the editor of *Move Out* and the new primary school material *Let's Go Together*. These were produced primarily for catechetical teaching in government schools but were also immediately adopted by a large number of Catholic schools.

He concluded that “it was the large sales of *Move Out* and *Let's Go Together* to Catholic schools that made them and subsequent magazines and texts viable”. Attempts were made also to broaden the reach of those publications by incorporating the work of Sydney’s *Confraternity of Christian Doctrine*. However, that did not occur with materials produced for use in Sydney schools being produced separately.

Conclusion

For the period 1962-1971 religion as a subject, internationally and in Australia underwent significant development. The chapter first provided an overview of the context in which religion as a subject was constructed during that period. That overview focused on international and Australian developments in society, Church and education. The second section outlined developments in the construction of the subject as a school subject for the period. Chapter Seven, the next chapter, provides an elaboration and discussion of the developments detailed in this chapter, and analyses associated key issues specifically in relation to Western Australian Catholic schools.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RELIGION AS A SUBJECT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1962-1971: THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

Introduction

The previous chapter presented an overview indicating that construction of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools for the period 1962-1971 underwent significant change. This chapter is a more detailed exposition of the construction process itself during the period. It is detailed through an exploration of key related themes.

Elaboration on the Construction Process

In relation to this section several major themes are examined. These are ‘the modern catechetical movement’, ‘kerygmatic renewal’, ‘changes in a distinct Catholic culture’, ‘a new theology’, ‘readiness for change’, ‘teacher support material’, ‘ecclesiastical support’, adopting a kerygmatic approach’, ‘developments in Western Australia’, ‘Archbishop Prendiville’, ‘Catholic school funding’, ‘Monsignor Bourke’, ‘succession plans’, ‘the teaching orders’, ‘the relevance and effectiveness of Catholic schools’, ‘teacher preparation’, ‘the readiness of parents’, ‘spiral learning’, ‘broader concerns’, and ‘developments in theology and catechetics’. Each is now considered in turn.

The modern catechetical movement

During the first half of the 20th century, the work of Catholic individuals and groups internationally, seeking to renew catechetics within the Church began to influence how religion as a subject was understood. In broad terms, that work formed what in Chapter

Five was referred to as the modern catechetical movement.¹ While those associated with it held differing views about how best to improve catechetics, they shared a view that existing practice placed too much attention on an “intellectual assent to the truths of the Church expressed in theological propositions” and that, as a consequence, “the belief and practice of so many ordinary Catholics” became “lifeless, even trivial”.² They also shared a view that catechesis is essentially “pastoral in intents and means”.³ In response, they looked for ways to ensure that catechetics nurtured “the faith of individuals and communities so that, in the words of Vatican II, it becomes ‘living, conscious, and active’”.⁴

Of the promoters of catechetical renewal, those associated with kerygmatic⁵ renewal became the most influential group during the period 1962-1971.⁶ It was their work and that strand of catechetical renewal also that Flynn⁷ identified as the second stage in his three-stage linear model, namely ‘kerygmatic catechesis’. Further, at an international level, the work of those associated with catechetical renewal and the level of debate among catechetical theorists about how to improve catechetics all serve to

¹ B. Marthaler, “The modern catechetical movement in Roman Catholicism: issues and personalities,” in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, Vol. 1, ed. M. Warren (Winona, Minn: Saint Mary's Press, 1983), 275-289.

² M. Ryan, “My Way to God: The birth and early demise of the kerygmatic renewal in Australian religious education,” *Journal of Religious Education* 49, no. 1 (2001), 2.

³ B. Marthaler, “The modern catechetical movement in Roman Catholicism: issues and personalities,” in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, 276; “Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, (Christus Dominus),” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: American Press, 1966), 406.

⁴ Rev. McMahon expressed a similar view in the 1930s in his *Christian Doctrine Through the Liturgy* syllabus (see Chapter 5). B. Marthaler, “The modern catechetical movement in Roman Catholicism: issues and personalities,” in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, 276.

⁵ Kerygma, a Greek term, was used in the early church and refers ‘proclaiming’ or ‘heralding’.

⁶ Marthaler, writing in 1983, identified “three more or less distinct phases” in the modern catechetical movement: “a quest to find a more effective method”; a concern about content; greater attention given to “a variety of educational ministries and instructional strategies”. B. Marthaler, “The modern catechetical movement in Roman Catholicism: issues and personalities,” in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, 276; Rummery provides a more detailed and nuanced presentation. R. Rummery, *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1975).

⁷ M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Pauls, 1993).

support the second hypothesis for this study. Adapted from Goodson's⁸ work, that hypothesis proposed at the outset of this study that in the process of establishing Religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic tradition.

Kerygmatic renewal

During the 1930s and 1940s a small number of European Catholic theologians⁹ “began to speak of a kerygmatic approach to liturgy and catechesis”.¹⁰ Of that group, Rev. Josef Jungmann, an Austrian Jesuit, became central to what became known as the kerygmatic renewal of catechesis.¹¹ His work challenged the content of existing catechisms,¹² especially in 1936, when he published his book *Die Frohbotschaft und unsere Glaubensverkündigung* (The Good News and our Proclamation of Faith).¹³ Of Rev. Jungmann, Devitt¹⁴ has written:

[He] was happy with the advances made by the Munich Method but not at all happy with the abstract, scholastic, over-intellectual presentation of the faith

⁸ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum* (New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1983).

⁹ Those scholars worked in the fields of Catholic liturgical studies, catechetics or Biblical studies. M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools* (Brisbane: Lumino Press, 2013), 64.

¹⁰ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 63.

¹¹ Promoted a renewal of content with the Bible, not catechisms, central to that content. C. Sultana, “Catechesis in Europe during the 20th Century,” *Sophia - Paideia. Sapienza e Educazione (Sir 1, 27), Miscellanea Di Studi Offerti in Onore Del Prof. Mario Cimoso*, (Roma, 2012), 425-426; G. Rummery, “The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools, 1872-1972,” *Journal of Religious History* 9, no. 3 (1977), 313; B. Marthaler, “The modern catechetical movement in Roman Catholicism: issues and personalities,” in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, 277-281; M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism* (North Blackburn, Vic: Collins Dove, 1991), 82-83; C. Sultana, “Catechesis in Europe during the 20th Century,” *Sophia - Paideia. Sapienza e Educazione (Sir 1, 27), Miscellanea Di Studi Offerti in Onore Del Prof. Mario Cimoso*, 430; M. Horan, “Josef A. Jungmann,” *Biola University*, 5 April 2021, http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/josef_jungmann/.

¹² C. Sultana, “Catechesis in Europe during the 20th Century,” *Sophia - Paideia. Sapienza e Educazione (Sir 1, 27), Miscellanea Di Studi Offerti in Onore Del Prof. Mario Cimoso*, 426-429; M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism*, 82-83; M. Ryan, “My Way to God: The birth and early demise of the kerygmatic renewal in Australian religious education,” *Journal of Religious Education*, 3.

¹³ J. Jungmann, *Die Frohbotschaft und unsere Glaubensverkündigung* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1936).

¹⁴ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1992), 71.

in the catechisms. He proposed a more concrete, biblical and liturgical presentation centred on the person of Jesus Christ who is the object of our faith.

One of his students, Rev. Johannes Hofinger,¹⁵ also a theologian, became a central figure in the promotion of kerygmatic catechesis.¹⁶ On that, he credited Rev. Jungmann with providing five principles important to the kerygmatic renewal¹⁷:

[First] a deep religious understanding of the Christian message is even more important than training in teaching and educational methods; [secondly] this deep religious understanding requires much more than an orthodox interpretation of the particular doctrines; [thirdly] the Good News has Jesus Christ as its center, and all religion teachers need “a clear insight into (this) central Christian message” so all other elements of the Catholic tradition can be organized accordingly; [fourthly] perhaps contrary to intuition, the principles are “even more important” in catechesis with adolescents and adults than children; [fifthly] the Bible and the liturgy are the “authentic expression of the Christian kerygma” and the church's failure to remember this fact has been a big reason for the decline of preaching in Christian history.

Both Rev. Jungmann and Rev. Hofinger began to develop and promote their ideas well before the commencement of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). However, many Catholic education leaders, and particularly those in Australia, only adopted kerygmatic catechesis as a preferred approach for the teaching of religion on the advent of the Council.

Those promoting kerygmatic catechesis were informed by the theological renewal movement. Their work was seen also as both a coherent reaction against, and an alternative to, traditional catechesis. Leaders of the movement challenged many of the practices associated with the latter, including a reliance on scholastic thought and the use of catechisms. At the same time, exponents did not reject the learning of doctrine. Instead, that was deemed to be a component of the learning process and a way in which people came to know the kerygma,¹⁸ rather than an end in itself.

¹⁵ M. Markuly, “Johannes Hofinger,” *Biola University*, 5 April 2021, http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/johannes_hofinger/.

¹⁶ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 72.

¹⁷ M. Markuly, “Johannes Hofinger,” *Biola University*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Referring to Rev. Jungmann's work, Ryan¹⁹ stated:

Not only did educators focus on problems with instructional methods, strong voices could also be heard contesting the theological validity of the content of the catechisms. The catechism, in the view of one theologian-critic in 1950, did not lead students to "an understanding of the wonderful message of divine grace. All they retain of Christian doctrine is a string of dogmas and moral precepts, threats and promises, customs and rites, tasks and duties imposed on unfortunate Catholics, whilst the non-Catholic gets off free of them" (Jungmann, 1950, p. 258). Clearly, reforming the method of instruction was insufficient if all it enabled was a clearer sense of the dread of the Christian way of life. A revised theology was also required which proclaimed the joy and good news of Christianity.

The aim, therefore, of effective catechetical learning, he held, was to help the learner recognise the proclamation of the Good News. On that, engaging the heart as well as the head in the learning process was deemed important. As a result, the content for learning and the method used by the catechist were deemed important. Both, it was argued, should always have the kerygma in mind. Further, kerygmatic catechesis placed an emphasis upon the disposition and skill of the catechist. Rev. Hofinger referred to that as the "kerygmatic virtues"²⁰ and argued the "catechist is first and foremost a 'herald' of God".²¹

In summary, those who promoted a kerygmatic approach wanted several things of the person teaching religion. They wanted to expand the theological knowledge of the catechist. They also wanted catechists to develop a positive disposition towards the subject matter they taught and the method they employed. More broadly, they also wanted the catechists to improve their pedagogic skills. In a general sense, then, those ambitions and the importance placed on them by those promoting a kerygmatic approach in religion indicate Beeby's third stage, namely, the 'Stage of Transition'.²²

¹⁹ M. Ryan, "My Way to God: The birth and early demise of the kerygmatic renewal in Australian religious education," *Journal of Religious Education*, 2.

²⁰ M. Markuly, "Johannes Hofinger," *Biola University*.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

Changes in a distinct Catholic culture

In terms of the historical analysis presented in this study, which it will be recalled, is based on Goodson's²³ work, the relationship between the wider context and religion as a school subject is also important for understanding the construction process. In that regard the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council are significant. During its deliberations those in attendance set in motion developments that over an extended period, have had an impact on Catholic education in Australia and upon religion as a subject in Australian Catholic schools. For the period under consideration, 1962-1971, two interrelated developments were important.

The first development referred to reflected what Stafford²⁴ identified as the changes in a distinct Catholic culture “which had sustained Catholics for decades if not for centuries”. That long tradition included deference to clerical authority and an acceptance without question by many of Catholic faith and its practices.²⁵ Mirroring that Australian Catholic schools had been “authoritarian, dominated by a dogmatic Irish brand of Catholicism and promoting rigidly conventional gender roles”²⁶ up to the 1960s. At the heart of that was what Stafford referred to as a “Catholic mind”. According to him, that reflected what the Canadian Catholic theologian, Bernard

²³ I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum Collected Essays* (New York: Falmer Press, 1987).

²⁴ J. Stafford, “An analysis of the fundamental shift in Catholic secondary religious education during the long sixties, 1955-1973,” in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education* 18 (2017), 29.

²⁵ K. Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1996), 13-54.

²⁶ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 195.

Loneragan,²⁷ defined as a classicist culture,²⁸ where “the larger community determined meaning and value, not the individual themselves”²⁹.

The changes in the distinct Catholic culture in Australia also led to the emergence of diverging views about all aspects of Catholic thought and life. Examples of associated issues were birth control, celibacy and how the Catholic Mass was to be celebrated. Associated disputes drew some Catholics into conflict with each other, split some religious communities, led certain priests to defy their bishops, and led some bishops to openly disagree with each other and the Pope. The release of the papal encyclical on birth control, *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life)³⁰ in 1968, a major site of such contestation, is an important example. Another site emerged on the publication in 1966 of the *De Nieuwe Katechismus, Geloofsverkondiging voor Volwassenen* (A New Catechism: The Catholic Faith for Adults, ‘the Dutch Catechism’).³¹ Both documents and the controversies that developed with the publication of both, also are pertinent for understanding the construction of religion as a subject in the period that follows, 1971-1982. Those matters are discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine.

A ‘new theology’

A second development arising from the Second Vatican Council was how Catholic educators initially understood its sixteen key documents³² that its members approved.

²⁷ For details see R Rymarz, “Conversion and the New Evangelization: A perspective from Lonergan,” *The Heythrop Journal* 51, no. 5 (2010), 754.

²⁸ This ‘classicist culture’ included: a conviction that Catholic belief needs to permeate the entire culture; Catholic culture is not one among many but “the only culture any right-minded and cultivated person would name as culture”; respect for antiquity; the infusion of each educational discipline with Catholic theology and philosophy; and reliance upon strict Neo-Thomism in Catholic theology and philosophy. J. Stafford, “An analysis of the fundamental shift in Catholic secondary religious education during the long sixties, 1955-1973,” in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, 29-32.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 30.

³⁰ Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (1968), 3 April 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/paulvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

³¹ Hoger katechetisch instituut (Nijmegen), *De Nieuwe Katechismus: Geloofsverkondiging voor Volwassenen* (Hilversum: Paul Brand, 1966).

³² A. Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Volume One*. (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1998).

Within them were ideas that shaped and legitimised the fundamental shift in Catholic thought that was to follow. According to Stafford,³³ that had three key elements:

[First] the abandonment of strict Neo-Thomism as the official philosophy of the Church... [Secondly] a new openness to the modern world [and]... [thirdly] the rehabilitation of the critics of strict Neo-Thomism within the Church whose ideas were encapsulated by the term the ‘new theology’. This rehabilitation is central not only to understanding what happened at Vatican II, but also to understanding the fundamental shift in secondary religious education as educators adopted the concepts of the new theology.

The ‘new theology’ that Stafford³⁴ referred to had several distinct features. For one thing, proponents were open to the use of the historical-criticism method. They also accepted that there is a plurality of philosophies. Moreover, Church doctrine was viewed as being subject to development and change because ‘Revelation’ is as an ongoing reality. Further:³⁵

The new theologians also adopted a subjective approach to religious belief and to discovering God, emphasizing the relationship between the individual believer and God, arguing that human beings could only be content with God because of the ‘inner drives’ of the human being and the dynamics of the mind.

Therefore, for proponents of that view, Christian faith was to be nurtured through a variety of sources and needed to be a lived experience embedded in the realities of everyday life.

Various ideas proposed by proponents of that ‘new theology’ found expression, to varying extents, in each Council document. The style of discourse used in those conciliar documents also was based on a panegyric³⁶ style that represented a shift from a juridical to a pastoral model of Church.³⁷ Before the Council, Church documents were “dominated by words of authority, of intimidation, threat,

³³ J. Stafford, “An analysis of the fundamental shift in Catholic secondary religious education during the long sixties, 1955-1973,” in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, 40-41.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 41-43.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 41.

³⁶ A literary genre used in the early Church.

³⁷ J. Stafford, “An analysis of the fundamental shift in Catholic secondary religious education during the long sixties, 1955-1973,” in *Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, 42-43.

condemnation, and punishment”.³⁸ Now, what Stafford called “power words” were “replaced with words implying a more reciprocal relationship such as dialogue, partnership, friendship, co-operation, and charism”.³⁹

Of the sixteen documents ratified during the four sessions of the Council, the 1965 document, *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education),⁴⁰ was of special interest to Catholic educators. Its content and how it came to be approved by members of the Council were clearly influenced by the ‘new theology’. Also, when read in conjunction with the other conciliar documents, it emphasised the role of the laity and the importance of the dignity of the human person.

The rights of the individual and the subjectivity of the believer was also emphasised.⁴¹ At the same time, the content of the document tended to confuse rather than clarify or redirect Catholic thought about education.⁴² On that, Stafford⁴³ made the following points:

Even though at Vatican II the bishops intended for the Church to be more ‘open’ to the modern world and to enhance the role of the laity within the Church, the Declaration did not clearly address how Catholic educators were to achieve this ‘openness’ nor did it explain the new role of the laity in Catholic education. Little guidance was provided. The Declaration did, however, attempt to maintain a balance between the needed reforms and traditional Catholic education – a balance that was not achieved in the years after Vatican II... Thus, the Church had not changed in its support for certain traditional principles of education. What had changed was the manner in which the Church defended and promoted them as the changes in the style of discourse indicated.

Furthermore, the document lacked specific detail. Instead, “fundamental Catholic educational principles which were long held positions of the church”⁴⁴ were once

³⁸ Ibid, 42.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Second Vatican Council, “Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965),” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975).

⁴¹ Ibid, 43.

⁴² Ibid, 45.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

again promoted. Many of those were derived from Pope Pius XI 1929 encyclical on education, *Divini Illius Magistri* (That Divine Teacher).⁴⁵

In several key conciliar documents Council members also addressed in detail important matters related to Catholic education. For example, they offered renewed insights about the baptismal calling of all to holiness. That position undermined a long held hierarchical view of the Christian life, contributed to a renewed understanding of the nature of religious and priestly life, and provided an enhanced understanding of the vocational dimension of the lay person.

Readiness for change

Within Australia at the time, there was a growing appetite among some members of the Church for the ideas being generated by the work of “biblical scholars, liturgists and catechetical theorists”.⁴⁶ Also, after World War Two, as in various other parts of the world, the ideas of those scholars and especially people like Rev. Jungmann, began to influence some Australian practitioners.⁴⁷ That process was facilitated by the

⁴⁵ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), 3 March 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/piusxi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html.

⁴⁶ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 66.

⁴⁷ Europe after World War Two had many foundations dedicated to religious education. G. Rummery, “The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools 1872-1971,” *Journal of Religious History*, 312-313.

publication of journals,⁴⁸ conferences and seminars,⁴⁹ visits to centres of catechetical activity⁵⁰ and the use of newly developed classroom texts.⁵¹

Those associated with the kerygmatic renewal promoted the notion that there was a great need to provide teachers with suitable training, guidance and support. For example, in 1960, participants at the Eichstatt International Study Week⁵² concluded that new pedagogical resources were needed. Further, they held, those resources should not be based on a reworking or updating of older texts. It was added that new texts should be written by those familiar with modern catechetics and that those teaching religion should be provided with additional teachers' texts that included the background knowledge they needed.⁵³

Teacher support material

One way in which the focus on teacher training and support mentioned above found expression in Australia was in the teacher manuals produced to accompany the *Catholic Catechism* series and the *My Way to God* series. In each manual, an introductory section included statements on general principles on what was required

⁴⁸ For example, in 1953, a De La Salle Brother's catechetical journal, *Our Apostolate*. M. Ryan, "My Way to God: The birth and early demise of the kerygmatic renewal in Australian religious education," *Journal of Religious Education*, 4; M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 66; G. Rummery, "The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools 1872-1972," *Journal of Religious History*, 312.

⁴⁹ Nijmegen (1959), Eichstatt (1960), Bangkok (1962), Katigondo (1964), Manila (1967), and Medellin (1968). M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 66; M. Ryan, "My Way to God: The birth and early demise of the kerygmatic renewal in Australian religious education," *Journal of Religious Education*, 4; M. Warren, *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, Vol. 1 (Winona, Minn: Saint Mary's Press, 1983); G. Rummery, "The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools 1872-1972," *Journal of Religious History*, 312.

⁵⁰ Two key visitors were Archbishop James Knox and Father John F. Kelly. M. Ryan, "My Way to God: The birth and early demise of the kerygmatic renewal in Australian religious education," *Journal of Religious Education*, 4.

⁵¹ G. Rummery, "The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools 1872-1972," *Journal of Religious History*, 314-315.

⁵² J. Hofinger, *Teaching all Nations: A Symposium on Modern Catechetics* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961); P. Walsh, "Reviewed work(s): Teaching all nations: A symposium on modern catechetics by Johannes Hofinger and Clifford Howell," *The Furrow* 13, no. 4 (1962), 239-40.

⁵³ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 66.

of teachers. Further, the substance of those manuals focused on explaining content, describing how content could be taught, and indicating what resources could be used to support teaching. The following two examples from the teacher manual for the *Catholic Catechism*⁵⁴ illustrate that:

It is not an exaggeration, then, to say that Christ the teacher in teaching adults used the principles and methods that are taught in our teachers' colleges, from known to unknown, from concrete to abstract, teaching and life, active participation, aids, dramatization, group activities, etc. But he did not use the method of abstract logical exposition which is appropriate to senior mathematics. If such was His way of teaching with adults, how would He have taught your Grade V or VI?

The teacher has planned his course; he still has to plan his lessons. It would be fatal if he began by "Now, children, open your Catechism at page... and read it". The chapter in the Catechism on the topic he has chosen will give him the matter, but not in lesson form. He will probably make of it several lessons, perhaps a week's work. His teacher-training gave him the pattern of a lesson: aim, preparation, presentation and explanation, application, activity. (The names vary, but he knows what they mean.)

Further, teachers were being reminded to draw upon the pedagogical practices they had learned to use for the teaching of other subjects.

In summary, during the period under consideration, those who promoted a kerygmatic approach wished to further progress the role of the teacher of religion beyond that of someone operating at a basic skill level. They reminded teachers of religion that their level of pedagogical skill was important. They widely disseminated amongst practitioners the ideas promoted by leaders of kerygmatic renewal. They also emphasised the need for new texts to be produced that would reflect a kerygmatic approach and support the teacher of religion. Moreover, when taken as a whole, those developments further indicate a move akin to that characterised by Beeby's 'Stage of Transition'.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book One Teacher's Book* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1962), 5, 24.

⁵⁵ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

Ecclesiastical support

Some Catholics in Australia welcomed the idea of change occurring within the Church. There was also a desire to see change regarding religion as a subject. In fact, Church officials were already overseeing efforts to update the texts used in Catholic schools for teaching it.⁵⁶ Australian Church leaders, through the Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee for Education, had given responsibility for that work to Father John F. Kelly, a priest from the Melbourne Archdiocese, who worked with a small team of writers.⁵⁷ About him and his teams' work, Trainor⁵⁸ stated:

[He] managed to blend a sound knowledge of educational psychology and the biblical and theological understanding of the time with an easy literary style. He made comprehensible the obvious benefits that came from the kerygmatic theology as expressed in the writings of Jungmann, Hofinger, Howell, Drinkwater, Goldbrunner, Parsch and Bouyer. He was deeply concerned about translating their theological insights into a faith education that could be easily accessible at the local level. From the ferment of Jungmann's kerygmatic theology came the Australian translation of this theology into two series of catechetical texts - the Catholic Catechism and My Way to God. These texts received international acclaim.

In developing the new texts, Rev. Kelly and his team consulted with experts and with experienced educators. Those included "staff from Catholic Teachers' Colleges throughout Australia",⁵⁹ leaders of religious communities, bishops, priests, and experienced teachers.

Regarding the writing process, the Preface written for each teacher book⁶⁰ in the *My Way to God* series stated:

The four books of the My Way to God series of prescribed religious texts for junior grades have been written by four Sisters of four different teaching congregations. The texts were circulated in draft form, and teachers of many

⁵⁶ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 67.

⁵⁷ G. Rummery, "The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools 1872-1972," *Journal of Religious History*, 314-315.

⁵⁸ M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism*, 84.

⁵⁹ Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book One Teacher's Book*, i.

⁶⁰ Australian Bishops' Committee for Education, *My Way to God One: Teacher's Book* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1964), vii.

other religious congregations were able to make comments and suggestions. The illustrations were done for each of the books by another Sister of the same congregation as the author. The Sister who prepared the text in each case prepared also the accompanying Teacher's Book with the assistance of experienced teachers from her own and other congregations, and incorporating lesson plans for Government schools that were already in use.

The extent of consultation used as part of the writing process for the production of the new texts was beneficial in two key ways. First, consultation helped the team of writers in their efforts to refine the texts they were developing. Secondly, consultation provided them with an opportunity to build ownership and support amongst those most likely to use, or be influential in the implementation of, the *My Way to God* series.

The new texts comprised both student and teacher books for teaching the 1962 *Catholic Catechism*⁶¹ series and the 1964-65 *My Way to God*⁶² series. Upon publication both sets of books became prescribed texts⁶³ for use in Australian Catholic schools.⁶⁴ All had a distinctively kerygmatic design. On that, the Australian bishops in a joint pastoral letter written when the *Catholic Catechism* was launched in 1962, stated:⁶⁵

The emphasis in the book is on the love of God who created us and sent His Son to save us and His Spirit to remain with us in the living Church... We trust that the long desired use of the one text in all dioceses in Australia will be of great assistance to teachers and pupils, especially those who are transferred from one State to another. Above all we believe that this new Catechism issued by us, after most careful preparation and consultation, will be an effective instrument in the hands of our devoted teachers who are striving to unfold to their pupils God's great plan of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

⁶¹ Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book One Teacher's Book*; Australian Episcopal Conference, *Catholic Catechism Book Two Teacher's Book*.

⁶² Australian Bishops' Committee for Education, *My Way to God: Teacher's Book*, Books 1-4, (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1964).

⁶³ "Pastoral Letter of Bishops of Australia, 1 April 1962," *The Newcastle and Maitland Catholic Sentinel: The Official Organ of the Diocese of Maitland* 30, no. 7 (1962), 103.

⁶⁴ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 67.

⁶⁵ "Pastoral Letter of Bishops of Australia, 1 April 1962," *The Newcastle and Maitland Catholic Sentinel: The Official Organ of the Diocese of Maitland*, 103.

Their decision that the texts be produced was significant in four important ways. First, they represented a major departure from the traditional catechisms. Thus, reflecting what Flynn⁶⁶ proposed as the second stage in his three-stage linear model, namely, ‘kerygmatic catechesis’. Secondly, despite a desire for an updated catechism, the Australian bishops had not, up to that point in time, been able to agree on a national approach. On the latter, Laffin,⁶⁷ recalling Archbishop Beovich’s efforts to develop a revised catechism, recounted how various attempts had been made to write a new catechism for Australia in the decades leading up to the 1960s.

In explaining those developments, Laffin⁶⁸ described a range of factors that held back progress. Central to those were ecclesiastical differences of opinion combined with regional rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne, and those at a time of change and optimism within the Australian Church.⁶⁹

Cognisance of the latter matter serves to uphold for Catholic schools and Catholic education in Western Australia for the period under investigation Goodson’s⁷⁰ hypotheses that a school subject is not a monolithic entity. Rather, it reflects shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions. The debate which occurred about religion as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian Catholic

⁶⁶ M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools 2000: A Longitudinal Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic Schools, 1972-198; 1990-1998* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Catholic Education Commission, 2002); M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Pauls, 1993); M. Flynn, *The Effectiveness of Catholic Schools: A Ten-year Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic High Schools* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Paul Publications, 1985); M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools and the Communication of Faith: A Study of the Mission of Catholic Schools Today for Parents, Teachers and Students* (Homebush, N.S.W.: Society of Saint Paul, 1979); M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys’ High Schools* (Sydney: Catholic Education Office, 1975).

⁶⁷ J. Laffin, *Matthew Beovich: A Biography* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2008), 84-92.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ J. Laffin, “‘Sailing in stormy waters’: Archbishop Matthew Beovich and the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide in the 1960s,” *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 3 (2010), 189-193.

⁷⁰ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum*.

schools also supports another of his hypotheses, namely, that school subjects reflect conflict over status, resources and territory.

A third way in which the decision to produce the new texts was significant was that it established the Bible as an important catechetical text for use in the religion classroom. That contrasted with its neglect there in the past. Further, according to Rummery,⁷¹ that change would not have been possible without “a radical re-appraisal of the use of the Bible in the teaching of religion” and “translations into English of the Bible endorsed and recommended by Catholic authorities” that took place during the 1940s and 1950s.

Finally, the nature of the new texts and a renewed use of the Bible as a separate and important text signalled future shifts that were to occur in the construction of religion as a subject in Catholic schools in Australia, including in Western Australia.

About that Rummery⁷² stated:

Implicitly, therefore, the new approach was already raising questions about the traditional way of formulating the idea of Revelation and also the idea of a ‘fortress’ Church. Both of these matters were to be highlighted by that movement in the Church which was signaled by the event itself, and the decrees, of the second Vatican Council called by Pope John XXIII. It seems very important to note this sense of Vatican II as ‘event’ and ‘movement’.

Further, while the shift Rummery referred to is examined in more detail in the next two chapters, it is important to note here that leaders of the Church in Australia decided to move away from a kerygmatic approach not long after first implementing it. That decision contrasted with the relatively long gestation period involved in the development of the associated pedagogical material.

⁷¹ G. Rummery, “The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools 1872-1972,” *Journal of Religious History*, 312-313.

⁷² *Ibid*, 314-315.

Adopting a kerygmatic approach

Considering the sequence in which each set of new texts was developed draws attention to two key points about the adoption in Australia of a kerygmatic approach. First, while published later, the *My Way to God* series is the text most strongly associated in Australia with the kerygmatic approach. Yet the *Catholic Catechism* books were also ‘kerygmatic’ in design. A lack of appreciation of that matter may be because those books retained features found in older style catechisms.⁷³ Further, within two years, the *My Way to God* series for use with primary aged children was published. That set of texts demonstrated clearly a departure from a reliance upon a traditional catechism for the subject’s content and pedagogy.

A second key point is that preparatory work for a shift to a Kerygmatic approach was already underway during the 1950s, both overseas and in Australia,⁷⁴ a matter discussed in Chapter Five.⁷⁵ The aim of much of that was to address shortcomings in the traditional approach to teaching the subject and to incorporate the latest catechetical theory, including that of the Kerygmatic Renewal. On the process, the Australian bishops when launching Australia’s new catechism in 1962 stated:⁷⁶

We are aware that text books can be valuable tools for both teachers and pupils. Therefore, we have been planning for a number of years to improve the standard of our Catechisms and to design them not only to give to children and others the factual truths of God’s revelation to man, but also to inspire them with the love of God and with zeal to extend His Kingdom on earth.

⁷³ “Pastoral Letter of Bishops of Australia, 1 April 1962,” *The Newcastle and Maitland Catholic Sentinel: The Official Organ of the Diocese of Maitland*, 103.

⁷⁴ A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, University of Western Australia, 1976), 28.

⁷⁵ Prior to the 1960s substantial work had been undertaken, overseas and in Australia, towards the development of new catechisms. P. Birch, “The new German catechism,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1958), 186–189; C. Howell, “The new German catechism,” *The Downside Review* 74, no. 236 (1956), 113-123; S. Matthew, “Reviewed work: A Catholic catechism: A translation of the new German catechism,” *Life of the Spirit* 13, no. 152 (1959), 380.

⁷⁶ “Pastoral Letter of Bishops of Australia, 1 April 1962,” *The Newcastle and Maitland Catholic Sentinel: The Official Organ of the Diocese of Maitland*, 103.

That indicated that the task of first progressing and then completing the publication of a new Australian catechism may have been an obvious choice for the bishops of Australia to make.

Essential for the development of the new Australian catechism texts, was the publication overseas in 1957, of *A Catholic Catechism*.⁷⁷ That text was an English translation of a 1955 German catechism, *Katholischer Katechismus Der Bistümer Deutschlands* (Catholic Catechism of the Dioceses of Germany).⁷⁸ Howell,⁷⁹ writing in 1956, summarised its history and described the features it incorporated as follows:⁸⁰

The plan of the Catechism, and its whole approach to the faith, is quite different from that to which we are accustomed. There is a unifying theme throughout – and this is ‘The Good Tidings’, the marvellous story of God’s dealings with man from the beginning of Creation to the end of time. The attitude it aims to engender in the children is a wonderful thankfulness that God has been so good as to choose them to the great dignity and privilege of being members of the Church founded by Christ – the Church from which they can learn his Good Tidings about the Kingdom of God.

In addition, it explicitly demonstrated many of the principles of kerygmatic catechesis, including a biblical orientation and an emphasis on living the faith.⁸¹

Developments in Western Australia

In Western Australia, religion as a school subject for the period 1962-1971 conformed to the pattern established by the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Education. On that, Tormey⁸² wrote:

In Catholic Schools in Western Australia, it was traditional practice to devote a full period each day to catechetical instruction. During the early sixties, there was increasing dissatisfaction with texts available for religious education, particularly as the quality of the texts used in other subject areas improved.

⁷⁷ *A Catholic Catechism* (Freiburg: Herder and Herder, 1957).

⁷⁸ F. Schreibmayr and K. Tilmann, *Katholischer Katechismus Der Bistümer Deutschlands*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1955).

⁷⁹ C. Howell, “The new German catechism,” *The Downside Review*, 113-123.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 118.

⁸¹ H. Fischer, “Experiences in compiling a new catechism,” in *Teaching All Nations: A Symposium on Modern Catechetics*, ed. J. Hofinger and C. Howell (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), 154.

⁸² A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions*, 28.

Many secondary teachers made use of the German Catechism when, after twenty years of research, it appeared in 1957. Soon afterwards, the Australian Episcopal Conference authorized Monsignor J. F. Kelly of the Melbourne Archdiocese to develop texts for the secondary grades, four volumes of a series for the primary grades and six teachers' handbooks to support the effective use of texts were produced.

However, Tormey⁸³ provided a more nuanced reaction by summarising the introduction and use of the texts in Western Australian Catholic schools as follows:

The reaction to the new texts was generally favourable. However they made great demands on the knowledge and pedagogical skill of the teachers. In order to teach effectively the teachers had to understand the current catechetical ideas and their general level of theological knowledge was sometimes inadequate to the task. Furthermore, there was the problem of communicating with the adolescent in a way that made the message meaningful to them in their everyday lives.

The point is that while the new texts were well regarded, the poor preparation of those using them to teach religion as a subject became an impediment to successful implementation.

Archbishop Prendiville

Several aspects of Church life in the State also provide an important context for understanding developments. The Archbishop of Perth for much of the decade was Archbishop Prendiville (1935-1968) and his style of leadership led him to rely upon those to whom he delegated authority. He, however, had experienced ill health for a long time and his capacity to fully supervise his subordinates and engage in all Church matters was limited.⁸⁴ Developments at a national level regarding the subject were thus welcomed by him as they relieved him of the burden to initiate or sustain initiatives at the State level. The same is likely to have been the case for most of the other senior clerics in Australia; the Archbishop in each State's capital city, was

⁸³ Ibid, 29.

⁸⁴ P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008* (Inglewood: Victor Publishing, 2008), 208-213.

elderly and had held their office for a lengthy period. The individuals in question were Sydney's Cardinal Gilroy (1940-1971), Melbourne's Archbishop Mannix (1917-1963), Brisbane's Archbishop Duhig (1917-1965), Adelaide's Archbishop Beovich (1939-1971), Hobart's Archbishop Young (1955-1988) and Archbishop O'Brien in Canberra (1953-1966).

Catholic school funding

Another important aspect of Church life in the State of Western Australia during the period under consideration was the vexed issue of the lack of State financial aid for Catholic schools. Restoring funding had become a major concern for those who led Catholic education in Western Australia. The concerns of religious teaching orders went beyond the material for, at the time, they considered the very model that had sustained Catholic education in the State to be under threat.⁸⁵ About that, Tormey,⁸⁶ in 1976 stated:

Expanding enrolments within the schools as a result of post-war increases in the birthrate and the migration programmes; their [teaching orders] progressive failure to provide for the demand for Catholic schooling and the consequent decline in the proportion of the total number of children enrolled in Catholic schools, in spite of an increasing reliance on lay teachers. It indicates that an important trend in the history of the last twenty years has been the progressive diminution in the proportion of religious teachers and the transition to a predominantly lay teacher system, which has posed problems of adaptation for the orders, the schools and the Catholic community.

Restoring State-aid, therefore, was seen as an important part of the solution but so too was the need to find ways to adjust to the changed circumstances that the authorities of Catholic schools in the State faced. At the same time, of immediate concern to members of the local Church was a crisis in funding. In response, clerical, religious

⁸⁵ A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions*, 1-27.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, iii.

and lay leaders in Western Australia were, from the 1950s, “determinedly planning”⁸⁷ to have State-aid for Catholic schools restored.

Monsignor Bourke

One of those that took a leading role in the State-aid campaign was Monsignor Bourke. He first campaigned locally, in the 1950s and 1960s, in his capacity as Director of Catholic Education in Perth. Then, after being appointed as the inaugural Director of the National Catholic Education Commission in 1968, he campaigned at a national level for the restoration of State-aid across the country.⁸⁸

Rev. Bourke’s career followed a pattern somewhat similar to that of Rev. McMahon. In 1949, he was appointed “inspector of religious knowledge in Catholic schools in Perth and in 1951 he became a part-time lecturer in English at the University of Western Australia”.⁸⁹ However, unlike Rev. McMahon, he was not immersed in the details of religion as a subject.

Succession plans

Another matter involved two deaths in the Archdiocese. Those hampered the capacity of local Church leaders to initiate or contribute towards efforts to develop religion as a school subject. Regarding the first of those deaths, in 1962, Bishop Rafferty, Archbishop Prendiville’s auxiliary, died suddenly. While soon replaced, Archbishop Prendiville’s plans were disrupted at a time when much was happening within the Church at a national and international level. Even more disruptive was the unexpected

⁸⁷ P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 213.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 213-222.

⁸⁹ “Obituary - Mgr James Bourke, Saturday 4 June 1983,” *Canberra Times* (ACT: 1926 - 1995), 12.

death⁹⁰ in 1959 of a Father O’Hara. On that and its significance to the Archdiocese, Pandal stated:⁹¹

The death of Father O’Hara ... in all likelihood robbed the Archdiocese of Perth of its next Director of Catholic Education. [He] “was earmarked to be in charge of education in the Archdiocese” ... [and] being a graduate from Dublin University, would have been required to study only a further year for his Diploma of Education before taking on the education role in the Archdiocese.

Rev. O’Hara’s death came at an important time in the development of religion as a subject nationally. For Archbishop Prendiville, that meant that he had to find another priest to train in readiness for the position of Archdiocesan Director of Catholic Education. The person identified was Father James Nestor (1926-2016).

Rev. Nestor took up his position in 1967 and held it until 1985.⁹² He was an Irish born and Irish trained priest who arrived in Western Australia to work for the Archdiocese of Perth in 1956. In 1960 he enrolled to study⁹³ at the University of Western Australia for a Diploma of Education.

The teaching orders

Regarding Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Perth, Archbishop Prendiville’s style of leadership and his personal health meant that he tended to rely upon the religious who staffed the schools to also manage them. That also meant that the leaders of each religious community, as in previous decades, relied upon their own personnel, traditions and resources when managing the operation of a Catholic school. By the 1960s, however, their teachers too were often dealing with various challenges due to

⁹⁰ A boating accident led to his drowning.

⁹¹ P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 213.

⁹² R. Curry, “Obituary: Monsignor James Francis Nestor,” *The Record Magazine* 3, (2016), 26-27. https://issuu.com/archdioceseofperth_therecord/docs/the_record_magazine_issue03_july_1/26.

⁹³ Rev. Nestor held a National University of Ireland degree in Celtic Studies. P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 213.

changes in society as well as within the Church. On that, Carter, in writing about the Loreto community in Western Australia stated:

Changes in post-war society did not go hand-in-hand with the traditional customs of the Loreto community. Under the appearance of calm and stability crises of varying magnitude were developing in Perth's Loreto communities, caused by a number of factors. One was the effects of 'Enclosure', another the lack of, or inadequate, academic and professional education provided for the younger nuns (those who entered the IBVM during the 1930-1960 era).⁹⁴

She added:

Enclosure was linked to the education issue in a more serious way as the nuns were not permitted to attend non-IVBM institutions. The Loreto Central Catholic Training College was closed in 1930 after its return to Ballarat, thus necessitating an alternative venue for the professional education of the Loreto nuns. Mother Teresa Gertrude decided that this would be undertaken, not at a tertiary educational institution, but under the guidance and supervision of a qualified teacher (a Loreto nun) in one or other of the Loreto schools, mainly in Victoria. The nuns chosen for the role of supervisor and tutor were those who had either been lecturers at the Loreto Catholic Training College, or had gained teacher qualifications prior to entering the IVBM ... In the 1940-1950 period, Loreto nuns were sent, immediately following profession, to Loreto Convents in other States, including Western Australia, where frequently the nuns appointed to be tutor/supervisor were too elderly to undertake the task, had limited professional education, or had lost touch with educational developments.⁹⁵

Those developments meant that from 1930-1960, Loreto nuns were poorly trained as teachers and had to learn to make do as best they could, often in isolation and often with an expectation that their spiritual and communal responsibilities had priority over their professional work. Adding to their difficulties, they had to deal with growing class sizes. They became increasingly dependent on texts and teaching notes handed down by other sisters in order to fulfill their teaching duties. Further, because there was no formal requirement on the matter, few secondary school teachers who were religious had degrees in their subject area and only some had a level of primary school teacher training considered desirable.

⁹⁴ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997* (Perth, W.A.: Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Australia, 1996), 183-184.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 186.

Lack of finance was also a difficulty. Burdened by the outlays and debts incurred in operating schools without State aid, “only five Loreto nuns [attended] a university”⁹⁶ during the period 1930-1960, In some cases, parents of nun’s “considered to have above average intelligence”⁹⁷ paid for that. Complicating the predicament for many female religious was a prevailing social attitude that considered higher education unnecessary for women. Therefore, “one had to show exceptional intelligence to attempt a university degree”.⁹⁸ In contrast to earlier more general comments made in this chapter, the above characterisation clearly suggests that at a local level, teachers within the Loreto community in Western Australia continued to operate at Beeby’s⁹⁹ ‘Stage of Formalism’ when teaching religion as a school subject.

The relevance and effectiveness of Catholic schools

Another important aspect of Church life in the State during the period under consideration was concern within the Western Australian Catholic community about the relevance and effectiveness of Catholic schools. Several interrelated elements contributed to that situation. One was the diminishing proportion of Catholic children within the State attending Catholic schools. Another was an increase in the proportion of lay teachers working in them. Having to pay for those led to fee increases, which in turn led to a move towards Catholic schools catering for those children who came from more “socially and economically privileged”¹⁰⁰ families. It also contributed to Catholic parents, who were affluent and better educated, to have now high expectations of Catholic schools and to be critical when those were not met.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 187.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 188.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

¹⁰⁰ A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions*, 39.

The latter developments also led some members of religious orders to question themselves, their work and the role of the Catholic school. About those concerns, Tormey¹⁰¹ stated:

Many of the orders had been founded specifically for the education of the poor and among younger religious, in particular, there was a heightened sense of providing for their needs. As the proportion of lay teachers in the schools increased (by 1963, 23.9% of the teachers in the schools in the Archdiocese of Perth were lay teachers) so the feelings of inadequacy and incompetence of many of the middle-aged and older teachers were intensified. There was also a questioning by some as to whether or not their role could be just as adequately fulfilled by lay teachers. The diminution in the numbers of teaching religious was due not only to death or retirement, but to a new phenomenon in the history of the teaching orders in Western Australia, a sizeable loss through resignation from the orders. Between 1965 and 1969, of the 98 members who left the teaching force, 35 left through dispensation.

While such views undermined the confidence of many religious, the accompanying soul-searching within the various teaching orders by their members led to a gradual renewal of the internal life and work of the orders. It also led to the exploration of new fields in which their work could continue outside of that in the traditional Catholic school.¹⁰²

One of the new fields involved working in Motor Missions. That service involved small groups of religious nuns travelling by car on a regular basis in a particular rural district where they taught religion to the children there and provided pastoral outreach to their families. As already discussed in Chapter Five, Motor Missions were first introduced to Western Australia in the late 1950s. However, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that the provision of that service expanded, with more members from several religious orders becoming involved in providing the service across several districts in the State.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid, 40-41.

¹⁰³ A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions*, 28, 40-41, 48, 74, 83.

For those lay people who began to work in Catholic schools, several challenges existed. First, because lay teachers were often initially employed to fill a gap in the staffing requirements of a school, “acceptance in principle of their role”¹⁰⁴ was not always evident amongst some religious and other members of the Church. A practical challenge was how to integrate the practices and way of life typically associated with lay people with that of the religious. Finally, while some religious welcomed the changes and found ways to integrate the role of the lay teacher into the operation of their school, others grew concerned that they and their religious order would lose control.¹⁰⁵

As the 1960s progressed some within the Church in Western Australia, including parishioners and their parish priests, lay teachers, members of religious orders and leaders of the Catholic community expressed concerns about Catholic schooling and religion as a subject. While many of the debates and actions taken in response to those concerns began during the period under consideration, it was during the next period, 1971-1982, which is the concern of the next two chapters, that the associated concerns became critical and began to be addressed.

Recognition of the context of the Western Australian situation as illustrated by the matters identified above add further support to the first hypothesis proposed for this study, namely, that Catholic schools and Catholic education in Western Australia for the period under investigation did not indicate the existence of a monolithic entity. Rather, what prevailed was shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions. Recognising that situation also brings one to draw attention to the fact that a strong

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 41.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 41.

relationship existed between the wider social context and religion as a subject in Catholic schools in Western Australia.¹⁰⁶

Teacher preparation

The ideals generated by those leading the kerygmatic renewal of catechesis faced from an early stage challenges. One important challenge was that the kerygmatic approach was quickly superseded. That was due to several factors. For one thing, while the approach emphasised the need for teachers to be well trained, many were not. Many also were not prepared for the type of changes required of them. Indeed, prior to the introduction of the new approach, most teachers had not received any extensive biblical or theological training. Further, the process of implementation led to such a quick transition from one approach to another that many teachers became overwhelmed by the demands placed on them.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, as noted earlier in the chapter, while international leaders of the kerygmatic approach to catechesis recognised, and provided for, the training needs of teachers, the lack of preparedness of teachers in Australia impeded successful implementation.

Early in the process of implementation, steps were taken to mitigate some of the shortcomings. Often led by members of religious orders, those included the formation of teacher associations and networks, the production and use by teachers of catechetical journals, and the provision of in-service training seminars for teachers of religion. On those the following occurred in Western Australia:¹⁰⁸

The Association of Teaching Sisters – formed in 1959, was responsible for organizing an annual conference for teachers, and in 1964 the Conference was concerned with assisting teachers to use the new catechism in schools; in May of the same year additional seminars for the teachers in the Archdiocese and

¹⁰⁶ I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum Collected Essays*.

¹⁰⁷ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ A. Tormey, *Teaching Orders in Catholic Education in Western Australia 1955- 1975: A Historical Study of Changes and Repercussions*, 29.

diocese of Geraldton were arranged. Catechetical journals such as *Lumen Vitae* (an international review from Belgium); *The Sower* (an English review) and *Our Apostolate* (the Australian catechetical review, first appearing in 1953, and edited by the de la Salle Brothers), were increasingly being read by teachers.

For Tormey,¹⁰⁹ writing about the situation of religious orders in Western Australia at that time, those developments suggested that “many teachers were beginning to approach the teaching of religion in a more professional manner”.

With reference to Beeby’s¹¹⁰ stages of development in education systems, the above developments suggest two key matters. First, for the period under consideration, the development of religion as a subject in Western Australia is best characterised as having been at the ‘Stage of Formalism’. Secondly, those who promoted the approach understood the need to support teachers and took steps to try to ensure that teachers would function at the ‘Stage of Transition’. Overall, however, those promoting it underestimated the gap that existed between their aspirations for teachers and the reality of many who taught religion in Australia, including Western Australia.

The readiness of parents

Parents and students were ill-prepared for the change. Most parents and family members had been schooled in religion as a subject across several generations through use of the same catechism. Thus, they had little understanding of what their children were experiencing at school. That left many struggling to share in their children’s learning and left them feeling inadequate due to the demands of the new approach to teaching.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

Spiral learning

Because the basic kerygma had to be recalled and applied in each unit of learning, content tended to be repetitious. The ‘newness’ of the salvation story, for example, did not remain a ‘fresh’ concept after being emphasised again and again in each unit of work. Rather, for students and their teachers, the approach meant that learning became predictable and boring, and did not seem to move beyond the initial story told.¹¹¹ Somewhat confusing for many too was that while presented in a different format, the question-and-answer style used in traditional catechesis remained.¹¹²

Those matters noted above once again indicate that teachers lacked the skills needed to successfully implement a kerygmatic approach and, in response, defaulted to what was familiar to them. For many, that latter meant using the basic approach of traditional catechesis. That situation again indicates that Beeby’s¹¹³ notion of a ‘Stage of Formalism’ characterised the role that teachers played in facilitating progress.

Broader concerns

Another matter important for understanding the process of constructing religion as a school subject in Catholic schools in Western Australia was the conditions under which Catholic schooling existed. Those were not conducive to the embracement of the new approach to teaching.¹¹⁴ In particular, post-war migration and a baby boom placed significant pressures on the operation of schools in general. For those leading and working in Catholic schools, a lack of sufficient resources and funding created further pressure. In addition, there was a shortage of religious as teachers. That led to

¹¹¹ It will be recalled, that was also considered to be an issue associated with the use of Traditional Catechesis.

¹¹² This format was incorporated into the materials developed for use, particularly for older students.

¹¹³ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

¹¹⁴ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 86.

more lay teachers being employed in Catholic schools at significant additional cost. Complicating these challenges, leaders, and members of the Church, locally and globally, also struggled to digest and deal with the views circulating due to the impact of the Second Vatican Council.

Developments in theology and catechetics

The ideals and practices that emerged in the Church following the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council were influenced by a broad movement of reform that had emerged before the Council members met. Within that broad movement of reform, some catechetical reformers developed and promoted the kerygmatic renewal of catechetics. The ideals and principles promoted by its proponents underwent further development during the years that the Council members deliberated.

That later development had consequences for how catechetics began to be understood by Church leaders and catechetical theorists.¹¹⁵ Earlier, while proponents of the kerygmatic catechesis acknowledged a need to attend to students of different ages, they assumed that faith existed within students. They also did not consider the life experience of students or their disposition towards faith as worthy of attention. The deliberations of the Second Vatican Council, however, refocused the attention of Catholics on the importance of experience,¹¹⁶ the nature of Revelation and the process of conversion.¹¹⁷ In Australia, Australian Church leaders, catechetical theorists and teachers of religion responded in like vein. That also meant they engaged in re-

¹¹⁵ M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism*, 86.

¹¹⁶ What Hagarty refers to as “the problem of ‘Experience’”. M. Hagarty, *The Role of Experience in Religious Education/catechesis in the United States Since the Second Vatican Council: An Analysis and Critique* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Catholic University of America, 2000), 1.

¹¹⁷ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 71, 76; M. Buchanan, *Management of Curriculum Change: An Analysis of Religious Education Coordinators’ Perspectives on the Management of a Particular Curriculum Change in Catholic Secondary Schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Australian Catholic University, 2007), 20-23.

evaluating the relevance of the comprehensive packages of resources designed and produced to support the teaching of religion in all Australian Catholic schools.

Soon leaders of the Australian Church, catechetical theorists and Catholic school teachers came to play a major role in shifting how religion as a subject was understood and taught in Catholic schools. They recognised that they needed to break from their entrenched beliefs and practices about religion as a subject. Central to their changed outlook was an awareness that they could no longer expect teachers to rely solely upon a catechism to identify what content they should teach and what method was best suited the teaching of the subject. Further, they contributed to the legitimisation and use of progressive education ideals in the theory and practice of the religion as a subject in Catholic schools. That acceptance also enabled attractive teaching and learning resources to be developed for teachers to use in their religion classes.

Another benefit of the changed outlook was that Catholic theorists and practitioners were more willing than previously to engage in a process of sharing with those involved with religion as a subject in other Christian churches.¹¹⁸ Finally, adopting that approach drew attention to shortcomings in the skills and knowledge of the classroom teachers of religion in Catholic schools. That concern led school leaders to focus on ways to improve the training of religion teachers.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

How religion as a subject was constructed for Western Australian Catholic schools for the period 1962-1971 underwent significant change. This chapter and the previous one

¹¹⁸ R. Rummery, *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society*, 101-103.

¹¹⁹ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 77.

provided an outline and analysis of the matter for the period 1929-1962. It elaborated upon the construction process itself through an exploration of several themes. The two chapters that now follow repeat the analytical approach adopted, this time for the third period under consideration, namely, 1972-1982.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGION AS A SUBJECT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: 1971-1982

Introduction

Religion as a subject for Catholic schools in Western Australia continued to experience significant change in the period 1971-1982. The associated developments are detailed in the next two chapters. This chapter is presented in two sections. The first of those provides an overview of the broad historical context within which the construction of the subject occurred. The second section then outlines specific developments in relation to developments in the construction of the subject for Western Australian Catholic schools for the period. These latter developments are then elaborated on and discussed in the chapter that follows.

Historical Context

The 1970s began as a continuation of the 1960s, but by the end of the decade a more conservative and reactionary outlook was present in many Western societies, including Australia. In the United States, for example, a movement known as the ‘New Right’ emerged. Proponents expressed a strong belief in free market economics and opposed what they saw as the decline of ‘traditional’ values in society. Politically those influenced by that position were suspicious of efforts made by government leaders to regulate or intervene in society or the economy.

Many who adopted the new conservative outlook were influenced by political, social, and economic developments. Those, in general, tended to result in some people experiencing a sense of uncertainty, mistrust and fear. For instance, ongoing tension and conflict between the two superpowers continued to create an atmosphere of crisis,

fear, and anxiety¹ for many. Economically, the 1970s was also a difficult period for many people living in Western countries where, following an international oil crisis,² stagflation³ emerged. Coupled with political crises like Watergate and increasing numbers of marginalised people arguing for equal rights in society, views of people about politics and society tended to become more polarised and opposing movements began to develop. Often those who joined those movements held strong views about either the need for social change or to maintain traditional social values. As with the opposing forces during the Cold War, those who held strong social views found that they shared fewer areas of common ground with other people.

In Australia, the 1970s also saw increasing turmoil in society. For example, Australians became more divided over the nation's participation in the Vietnam War, especially on the matter of conscription. The level of division within society, combined with weaknesses in the leadership provided by the Federal Liberal party,⁴ helped representatives from the Australian Labor Party gain control of the national government following the 1972 Federal election.⁵

Under the leadership of Gough Whitlam, the new Prime Minister (1972-1975), the national government quickly began implementing a progressive political agenda. For instance, funding to schools and universities increased significantly. Laws were passed establishing a national health scheme known as Medibank and funding for

¹ The continuation of the Cold War meant tensions remained high between superpowers.

² J. Donev, *Energy Education - Oil crisis of the 1970s*, 29 April 2021, https://energyeducation.ca/encyclopedia/Oil_crisis_of_the_1970s; ABC, "Lecture 2: From Golden Age to Stagflation," *Radio National, Boyer Lectures*, 19 November 2006, <https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20140212165940/http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/81505/20140213-0015/www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/boyerlectures/lecture-2-from-golden-age-to-stagflation/3353140.html>.

³ Both high unemployment and high inflation exists at the same time in the economy.

⁴ Members of the Liberal party had held parliamentary control over the national government since 1949 and Robert Menzies held the position of Prime Minister until 1966. Between 1966 and 1972 three different leaders of the Liberal Party held that office. Personal rivalries and divisions over policy within the government weakened those leaders and the electoral appeal of the Liberal Party.

⁵ The ALP election campaign promoted the theme of 'it's time'.

health services was increased. The Family Court was also established, and no-fault divorce laws were passed. Further, in response to a land rights movement, the national government agreed to hand back to Aboriginal peoples their traditional lands.

The effects of an oil crisis in 1973, however, created a worldwide economic shock that soon led to an economic recession in several countries, including Australia. That, combined with the Whitlam government's reforming agenda, contributed to economic and political stresses in Australian society.⁶ What followed was the controversial dismissal by the Governor General of Gough Whitlam and his government in 1975. Viewed by some as a constitutional crisis, that event aggravated and accentuated divisions already present in the country.

The dismissal of the Whitlam government led to a general election. That saw the return to power of the Liberal Party led by Malcolm Fraser.⁷ His new government returned to a more traditional approach to the management of economic and public affairs. He also attempted to wind back what were perceived to be the excesses of the previous government. However, when the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) fixed oil prices in 1979, another oil shock ensued. That led to further 'stagflation' in the Australian economy. In response, the national government made further significant cuts to spending.⁸

In foreign policy and defence matters, Fraser's Liberal government tended to default to a more traditional approach. That included strong defence spending, and the fostering of diplomatic and trade relations with Australia's traditional allies and those

⁶ Australians remained divided over the Vietnam War. Post-colonial developments in East Timor and Papua New Guinea also occupied the leaders of the Australian government.

⁷ National Archives of Australia: 1961-2021, "Malcolm Fraser," *Australia's Prime Ministers*, 29 April 2021, <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/fraser/in-office.aspx>.

⁸ By the late 1970s economic rationalism surfaced as an area of policy debate within Australia. Within the Liberal Party a faction known as the 'new right' emerged. National Archives of Australia: 1961-2021, "Malcolm Fraser," *Australia's Prime Ministers*.

countries in the region that opposed the spread of Communism. Fraser and members of his government also strongly opposed South African Apartheid and supported the independence of Zimbabwe. At that time also, significant numbers of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees began arriving in Australia. Many had taken enormous risks when they left to travel there by boat. They also presented many challenges for Australian society, where people in general tended to respond positively⁹ to their plight.

Church developments

During the 1970s, leaders and members of the Catholic Church internationally continued to grapple with the outcomes of the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰ For instance, some priests and religious continued to abandon their vocation and the recruitment of new personnel to replace them dried up. On the other hand, within the Church, lay people, including women, became increasingly involved with theological studies, read the Bible, and undertook programs of personal spiritual formation. Some also were appointed to positions within the Church that involved ministry and leadership. Questions about the ordination of women also arose.¹¹ In addition, the participation of Catholics in ecumenical dialogue, common Christian worship and shared activities with other Christian Churches grew in popularity. Those efforts took place in parishes and dioceses, and through official Church bodies set up specifically for such work.

⁹ That position was adopted because of Fraser's leadership, the work of some members of his government, and the support of other groups in society, including churches.

¹⁰ The history of the Church following the Second Vatican Council continues to be highly contested. For examples, see: B. Macfarlane, "A Bright Future for the Church in America," *CatholicCity*, 30 April 2021, <http://www.catholicity.com/commentary/macfarlane/bright-future.html>; M. Faggioli, "Vatican II: The history and the narratives," *Theological Studies (Baltimore)* 73, no. 4 (2012), 749–67; "History of the Catholic Church since 1962," *Wikipedia*, 30 April 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Catholic_Church_since_1962; M. Massa, "The times they were a'changing," *U.S. Catholic* 76, no. 7 (2011), 18–22; K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis Bendigo: La Trobe University, 1999), vii.

¹¹ "History of the Catholic Church since 1962," *Wikipedia*.

Likewise, at all levels of the Church, individuals and groups experimented with ways to reform liturgical practice. For example, in many Catholic parishes the practice of individual Confession declined. Instead, parishioners preferred the use of communal penitential services.

Within Australia, some members of the local Church became more involved than previously in social justice activities. Others, however, became suspicious of such movements and the activities of those involved. Fuelling suspicion was the dissemination of a new theological movement out of which liberation theologies emerged.¹² Proponents of it promoted ideas that had developed in response to significant social inequality experienced by many people who lived in Latin American and Asian countries. According to Yarri,¹³ what was shared included:

Listening to the voices of the marginalized and oppressed; engaging in the process of praxis (the continual process of reflection and action); calling for justice on the part of the oppressors; constructing a theology focused on a God who cares about the marginalized; and encouraging others to become engaged, both intellectually and practically.

A sense of activism, a concern about the process of analysis involved, and what some perceived as radical solutions, led to suspicion and hostility amongst certain Church leaders. In their analysis of those “theologies of liberation”¹⁴ they saw a strongly Marxist tendency.¹⁵

Moreover, in relation to the Vatican, whereas Pope Paul VI saw his task as implementing the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council, a task he found

¹² D. Yarri, “Navigating Liberation Theologies,” *Religious Studies Review* 45, no. 2 (2019), 175–78.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁴ J Kirk, “John Paul II and the exorcism of Liberation Theology: A retrospective look at the Pope in Nicaragua,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 4, no. 1 (1985), 33.

¹⁵ M. Dodson, “The Church and political struggle: Faith and action in Central America,” *Latin American Research Review* 23, no. 1 (1988), 230–43.

challenging,¹⁶ Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) saw his role differently; he wanted to resist what he and others saw as the excesses created by the effects of those decisions.¹⁷

The composition of Church membership in Australia also continued to diversify during the 1970s. For instance, numbers of those who came from Asian countries, including Vietnamese refugees, were Catholics. It was also in that decade, in 1976, that officials in Rome declared that Australia was no longer officially a mission country. While well overdue, that action had both practical and symbolic significance for members of the Australian Church.

During the 1970s, members of the Australian Church tended to align themselves with one of two strands of thought. The composition of those who subscribed to either strand included bishops, clergy, religious and laity. Within each group were people who held strong views about what they considered should be the future direction of the Church. Amongst those who subscribed to the first strand of thought were those who welcomed a more progressive and socially aware Church. They engaged in ecumenical dialogue and welcomed liturgical innovations. Likewise, they welcomed greater lay participation and leadership in all areas of Church life.

Those who subscribed to the second, more conservative view, were smaller in number but very determined. They tended to gather to provide support to like-minded people. What united them was a mistrust of some developments that had occurred in the Church after the Second Vatican Council. That view led them to oppose many of the activities and attitudes promoted by those who belonged to the first group.

¹⁶ E. Heston, "St. Paul VI: Pope," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9 May 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Blessed-Paul-VI>; M. Faggioli, "Vatican II: The history and the narratives," *Theological Studies (Baltimore)*, 750.

¹⁷ For example, Pope John Paul II was strongly opposed to Communism and that led him to condemn several theologians and priests who promoted theologies of liberation. J Kirk, "John Paul II and the exorcism of Liberation Theology: A retrospective look at the Pope in Nicaragua," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 33.

A significant person who provided leadership to the second group of people in Australia was Bishop Steward, the Catholic Bishop of Sandhurst (1950-1979), a diocese in Victoria. About his views Lawlor¹⁸ stated:

It is apparent from the copies and subscription notices preserved in diocesan archives that the papers and journals he received were generally of a conservative nature. It would appear that he selected reading material supportive of, rather than opposed to, his own theological understandings. Many of these were critical of many of the progressive theologians of the time such as Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, Hans Kung, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Joseph Ratzinger. Of this, Monsignor Duffus observed “He may not have read people like Schillebeeckx...or Kung, probably not. He’d be aware of what they’d say mainly from criticism, but I don’t know that he always read, went back to the sources... He was very critical of and very suspicious of a lot of development in Scripture studies. He was inclined to be almost literalist in some of his approaches to Scripture. He found things like the idea of a Midrash very difficult to handle...Form Criticism and those sorts of things. He certainly had trouble handling some of the modern Scripture studies.”

Those who subscribed to views like Steward’s would at times take to task bishops and priests they believed were undermining orthodox Catholic belief and practice.

Essentially what prevailed was an ideological war between two factions within the Church. One of the chief battlegrounds for that conflict became Catholic education, where controversy tended to focus on matters associated with “Church authority, theological standpoint and educational ideology”.¹⁹ At a local level, bishops across Australia found themselves trying to mediate or manage the impact that that conflict had upon Catholic education, whether in the school, university, or seminary.²⁰

Specifically, regarding Western Australia, most of the bishops there along with other members of the Catholic Hierarchy in Australia, had attended and participated

¹⁸ K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979*, 49-50.

¹⁹ P. Ivers, *From the Cathedral to the Classroom: The Emergence of New Discourses on Religious Education* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2010), 6.

²⁰ T. D’Orsa, “The old as well as the new: Catholic education fifty years on from Vatican II,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 92, no. 4 (2015), 403-14; N. Ormerod, O. Rush, D. Pascoe, C. Johnson, and J. Hodge, *Vatican II: Reception and Implementation in the Australian Church* (Mulgrave, Vic: Garratt Publishing, 2012).

in some or all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council.²¹ However, implementing what had been discussed and decided during the Council presented many challenges for them. Moreover, those challenges had increased by the 1970s. Overseeing them were Archbishop Goody (1968-1983), the Archbishop of Perth, and his two auxiliary bishops, Bishop Quinn (1969-1982) and Bishop Healy (1975-2000). In the country dioceses of the State there were three bishops, namely, Bishop Thomas in Geraldton (1962-1981), Bishop McKeon in Bunbury (1969-1982) and Bishop Jobst in Broome (1966-1995).

The 1970s also saw significant and substantial increases in government funding of Catholic schools. Along with that came the creation of new types of Church bodies that assumed responsibility within dioceses for the administration of funds and the management of schools. That development led to a more centralised approach than previously to the provision of Catholic education. The availability of government money also enabled leaders of Catholic schools to employ more lay teachers at the very time that there was a serious decline in the numbers of religious and priests available to teach in schools. Further, the funds were used to release those responsible for parishes and dioceses in Australia from the burden of trying to find the money needed to run increasingly expensive schools. However, the advent of their availability also led some priests and their parishioners to feel less involved in their local Catholic school, and more broadly, Catholic education than in previous decades.²²

²¹ “Category: Participants in the Second Vatican Council,” *Wikipedia*, 12 May 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Participants_in_the_Second_Vatican_Council.

²² P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008* (Inglewood: Victor Publishing, 2008), 223-239.

Developments in education

Australian education in the period 1971-1982 is notable for two key developments. The first was direct intervention by leaders of the national government in education. That intervention was significant because education in Australia, constitutionally, is a State government responsibility. However, those leaders could, constitutionally, make use of the nation's fiscal resources. Therefore, drawing on them, they began funding schools, including Catholic schools across the country. That involvement also enabled them to initiate major reforms in the provision of education in Australian primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.²³

Among these initiatives taken was the production in 1973 of the *Karmel Report*²⁴ and the creation of the *Australian Schools Commission*²⁵ in 1973.²⁶ The authors of that report identified several issues in Australian education. Those included inequities in the distribution of resources, insufficient human and material resources, and problems with the quality of teaching and school administration.²⁷ They recommended that Commonwealth money be used to fund the construction of school buildings, the general running costs of schools, and the training of teachers. They also recommended that funds be allocated specifically for the building of school libraries,

²³ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 200.

²⁴ Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission and P. Karmel, *Schools in Australia: Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, May 1973*, (Canberra: Australian Govt. Pub. Service, 1973).

²⁵ "Schools Commission Act 1973," *Federal Register of Legislation*, 5 May 2021, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2004A00045>.

²⁶ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 201; P. Tannock, "Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979," in *Education in Western Australia*, ed. W. Neal (Nedlands: University of WA Press, 1979), 164.

²⁷ lucyrich752, "How did Gough change the way we are educated?," *makinghistoryatmacquarie*, 5 May 2021, <https://makinghistoryatmacquarie.wordpress.com/2014/11/15/how-did-gough-change-the-way-we-are-educated/>.

to address the needs of disadvantaged schools, and to provide for special education and other special education programs.²⁸ For example,

... the Commission introduced programs to address the disadvantages associated with poverty and a range of other causes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schooling, the schooling of people from non-English speaking backgrounds and gender inequality were the targets of some of its programs.²⁹

They recommended too that all schools, whether state or private, be resourced according to need.³⁰ That included all Catholic schools, many of which were in serious need of funds. The *Australian Schools Commission* became responsible for implementing the recommendations made in the *Karmel Report*. The task of those working for it was to conduct educational research and provide policy and funding advice to the leaders of the national government.³¹

Another important initiative of the Whitlam government was the 1973 *Students Assistance Act*³². That act enabled government money to be used to provide financial assistance, based on need, to secondary school and tertiary education students. A year later, all tertiary education fees were abolished. That initiative provided all Australian students, based on merit rather than means, with the opportunity to gain access to higher education. Those who supported the measure believed it would create greater equity in education than previously and increase employment opportunities for all students.

Collectively, the initiatives detailed above “had a profound effect on schools, and on the lives of teachers and students”.³³ Education now became a more important

²⁸ J. McLaren, “Karmel Report: Schools in Australia,” *Dictionary of Educational History in Australia and New Zealand (DEHANZ)*, 5 May 2021, <http://dehanz.net.au>.

²⁹ C. Campbell and H Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 182.

³⁰ “Schools Commission Act 1973,” *Federal Register of Legislation*, 5 May 2021, para.13 (4), <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2004A00045>.

³¹ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 182.

³² “Student Assistance Act 1973,” *Federal Register of Legislation*.

³³ C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 211.

issue for students, who increasingly completed twelve years of schooling. Families began to see education, and particularly higher education, as an important pathway for economic and social success in life. Parents, who were also increasingly becoming better educated, began to actively seek out and choose schools based on their perceived quality. Many Australians too came to recognise that education was an important instrument of the economy, a means for addressing a range of social concerns, and an important matter for voters.³⁴

Soon, however, those aspirations had to be adjusted following the constitutional crisis which led to the dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975. At the time, high levels of inflation and unemployment had also developed within the Australian economy. Within a short time, flow-on effects upon Australian education were felt.

For the period under consideration then, the change of government in 1975 represents a second key phase of development in Australian education. Leaders now prioritised different outcomes for education. Instead of promoting a social reform agenda, they paid more attention to the economic utility of education, with some key members of Fraser's Liberal-National government (1975-1983) advocating "neoliberalism in economic and social policy".³⁵ As a consequence, decisions about funding for education had to be justified on economic grounds.

About the shift in policy Campbell and Proctor³⁶ stated:

Though contested, there was an inexorable reorientation of schools and systems to the new policy agendas. The history of the Australian Schools Commission from the mid-1970s through the 1980s exemplified the process. An early emphasis on the funding and encouragement of diversity and equality in schooling was constrained. Though the Schools Commission had never been funded well enough to make a transformative impact on 'disadvantaged' students, the commitment to 'equality' dropped away. By the early 1980s, the

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, 212.

³⁶ Ibid.

Innovations Program and the Education Research and Development Committee that directly addressed disadvantage had gone and the flagship Disadvantaged Schools Program did what it could with no new funding. The Commission was in the process of being transformed from an agency giving major support to public education and its improvement, to an agency underwriting the costs of non-government schools: “driving deeper the wedge between public and private schooling” (Connell et al., 1982).

Problems in the economy and changes in government policy also had an impact upon Australian schooling. For example, schooling in general became more diverse and competitive. Moreover, with fewer employment options available and therefore higher retention rates in the senior years of secondary school, the curriculum had to be adjusted so that students were better prepared for the workforce.³⁷

While equity issues in the provision of education remained to be addressed, the focus of policy makers shifted to how schooling could contribute to higher education and employment. For leaders of Catholic education, however, equity issues remained important. Following the funding initiatives of the Whitlam government, Catholic lobbyists now expected and increasingly demanded that their schools be funded in the same way as government-run schools across the nation.

To address their expectation, members of Fraser’s government, through the *Australian Schools Commission*, established a needs-based funding principle. That was based on “the idea of per capita entitlement – that is, all families-rich or poor – should receive some support for their children's education”.³⁸ At the same time, the government reduced funding for programs designed to address social disadvantage. Instead, it increased the funding of non-government schools. Consequently, Catholic schools became major beneficiaries and were able to compete, in terms of resourcing, on an equal footing with government schools. For example, leaders of Catholic schools

³⁷ Ibid, 212-214.

³⁸ Ibid, 224.

were now able to undertake capital development works and could afford to pay the growing number of lay teachers a regular teacher's salary.³⁹

Another development, a High Court of Australia ruling in 1981, confirmed the right of the national governments to be able to fund Catholic schools. About that case, Campbell and Proctor⁴⁰ stated:

The High Court of Australia ruled on federal government funding of church-owned schools. The case was prosecuted by an alliance of public school supporters, the Defence of Government Schools (DOGS) organisation. DOGS lost the case despite the Australian Constitution's clause 116 disallowing federal governments from establishing religion. The decision signalled the final collapse of the century-old, post-1870s, state aid settlement. New government funding for non-government schools was legitimated. A golden age for non-government schools had begun.

As illustrated by the nature of the case, education in Australia had always had a political dimension. However, from the 1970s education policy and curriculum matters were even more political, with ideological partisanship a key factor.⁴¹ Text selection, gender, social studies curricula, how history was taught, sex education, what and how particular 'subjects' were taught, and assessment practice, all began to be publicly contested.⁴²

Catholic education in Australia

The 1970s saw major developments in Catholic education. With the renewal of State-aid, leaders of Catholic schools across the nation were now able to begin addressing the problems those schools faced because of inadequate or insufficient resources.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 227.

⁴¹ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 259

⁴² T. O'Donoghue, *Understanding Contemporary Education: Key Themes and Issues* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 13; C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 232-237.

⁴³ Western Australia. Education Department, *Report on the Needs of Catholic Schools in Western Australia, 1970-1974*, (Perth: Govt. Print, 1970); P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 227.

During the early years of the 1970s, deciding how to best manage and use the funds made available, became an important issue for Catholic leaders. Addressing that led them to reorganise the governance and management of Catholic schools across the nation.⁴⁴ In Western Australia local Church leaders established the *Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia* (CECWA), required each Catholic school to have a board, and inaugurated the *Catholic Institute of Western Australia* (CIWA).

CECWA was established in 1971 by the bishops of Western Australia.⁴⁵ Catholics in the State were told that the creation⁴⁶ of CECWA was “a first in Australia and a prototype for others to come”.⁴⁷ The new body had several features. It was “established under the authority of the Catholic bishops of Western Australia and the superiors of all the religious orders in the State”.⁴⁸ Commissioners on that new body were given the task of resourcing and managing the needs of Catholic schooling. They were also required to manage policy making for Catholic education in Western Australia. That shifted responsibility for policy making from individual dioceses and individual religious congregations to those who were members of the new State-wide body.

Membership of CECWA included a range of representatives with a stake in the ongoing provision of Catholic education in Western Australia. Those included “the bishops, the religious congregations, the P&F Federation, the laity and educational

⁴⁴ P. Tannock, “Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979,” in *Education in Western Australia*, 164-165.

⁴⁵ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 232.

⁴⁶ Tannock too was critical to the process. P. Tannock, “Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979,” in *Education in Western Australia*, 165.

⁴⁷ R. Curry, “Obituary: Monsignor James Francis Nestor,” *The Record Magazine* 3 (2016), 27. https://issuu.com/archdioceseofperth_therecord/docs/the_record_magazine_issue03_july_1/26.

⁴⁸ P. Tannock, “Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979,” in *Education in Western Australia*, 165.

experts”⁴⁹. Father James Nestor⁵⁰ was appointed as inaugural chair and Richard McSweeney was appointed as the Commission’s chief executive. In his position and on behalf of CECWA’s members, McSweeney was responsible for conducting research and planning.⁵¹

Regarding individual Catholic schools in Western Australia, the creation of CECWA also led to change. Before its creation, either a parish priest or a religious order had sole responsibility for each school. That included school finances, management, and staffing.⁵² After the creation of CECWA all Catholic schools were referred to as ‘parish’, ‘diocesan’⁵³ or ‘religious congregation-owned and operated’. Further, each Catholic school was required to have a “properly constituted board of management”⁵⁴ with a parish priest as a board member. In contrast to previous practice, members of those boards were also made accountable⁵⁵ for the management of a school’s finances. One implication of that change meant that members were required to oversee the financial accounts of a school separately from that of the local parish.

In November 1970, a Catholic Institute Constitutive Committee (CICC) was formed by the bishops of Western Australia.⁵⁶ Members of that committee had the task of developing a plan for how the training needs of Catholic school teachers in Western

⁴⁹ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 232.

⁵⁰ Later given the ecclesiastical title of Monsignor.

⁵¹ At that time, there was an expectation that Tannock would become more involved in the new Commission. Later, in 1985, he did become Director of Catholic Education in Western Australia. P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 237.

⁵² Whether the responsibility of a parish priest or a religious order, all schools before the 1970s were staffed primarily by religious from a specific religious order. Whether a parish or order owned school, religious orders provided most, if not all, of the teaching staff.

⁵³ Many were referred to as CEC schools.

⁵⁴ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 238.

⁵⁵ With the arrival of Commonwealth funding, school boards became accountable for those funds.

⁵⁶ J. Collins, *One of a Kind: A Social History of the Catholic Institute in Western Australia 1975-1999* (Perth, W.A.: Catholic Institute of Western Australia, 1999), 11.

Australia could be met. In establishing that committee in 1975, Archbishop Goody announced an important aim as:⁵⁷

... to serve unity⁵⁸ and particularly the Catholic citizens of WA by providing pre-service and inservice education and formation of future and present teachers in Catholic schools and by assisting and encouraging Catholic teachers and others of the Word of God and all who participate in the Church's office of educating, so as to make their contribution to that office more effective.

By 1975, the work of that committee had resulted in the formation of the *Catholic Pastoral Institute of Western Australia*. An important task of those who worked for the Institute was to develop or “enrich” the theology and spirituality of “those engaged in the transmission of the faith: to wit, teachers, clergy, religious and the wider community”.⁵⁹ The Terms of Reference included:⁶⁰

1. provision of Adult Religious Education Courses to assist parents understand and appreciate their own faith
2. inservice Religious Education Courses for teachers in Catholic primary and secondary schools
3. courses in Religious Education at Teacher Training Colleges
4. parish based Adult Religious Education courses
5. special seminars for priests, teachers and the general public; and
6. maintenance and development of the Western Australian Catholic Educators Resource Centre for Religious Education (which provided a service of films, tapes, books etc available to all).

Of those terms of reference, three were of particular importance for Catholic schools: providing ongoing training for teachers of religious education; offering tertiary studies for pre-service teachers at existing State-based teacher training institutions;⁶¹ providing a resource centre.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 15.

⁵⁸ The use of the word ‘unity’ hints at some degree of tension associated with the institute and more broadly, around matters concerning the transmission of the faith. Collins further illustrates that point. J. Collins, *One of a Kind: A Social History of the Catholic Institute in Western Australia 1975-1999*, 16.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 12.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 16.

⁶¹ Ibid, 17.

Religion for Catholic Schools: The Subject

The deliberations of the Second Vatican Council led to renewal in all areas of Church life. One of those was missiology, a field of study and practice that deals with the nature, purpose, and methods of Christian mission. Within that field, renewal of catechetics became important. On that, renewal of catechetical theory and practice had been underway for some years prior to the advent of the Council. During and after it, Church leaders began to change how they, and more precisely, the *Magisterium*⁶² of the Church, engaged with developments.

The new level of official engagement found expression in the content of several conciliar and post-conciliar Church documents approved by Church leaders. The content of those related to matters associated with Revelation, the Church, education, evangelisation, catechesis, the role of the catechist and the teacher, the Catholic school, and the cultural context in which Catholic education takes place. While much of what was written did not directly address religion as a subject in Catholic schools, there were implications for how Church leaders and teachers should understand that subject. For the period 1971-1982, the influential documents in that regard were, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*⁶³ (1970), *We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord*⁶⁴ (1970), *General Catechetical Directory*⁶⁵ (1971), *Evangelii Nuntiandi*⁶⁶ (On

⁶² Magisterium refers to those Church officials tasked with “giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.” That task is “entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.” Catholic Church, “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” *The Holy See*, 9 May 2021, 85, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_PM.HTM.

⁶³ Australian Episcopal Conference, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1970).

⁶⁴ Australian Episcopal Conference, *We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord: Handing on the Faith* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1970).

⁶⁵ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), 6 May 2021, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc_con_ccclergy_doc_11041971_gcat_en.html.

⁶⁶ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), 9 May 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

Evangelization in the Modern World, 1975), *The Catholic School*⁶⁷ (1977), *Catechesi Tradendae*⁶⁸ (Catechesis in Our Time, 1979), and *Lay Catholic in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*⁶⁹ (1982).⁷⁰ Of those, the ideas presented in *General Catechetical Directory*, *Renewal of the Education of Faith*, and *The Catholic School* were of particular significance for the development of religion as a subject for Catholic schools.

General Catechetical Directory (1971)

In 1971 members of the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy published the *General Catechetical Directory*. About that document and subsequent editions,⁷¹ Marthaler⁷² stated:

Catechetical directories are a new genre of writing in the Roman Catholic religious education that emerged at the Second Vatican Council. They furnish guidelines that delineate theological-pastoral principles, describe the nature and purpose of catechesis, set goals, outline structures, and suggest strategies for catechetical programs.

The publication was a specific response to another document that had been approved by members of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, namely, *Gravissimum Educationis*⁷³ (Declaration on Christian Education). Moreover, publication of the *General Catechetical Directory* took place a year after the Australian bishops had released a related document, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*. While published

⁶⁷ The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, "The Catholic School (1977)," *The Holy See*, 9 May 2021, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html.

⁶⁸ Pope John Paul II, "Catechesi Tradendae (1979)," *The Holy See*, 9 May 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html.

⁶⁹ The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, "Lay Catholic in Schools: Witnesses to Faith (1982)," *The Holy See*, 9 May 2021, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19821015_lay-catholics_en.html.

⁷⁰ M. Ryan and P. Malone, *Exploring the Religion Classroom: A Guidebook for Catholic Schools* (Wentworth Falls, N.S.W: Social Science Press, 1996), 33-40, 42-43.

⁷¹ Two updated versions of The General Directory were published, 1997 and 2020.

⁷² B. Marthaler, "Catechesis, General Directory for," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement, Jubilee Volume: The Wojtyla Years*, ed. P Vedder (Detroit, MI: Gale eBooks, 2000), 186.

⁷³ "Declaration on Christian Education, (Gravissimum Educationis)," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: American Press, 1966).

later, the development of the *General Catechetical Directory* preceded⁷⁴ and informed the development of that Australian document.

The development and writing⁷⁵ of the 1971 *General Catechetical Directory* was informed by “basic principles of pastoral theology”.⁷⁶ Those responsible for approving and publishing that document had four main aims. They sought to provide, based on the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council, a synthesis of how Church leaders now understood the Church. They sought also to address the pastoral responsibilities that leaders and practitioners of catechetics had in this area of Church ministry. They further sought to apply those understandings to the practical aspects of catechesis. Finally, to provide “a rationale and guidelines for the new catechetical approaches”⁷⁷.

In addition to the aims detailed above the document also stated:⁷⁸

Such a course of action was adopted especially for the following reason: the errors which are not infrequently noted in catechetics today can be avoided only if one starts with the correct way of understanding the nature and purposes of catechesis and also the truths which are to be taught by it, with due account being taken of those to whom catechesis is directed and of the conditions in which they live.

To emphasise the relationship between this new document and the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council, writers also incorporated within the text a statement on the importance of a key process adopted during the Council,⁷⁹ namely, “scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel”.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Details can be found in the foreword of the *General Catechetical Directory*. Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971).

⁷⁵ D. Hoyos, “An Overview of the General Catechetical Directory,” *Catholic Culture*, 6 May 2021, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=326>.

⁷⁶ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971).

⁷⁷ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools* (Brisbane: Lumino Press, 2013), 91.

⁷⁸ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971).

⁷⁹ For detail see, J. D’Orsa, and T. D’Orsa, *Explorers, Guides and Meaning-Makers: Mission Theology for Catholic Educators* (Mulgrave, Vic: John Garratt Publishing, 2011), 15-17.

⁸⁰ “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, (Gaudium et Spes),” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: American Press, 1966), para. 4.

The intended audience for the *General Catechetical Directory* included the bishops of the world and their episcopal conferences.⁸¹ They were reminded that practitioners needed to be open to and make use of the “human sciences”.⁸² They were also required to use the *General Catechetical Directory* as a basis for developing other catechetical directories and catechisms. The purpose of producing those secondary documents, it was stated, was to address local contexts and pastoral needs.

Specifically on that context, Lawlor⁸³ stated:

In the years after the Vatican Council, the Roman Curia issued several documents on education, with the first being the 1971 General Catechetical Directory of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy. This began the process of applying the Council’s Declaration on education. It understood catechesis as being part of the missionary activity of the Church, and centred Religious Education within the basic Christian message. It also called on the Church to keep in tune with new educational and theological developments, but it largely stayed away from giving much attention to the actual applications of its principles, continuing with the practice of leaving that to the local Conferences. However, it did include some comment about a few current points of contention, including experiential catechetics which it called the ‘inductive method’. It stated that the method was seen to be beneficial, but also it cautioned that other complementary strategies needed to be retained as well.

To support the development of the secondary documents, the nature of the content and message to be expounded through catechesis was also included in the *General Catechetical Directory* along with detail about “the present situation, methodology, and the form of catechesis for people of differing ages”⁸⁴.

The content of Part 1 of the *General Catechetical Directory* included an examination of the contemporary context of the world.⁸⁵ In Part 2 there was an examination of how Church leaders understood the relationship between Revelation

⁸¹ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979*, 282.

⁸⁴ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971).

⁸⁵ Ibid, para. 1-9.

and what is referred to as the “Ministry of the Word”⁸⁶. Included in that was a focus on catechesis.⁸⁷

The writers of the document identified several features in relation to the latter. The aim of catechesis, it was stated, was to mature and enlighten individual and communal faith.⁸⁸ That process in turn was meant to take on various forms,⁸⁹ including, “religious instruction given to children and adolescents in schools or outside a school atmosphere”.⁹⁰ The writers stated several general principles about catechesis and the methodology associated with it. First, it was stated, there is no pre-determined or prescribed order in how content is to be presented; catechesis can “begin with God and proceed to Christ, or to do the reverse; similarly, it is permissible to begin with man and proceed to God, or to do the reverse; and so on”.⁹¹ Secondly, the choice of a pedagogical method should be determined by “the circumstances in which the ecclesial community or the individuals among the faithful to whom the catechesis is directed live”.⁹² Thirdly, conferences of Bishops were to be responsible for developing appropriate norms and the means needed to address the catechetical needs of different “age levels and cultural conditions”, including “catechetical directories”, “catechisms” and “other helps”⁹³.

In Part 3 of the document, writers explored the content of the Christian message. They described several sources from which those providing catechesis should draw content. Those included “God’s word, written or handed down...under the guidance of the Magisterium”, the Church’s liturgies, “the life of the Church,

⁸⁶ “That which gives voice to this living tradition, within the totality of tradition”. Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), para. 13.

⁸⁷ Ibid, para. 16-33.

⁸⁸ Ibid, para. 21.

⁸⁹ Ibid, para. 19-20.

⁹⁰ Ibid, para. 19.

⁹¹ Ibid, para. 46.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

especially in the just and in the saints; and in some way it is known too from those genuine moral values which, by divine providence, are found in human society”.⁹⁴

About the use of the sources, several points were also made:⁹⁵

These sources are either principal or subsidiary, and so they are by no means all to be taken as sources in exactly the same sense. In using them, the catechist must first and always look to the unquestionable pre-eminence of revelation, written or handed down, and to the authority of the Magisterium of the Church in matters connected with faith. Moreover, in regard to any particular part of the content of faith that is to be explained, the catechist should carefully note how the mystery of Christ is the centre of that part; how the Church interprets and defines that part, and how she celebrates it and puts it into practice, sharing it in her liturgy and in the practice of the Christian life. Finally, the catechist must consider how, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, the plan of God can be fulfilled in the present era.

In short, catechists were required to be skilled users of the sources and able to discern how and when to use them.

In Part 4, the writers of the *General Catechetical Directory* focused on methodology. They began by noting how catechists during the 20th Century had engaged with the “psychological, educational, and pedagogical sciences” and applied “the principles which govern the art of teaching (experience, imagination, memory, intelligence)”.⁹⁶ In addition, they promoted a notion that the development of “a methodology which varies according to the age, social conditions, and degree of psychological maturity of those who are to be taught”⁹⁷ is important. They also advised catechists that when designing learning, they should make use of both inductive and deductive methods. In addition, they acknowledged that the learning of formulations had a role to play as did personal experience. Catechists were also advised to include stimulating and creative activities, including in group work.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Ibid, para. 45.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, para. 70.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid, para. 72-76.

The writers also identified in Part 4 the important role that the catechist and the skill they demonstrated should play in the process of learning. However, they added that catechesis did not depend upon the catechist. Rather, the process relied upon the “fruit of grace and freedom”.⁹⁹ Central to that notion of freedom is that the person being catechised should be able to respond however he or she wished to what they were presented. As an extension of that understanding, in Part 5 they explored how the design and delivery of catechesis should address the needs of learners at different age levels.

In Part 6 the writers examined how and why catechesis must be accompanied by well-developed and well-understood pastoral action. They emphasised that:

Any pastoral activity for the carrying out of which there are not at hand persons with the right formation and preparation will necessarily come to nothing. The working tools themselves cannot be effective unless used by catechists who have been rightly formed. Hence, the suitable formation of catechists must come before reform in texts and strengthening of the organisation for handling catechesis.¹⁰⁰

Therefore, providing suitable training for catechists and ensuring that their faith is sufficiently developed was, they considered “the greatest importance” for “ecclesiastical authorities”.¹⁰¹ Further, that training, it was held, should include learning theology, anthropology, and educational methodology, while the formation of catechists needed to focus on their spiritual lives.

Another important component of pastoral action stated was the provision of “working tools for catechesis”.¹⁰² Regarding that, the writers identified several different types of working tools, and how, and by whom they might be developed. Included were ‘directories’ developed by conferences of Bishops. Those, it was said,

⁹⁹ Ibid, para. 71.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, para. 115.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, para. 108.

¹⁰² Ibid, para. 116.

would help to promote and coordinate “catechetical action in the territory of a region or nation, or even of several nations of the same sociocultural condition”.¹⁰³ The writers also said that they wanted to see “programs” developed to “set up the educational goals to be attained according to ages or places on set times, the methodological criteria to be used, and the content to be taught in catechesis”.¹⁰⁴

Catechisms¹⁰⁵ too were identified as important tools to be developed:¹⁰⁶

Their purpose is to provide, under a form that is condensed and practical, the witnesses of revelation and of Christian tradition as well as the chief principles which ought to be useful for catechetical activity, that is, for personal education in faith. The witnesses of tradition should be held in due esteem, and very great care must be taken to avoid presenting as doctrines of the faith special interpretations which are only private opinions or the views of some theological school. The doctrine of the Church must be presented faithfully. Here the norms set forth in Chapter I of Part Three are to be followed.

However, writers of the *General Catechetical Directory* also recognised that catechisms would be difficult to produce. They therefore advised that experts and specialists in theology, catechetics and other human disciplines be used in the task. Wide consultation, it was stated, should also occur and local ‘ordinaries’¹⁰⁷ should be involved. The documents should also be trialled before promulgated for use. They should also be regularly reviewed and updated. Moreover, it was held that any catechisms developed would need to be “submitted to the Apostolic See for review and approval”¹⁰⁸. Finally, it was recommended that textbooks¹⁰⁹, manuals for catechists¹¹⁰ and audio-visual aids¹¹¹ should also be developed.

¹⁰³ Ibid, para. 117.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, para. 118.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, para. 119.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ An officer of the Church, typically used to refer to the office of a bishop.

¹⁰⁸ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), para. 119.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, para. 120.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, para. 121.

¹¹¹ Ibid, para. 122.

The Renewal of the Education of Faith (1970)

As stated above, a further level of support envisaged by leaders of the Church for catechesis should be provided through the production of local directories that would attend to the context and pastoral needs of a local or regional Church. In Australia, a desire in that regard found expression in *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*.¹¹² In 1970 the Bishops of the land, with endorsement from senior Vatican officials, approved that document for publication. Much of its content had come from a translation and adaptation¹¹³ of an Italian text, *Il Rinnovamento della Catechesi*¹¹⁴ (The Renewal of Catechesis). While both documents preceded the release of the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), those who were responsible for their production were cognisant of the work on it by members of the Congregation for the Clergy.¹¹⁵

Included in the Australian document were ten chapters translated from the Italian document, plus one additional chapter written as an Australian supplement. Text in each chapter was in large font sizing and was presented in numbered paragraphs. Most chapters also included an occasional full-page abstract colour picture.

The writers of the document addressed several matters. They explained for readers the relationship between catechesis and Revelation, and how the Church proclaimed its message. They also examined several important catechetical principles that related to the aims and tasks of catechesis, including the Christological foundation of catechesis and its content, and the importance of treating in its entirety the message

¹¹² P. Malone, *The Renewal of the Education of the Faith*, 11 March 2021, <http://203.10.46.30/mre/cdrom/The%20Renewal%20of%20the%20Education%20of%20the%20Faith.htm>.

¹¹³ Australian Episcopal Conference, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*, xi.

¹¹⁴ Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, *Il Rinnovamento della Catechesi* (Roma: Universita Salesiana, 1970).

¹¹⁵ P. Malone, *The Renewal of the Education of the Faith*.

of Christ. They also examined important aspects of catechetical practice, including ensuring that catechesis addressed the needs of those who were taught and that it was a pastoral activity of the local Church. They pointed out too that those who taught needed to understand the nature of the catechetical method and their own role in the process of learning.

The last chapter in *The Renewal of the Education of Faith* was the Australian supplement. The writers compared the Australian catechetical context with the Italian one. They then expanded on that by summarising how members of the Australian Church provided catechesis in Australia in the past.¹¹⁶

Several important points about ‘catechetical methods’ were made. One of those required that those who use catechetical methods should maintain a dual fidelity to the ‘Word of God’ and “the concrete needs of the faithful”.¹¹⁷ That principle, it was stated, reflected “the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and the pastoral movement which accompanied it”.¹¹⁸

The starting point of catechists and how they should proceed would, it was argued, vary according to circumstances, needs and capacities.¹¹⁹ At the same time, catechists should also “leave room for divine initiative”¹²⁰. Attention to those matters, by the catechist, it was held, would lead them to focus on the “Word of God”, particularly as expressed in Scripture and in the Tradition of the Church, in “everyday life”, in “the daily life situation of the Christian”, in “doctrine”, in “current issues” and in the “nature of the Church”.¹²¹ About those matters, the writers stated:¹²²

¹¹⁶ Australian Episcopal Conference, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 132.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 132-133.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 133.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 135.

¹²¹ Ibid, 134-135.

¹²² Ibid, 136.

It is not always possible to begin with Divine Revelation, especially now in our age. It is often necessary to move from the life situations of the faithful in order to prepare them gradually to listen to the Word of God and to offer Him obedience in faith. But familiarity with the texts of Revelation gives catechetical method a force which will not be found in any other texts, because it is the Holy Spirit who both speaks and acts in them.

They added:¹²³

As a start, he will preferably use a scriptural event or account, or he might choose the life of some outstanding biblical person, or the most simple prayers; above all, he will present the life and teaching of Jesus. He will then proceed to show the unity and spiritual relevance of Revelation, selecting the scriptural texts which teach more clearly those sacred realities which the Liturgy re-enacts for the faithful, above all the central message of the Paschal Mystery and the overall unity of the plan of salvation. He directs the minds of the faithful by recalling the teaching of the Magisterium by pointing out the common faith of the People of God, and by explaining some well established theological data. He will teach prayer by using the words God Himself has inspired. In this way, the faithful will come to understand, with deep joy, that “everything that was written long ago in the scriptures was meant to teach us something about hope from the examples scripture gives of how people who did not give up were helped by God”.

Catechists, it was argued, should also be familiar with “the texts of Divine Revelation” and “God’s pedagogy” or process of ongoing self-revelation.¹²⁴ At the same time, they should be capable of paying attention to the “daily life situation”¹²⁵ of the child and the “age and spiritual situation of the faithful”.¹²⁶ Catechists further should employ pedagogical methods that promote a “living dialogue” “carried out in an atmosphere of friendship and in a spirit of service”.¹²⁷ That dialogue could take different forms, be “open to all forms of experiment”, and be “not restricted to unchangeable theoretical formulas”¹²⁸.

The writers of *The Renewal of the Education of Faith* also paid close attention to the personal convictions, skill, and the patience required of the catechist, all of

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 147.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 137.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 147.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 147-148

which they viewed as critical for the success of catechesis. They also viewed the work of the catechist as a Church ministry. Therefore, catechists were required to be people of faith who were attentive to their own interior life.¹²⁹ The task of the catechist was not to force an outcome or to provide all answers. Instead, a well-trained catechist would be “adept at keeping silent than at speaking” and would be respectful of the “personal liberty of the faithful”.¹³⁰

In addition to emphasising the spiritual principles of catechesis, the writers of the document also reminded catechists of various education principles. For example, it was stated that they should make use of “practical activities”, and the “everyday lives of the faithful” and move from the concrete to the abstract.¹³¹ They should also ensure that their catechesis was systematic, planned, and coordinated.¹³² Their program of learning too, should follow graduated steps and be organised into “clearly defined units” after considering the “spiritual progress already achieved”, and then should “widen, step by step, the horizon of faith”.¹³³ Further, those programs should be aimed to develop a systematic picture of “ideas and experiences” centred on a “natural, unifying nucleus”, the “Mystery of Christ”.¹³⁴ Regarding that, catechists were reminded of two key principles. First, the catechetical method requires them to use different aspects of culture and “branches of knowledge”.¹³⁵ Secondly, doctrinal formulas has a part to play in the pedagogical process and as an important way to present and proclaim the faith.

About the latter, the writers stated:¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Ibid, 138-142.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 139.

¹³¹ Ibid, 142.

¹³² Ibid, 143.

¹³³ Ibid, 144.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 145.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 146.

These formulas can be used as points of departure or as points of arrival, depending on the varying age and needs of the faithful. They may constitute an expression of a sort of personal synthesis, like spiritual landmarks in the journey of faith, concluding one phase of it and pointing the way to further progress.

Both principles were deemed to be important. They related to ‘dual fidelity’ that the catechist was expected to maintain. Consequently, the task of the catechist was to integrate learning, and to be guided by key ideas, and present a “unified vision”.¹³⁷ To support the catechist in those tasks, the writers of *The Renewal of the Education of Faith* also explained that additional documents would be required to provide more specific direction about the catechetical method. Those additional documents were to include “new Catechisms and Teachers’ Manuals”¹³⁸ designed to meet the needs of the specific context in which catechesis takes place.

The Catholic School (1977)

Pope Paul VI promulgated *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education) in 1965. Grace¹³⁹ considered that document to be “weak” and a missed opportunity to develop the Church’s thinking about education. It, he believed, “repeated the teaching of Pius XI that Christian education should be seen as ‘preparation for eternal life in the world to come’”.¹⁴⁰ Addressing that as a perceived deficiency, according to Grace,¹⁴¹ did not occur until the publication in 1977 of *The Catholic School*. About that he¹⁴² stated:

The opportunity for new and inspirational thinking in Catholic education which had been missed in 1965 came, at last, in 1977 with the publication of the ground-breaking document, *The Catholic School*, issued by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome. *The Catholic School*

¹³⁷ Ibid, 144.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 146.

¹³⁹ G. Grace, “Vatican II and new thinking about Catholic education: Aggiornamento thinking and principles into practice,” in *Vatican II and New Thinking about Catholic Education: The Impact and Legacy of Gravissimum Educationis*, ed. S. Whittle (London: Routledge, 2016), 13.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 14.

¹⁴² Ibid.

powerfully expressed a new spirit, which it was hoped would characterise Catholic education internationally. The Catholic School inaugurated a post-Vatican II conception of what a Catholic Christian education should be in the era of late modernity. It can be called the ‘foundation charter’ or ‘mission statement’ for contemporary Catholic education. As a mission statement The Catholic School presented eight foundation principles for the guidance of Catholic educators in the future.

Those foundational principles and that philosophy to which Grace referred, had implications for how and why Catholic schools educate.

The writers of *The Catholic School* saw the institution as a place of “human formation”¹⁴³ that aims to integrate faith and life, and faith and culture. Further, they considered that those schools exist for the good of both the Church and society, are important instruments of social justice, and should have a special concern for the poor. They also emphasised the important role each teacher’s personal witness to a life of faith plays in the work of the Catholic school.¹⁴⁴ In addition, according to Grace,¹⁴⁵ by promoting “the principle of openness” in *The Catholic School*, the writers of the document also echoed the “spirit of Vatican II *aggiornamento*”. That principle emphasises that the purpose of the Catholic school is to serve all, including “the wider community”, in a spirit of openness and dialogue.¹⁴⁶

The promotion of those understandings by the writers of the document had implications for religion as a subject. In recognising that the culture of a Catholic school is essential for nurturing, forming, and sustaining people and their faith, they placed them at the centre of religious education. It also meant that in the process of providing a religious education, everything about a Catholic school is important, not just the teaching of religion.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 15.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 14-17.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 17-18.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Adoption of a new catechetical approach

Approval and publication of *The Renewal of the Education of Faith* by the Bishops of Australia in 1971 signalled a clear intent to adopt and use throughout the country a new approach to how religion as a subject in Catholic schools would be taught. That new approach came to be known as experiential or life-centred catechesis. Many of its key ingredients were to be found in several key Church documents on catechesis, including those already considered above.¹⁴⁷

The approach was most explicitly expressed in Australia in the religious education curriculum guidelines developed by members of the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne during the 1970s.¹⁴⁸ Those articulated a process for teaching and learning that involved a “four-point plan”.¹⁴⁹ Buchanan and Engebretson¹⁵⁰ describe that as a “systematised and interactive process” consisting of four movements:

Experience shared (we share our experiences); reflection deepened (we reflect together); faith expressed (we come to know our Catholic faith through linking the reflection of experience to the faith tradition); and, insights reinforced (we gain further insights and respond).¹⁵¹

About the use of the plan in the religion classroom, Ryan¹⁵² stated:

[it] required students and teacher to begin by bringing to awareness some aspect of their common human experience. The leader of the group was directed to utilise film, anecdote, story, discussion or music in order to create an enthusiastic sharing of experiences. Next, participants were encouraged to engage in a process of reflection upon the experiences they had shared in order to come to a new and deeper understanding of the content of these shared life experiences. Participants would revisit the experience, probe it, test conclusions, reach for implication, and come to recognise the mystery of the joy, happiness, togetherness, pain, failure and fear of life. The third step

¹⁴⁷ Those documents were the *General Catechetical Directory*, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*, *Let's Go Together*, *Come Alive* and *Move Out*.

¹⁴⁸ M. Buchanan, “Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education,” *Religious Education* 100, no. 1 (2005), 20-37.

¹⁴⁹ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 91.

¹⁵⁰ M. Buchanan and K. Engebretson, “The significance of theory in the implementation of curriculum change in religious education,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 31, no. 2 (2009), 142.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 91.

involved participants, especially the teacher, in noting the presence and action of God in the experiences which had been shared and reflected upon: “The leader will gather the group’s reflection, and surround and nourish it with the faith of the Church as it comes in Scripture, tradition, Liturgy, Witness, guiding them to see more in what is present” (CEO Melbourne, 1984, p.17). Finally, the group would engage in a process of reinforcement of insights gained by supplementing conclusions with other examples, by revisiting some elements of the process, by further activities and by the leader facilitating a response from students.

Ryan’s description not only summarises the model promoted by the writers of the Melbourne guidelines, it also illustrates many of the qualities promoted by Church leaders in the *General Catechetical Directory* and *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*.

Units of work

Earlier in the chapter it was noted that publication of the *General Catechetical Directory* prompted leaders of the Australian Church to propose that three levels of catechetical support material be developed for use in Australia. With two of those already addressed in this chapter, the third is now considered. That third level was to include units of work supported by a series of primary and secondary school classrooms resources for teachers to use when teaching religion.

Within each unit of work different but interrelated types of resources were to also be developed, with each to be directed towards supporting the learning in the classroom of different groupings of school-age children.¹⁵³ The first type were teacher manuals, the second were magazine-style textbooks suited for and supportive of experiential catechesis, and the third type were supplementary resources designed for use in the classroom by teachers and students.¹⁵⁴ While not all those different types of

¹⁵³ K. Lawlor, “Learning from Come Alive: Lessons for religious education,” in *Echo and Silence: Contemporary Australian Religious Education*, ed. M. Ryan (Katoomba, NSW: Social Science Press, 2001), 200.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

resources were developed, those that were did not always receive official endorsement from a bishop. Some also were not always produced under the auspices of the Australian Catholic Bishops.¹⁵⁵

Two examples of resources that were developed at that time were *Let's Go Together*¹⁵⁶ and *Come Alive*¹⁵⁷. *Let's Go Together* was a series of educational resources published in the format of an illustrated magazine. Each edition was accompanied by teaching notes in a separate publication entitled¹⁵⁸ *Catechist*.¹⁵⁹ Both were written by members of the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne and published by Cripac Press.¹⁶⁰ An extensive "editorial committee network" supervised publication, and teachers in Catholic schools¹⁶¹ "throughout the country"¹⁶² used them in their classrooms.

The *Let's Go Together* magazine series incorporated several standard features.

Rymarz¹⁶³ described those as follows:

Each edition of *Let's Go Together* comprised four A4 pages. The front page was usually a large photograph along with a title caption, the facing second and third pages consisted of boxes containing pictures, activities and a range

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 201.

¹⁵⁶ Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.), *Let's Go Together: Junior Primary*, (Melbourne: Catholic Education Office, 1968); Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.), *Let's Go Together: Middle Primary*, (Melbourne: Catholic Education Office, 1968); Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.), *Let's Go Together: Senior Primary*, (Melbourne: Catholic Education Office, 1968).

¹⁵⁷ *Come Alive* (Sydney: Australian Bishops' Committee of Education, 1970).

¹⁵⁸ R. Rymarz, "Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s," *Journal of Religious Education* 51, no. 1 (2003), 54.

¹⁵⁹ Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.) *Junior Primary: Catechist*, (Melbourne: Cripac Press, 1968); Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.) *Middle Primary: Catechist*, (Melbourne: Cripac Press, 1968); Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.) *Senior Primary: Catechist*, (Melbourne: Cripac Press, 1968).

¹⁶⁰ In 1972, Cripac Press became Dove Communication. In addition to *Let's Go Together*, Cripac Press published four other magazines, *Say Yes!*, *Move Out*, *Shalom* and *Tempo*.

¹⁶¹ Although initially intended for use in government schools, they soon "became a key resource for Catholic primary schools". R. Rymarz, "Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s," *Journal of Religious Education*, 55.

¹⁶² G. English, "Highways, byways and dead ends: School textbooks in Australian Catholic religious education," *Journal of Religious Education* 53, no. 2 (2005), 41.

¹⁶³ R. Rymarz, "Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s," *Journal of Religious Education*, 55.

of illustrations. The back page could contain further activities such as crossword puzzles, a song, a prayer or even a message for parents.

Let's Go Together was published between 1968 and 1975, and was released eight times a year. Moreover, from 1976, similar magazine style student texts “were converted to textbooks with more extensive curriculum frameworks”.¹⁶⁴ In that format, each edition was published in three different versions, each written for those in specific age groups in Catholic primary schools. The Junior Primary¹⁶⁵ version was for children in Years 1-2. The Middle Primary¹⁶⁶ version was for children in Years 3-4, and the Senior Primary¹⁶⁷ version was for those in Years 5-6.

Based on an early 1970 edition, Rymarz¹⁶⁸ illustrated the content of those magazines in the following description:

Let's Go Together: Middle Primary, 3(2) published on 16 March, 1970 is an example of the publication style of the series. This edition is printed with a strong blue colour throughout. The title on the front is: Where are you? Are you here? The photograph on the cover highlights a girl sitting in a classroom. The inside of the magazine features three further photographs; two are of children at school and the third a family group. The main text on page two is the Story of Joe and this illustrates well the emphasis in Let's Go Together on placing the students' experiences and his or her story at the centre of the educative process. “My name is Joe O'Donnell. I am in Grade 4. When I was in Grade 2 I went for a holiday to England. I made new friends there. I stayed in England for one year. Finally I went home. It was a long trip home and we were tired. When I got back to school I felt a bit strange. Now I am in grade 4 and I don't feel strange anymore, because I am with the friends I am used to and belong with.” The back page asks the question: ‘What makes a happy home?’ And also contains a prayer – ‘Thanking God for a family’ – as well as a song with a similar theme.

That example also illustrates both the format of the publications and how the magazines incorporated experiential catechesis within them.

¹⁶⁴ G. English, “Highways, byways and dead ends: School textbooks in Australian Catholic religious education,” *Journal of Religious Education*, 41.

¹⁶⁵ Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.) *Let's Go Together: Junior Primary*.

¹⁶⁶ Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.) *Let's Go Together: Middle Primary*.

¹⁶⁷ Catholic Education Office (Melbourne, Vic.) *Let's Go Together: Senior Primary*.

¹⁶⁸ R. Rymarz, “Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s,” *Journal of Religious Education*, 56.

Come Alive was another resource developed. That, however, differed in two ways from *Let's Go Together* and other catechetical resources produced in the 1970s. First, it was developed for use in the teaching of senior secondary school students in Catholic schools. Secondly, its development was overseen by the Education Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference¹⁶⁹ which was, at that time, chaired by the Archbishop of Melbourne,¹⁷⁰ James Robert Knox¹⁷¹ (1914-1983). He oversaw the recruitment of a small team that became responsible for producing *Come Alive*.¹⁷² A priest from the Sandhurst diocese (Bendigo), Fr Maurice Duffy was appointed to lead that team on which several priests and religious¹⁷³ from different Australian dioceses and religious communities were members, including, as identified by English:¹⁷⁴

Three Sisters of Mercy, Sister Ligouri (Pauline Smith), Sister St James (Maureen McInerney), and the editor Sister St Thomas (Rosemary Crumlin) are listed as 'Associates'. Albert Falzon did the photography and design. Father Maurice Duffy is named as 'Director'.

Many others also had input to the process of developing *Come Alive*.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹ G. English, "Highways, byways and dead ends: School textbooks in Australian Catholic religious education," *Journal of Religious Education*, 42; K. Lawlor, "Learning from *Come Alive*: Lessons for religious education," in *Echo and Silence: Contemporary Australian Religious Education*, 200-201.

¹⁷⁰ It is worth recalling that Archbishop Knox's own Archdiocese, through the Catholic Education Office, produced the *Let's Go Together* series.

¹⁷¹ I. Waters, "Knox, James Robert (1914–1983)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 24 September 2020, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/knox-james-robert-12752/text22999>; K. Lawlor, "Learning from *Come Alive*: Lessons for religious education," in *Echo and Silence: Contemporary Australian Religious Education*, 201.

¹⁷² R. Rymarz, "Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s," *Journal of Religious Education*, 54.

¹⁷³ Braniff identifies two of those people. A Marist brother, Flavius Donnelly, and a priest from the Sandhurst diocese (Bendigo), Maurice Duffy. Rev. Duffy was responsible for the project and ironically, was a priest from the Sandhurst diocese (Bendigo, Victoria) where his bishop, Bishop Bernard Stewart, led much of the opposition to *Come Alive* and experiential catechesis. J. Braniff, *The Marist Brothers' Teaching Tradition in Australia, 1872-2000* (University of Sydney: Policy and Practice, 2005), 186.

¹⁷⁴ G. English, "Highways, byways and dead ends: School textbooks in Australian Catholic religious education," *Journal of Religious Education*, 42.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

The *Come Alive* series first appeared in schools in late 1970¹⁷⁶ and eventually included a set of nine resources. Those included “booklets in a magazine style format, a Teachers’ Manual, and floppy audio records”.¹⁷⁷ However, it was the *Come Alive* series of magazines that were the most noticeable feature of the series. The format and style used in them “displayed high production standards and made heavy use of photographs and other images to try and give it a contemporary feel”.¹⁷⁸ In each magazine, writers developed a theme¹⁷⁹ focused on a contemporary issue in society and referred to relevant passages of scripture. They also included stories from the lives of people, with examples from art, history, and literature.¹⁸⁰ Rymarz¹⁸¹ illustrated those features as follows:

In *Come Alive* 1, published in 1970, for example, pages 4 and 5 are devoted to a picture of two hands joining against the background of a sunset. The only text on the pages [is a] short poem... *Come Alive* 5... was titled *Wide Angle* and begins with a two page colour photograph of a lamp with an accompanying quote from Bonhoeffer. Also included in this edition, amongst other things, were; a survey on *What do you want in life?*; an article based on the scriptural story of Jesus feeding five thousand people and a story about a father and his drug addicted son. *Come Alive* typically used stories in an attempt to get readers to profoundly question themselves, their own beliefs and values and those of the wider society. In *Come Alive* 6, for example, *Ten Years Later*, is a story about a former SS soldier who, after a period of time, confronts his own active role in the Holocaust. One of the questions following the story is; “How true is the statement – Sinful action is a sign of deeper sinfulness?”

This extract illustrates many of the qualities promoted by Church leaders in the *General Catechetical Directory* and *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*.

¹⁷⁶ K. Lawlor, “Learning from *Come Alive*: Lessons for religious education,” in *Echo and Silence: Contemporary Australian Religious Education*, 201.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁷⁸ R. Rymarz, “Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s,” *Journal of Religious Education*, 54.

¹⁷⁹ Titles given to those themes included: “To be a man”; “Patterns”; “I am not a rock”; “Life’s like that”; “Wide angle”; “Turned off”; “The now”; “The shape of things to come”; “The big rethink”. “Come alive,” Trove, 12 May 2021, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/230175860?keyword=come%20alive>.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Experiential catechesis informed the construction of the resources.¹⁸²

Nevertheless, as Lawlor¹⁸³ noted:

Come Alive was not the first Australian produced Catholic Religious Education program, nor was it the first created by the Australian Bishops. It was, however, the first episcopally sponsored program to adopt the Experiential, or Life Centred, methodology. For many, it became a symbol of what they saw as wrong in Religious Education of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Its publication led to heated debate across the community and between individual bishops, some of which has been reviewed in various places (Praetz¹⁸⁴, 1980; Garland¹⁸⁵, 1981; O'Brien¹⁸⁶, 1999).

Soon, too, the resources, the series and more broadly, experiential catechesis, became controversial.¹⁸⁷ The nature of that controversy is discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

For the period 1971-1982, religion as a subject for Catholic schools in Western Australia continued to experience significant change. The first section of the chapter provided an overview of the broad historical context within which the construction of the subject occurred. The second section then outlined specific developments in relation to developments in the construction of the subject for Western Australian Catholic schools for the period. The chapter that now follows, elaborates and discusses those developments.

¹⁸² J. Braniff, *The Marist Brothers' Teaching Tradition in Australia, 1872-2000*, 200.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ H. Praetz, *Building A School System: A Sociological Study of Catholic Education* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1980).

¹⁸⁵ P. Garland, *Continuity and Conflict: Symbolic Mediation in a Religious Context: A Case Study of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (Melbourne) 1963-1975* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, LaTrobe University, Melbourne, 1981).

¹⁸⁶ A. O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963-1980* (Melbourne: David Lovell, 1999).

¹⁸⁷ G. English, "Highways, byways and dead ends: School textbooks in Australian Catholic religious education," *Journal of Religious Education*, 43.

CHAPTER NINE

RELIGION AS A SUBJECT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1971-1982: THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

Introduction

The overview provided in the previous chapter indicated that the construction of religion as a subject for Catholic children in Western Australia underwent further, significant change in the period 1971-1982. This chapter provides a detailed exposition of the construction process in relation to the subject during the period. That process and associated developments are examined through a detailed exploration of key related themes. First, international and intranational development that had an influence within Western Australia are considered. Specific developments within Western Australia itself are then detailed.

Elaboration and Discussion

In relation to this section major themes are examined. These are ‘developments in catechetical theory’, ‘the sider context’, ‘directory not catechism’, ‘adoption of Life-experience catechesis’, ‘Come Alive controversy’, ‘criticisms’, ‘the effectiveness of the Catholic school’, and ‘specific Western Australian developments’. Each is now considered in turn.

Developments in catechetical theory

By the time deliberations at the Second Vatican Council had concluded in 1965, leaders of the Church had largely abandoned their support for traditional forms of catechesis and were promoting a kerygmatic approach. A key reason for that was that during the Council they revisited Church teaching on Revelation. Their deliberations

found expression in a principal conciliar document, *Dei Verbum*¹ (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation).

The latter document presented a view that considered Divine Revelation to be a present, ongoing reality and not just a deposit of divinely revealed truths. About that Buchannon² stated:

Dei Verbum made it clear that scripture and Church tradition were not sources of Revelation, but rather witnesses to it. The Constitution stressed that God was the only source of Divine Revelation, and that Revelation was an ongoing process that God initiated (Abbott 1966, 113). The Second Vatican Council supported the view that God was not only revealed in past events, but also through the present events of ordinary life. The sacred and secular worlds needed to be understood as integral rather than separate, in order to understand this enlightened view of Revelation.

That theological position exposed deficiencies in the kerygmatic approach and led catechetical theorists to reconsider how they understood the teaching of religion. For example, the task of the catechist, as it had been understood, was not simply a matter of handing on a tradition or a deposit of faith to students. Rather, it was to draw out the presence of God in the life and experience of the student and then to help him or her to develop a personal faith.

With Revelation now understood as dialogical, the process of learning religion also required a fostering of a dialogue between the life experience of the student and God's Revelation. Based on such insights, catechetical theorists began to understand that "sharing of life experiences between students and teacher, reflection on this life experience, and the linking of this reflection with growth in knowledge and affective

¹ Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* (1965)," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975).

² M. Buchanan, "Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education," *Religious Education* 100, no. 1 (2005),25.

understanding of faith content”³ were important. As a result, they began to explore alternative approaches to those to which they were accustomed.

The post-World War Two work of two French speaking scholars, Rev. Pierre-André Liégé⁴ and Rev. Joseph Colomb,⁵ informed the development of an alternative catechetical approach. Both took a different path to that taken by people such as Rev. Jungmann.⁶ Each also focused his scholarship on the realities of student lives.

Rev. Liégé recognised that the culture and the way students lived often differed from that experienced within and promoted by the Catholic school. Those providing catechesis, therefore, needed to take that issue into account and attend to it in their classrooms. Rev. Liégé also argued that ‘pre-evangelisation’ was required before the kerygma could be presented since a catechist’s task was to help their students’ address and make sense of the contrast that might exist between the environment in which they lived, and the message they were presented.⁷

According to Devitt,⁸ Rev. Colomb, offered a different focus:

[He] was more concerned with the question of the growth-process as it influenced teaching strategies. He coined the phrase ‘the double fidelity’. It is true, he would say, that in catechesis one should be faithful to God (as the kerygmatic renewal so often stressed). Equally true however, is the need to be true to humankind. The rhythms of human growth and development need to be scientifically established and then one’s catechesis should respect this process of maturation... When one begins to take seriously the culture of people who are hearing the kerygma, then the human or anthropological or experiential or life-centred approach to catechesis is being born.

³ K. Engebretson, “Writing church-sponsored religious education textbooks,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 25, no. 1 (2002), 38.

⁴ P. Liege, “Evangelisation,” *Catholicisme, Hier, Aujourd’hui, Demain, Vol. 4* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1954), 755-764; P. Liege, *Consider Christian Maturity* (Chicago: Priory Press, 1965); P. Liege, “The Ministry of the Word: From Kerygma to Catechesis,” in M. Warren, *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, Vol. 1 (Winona, Minn: Saint Mary’s Press, 1983), 313-328.

⁵ J. Colomb, *Le Service de L’Evangile*, Vols.1 and 2 (Paris: Desclee, 1968).

⁶ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1992), 71-72.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

His ideas were of particular relevance to those who worked as missionaries amongst people whose culture was non-Western. Along with those of Liégé, they drew attention to the subjectivity of the student, both in terms of cultural context and personal experience. Their scholarly insights along with a renewed understanding of Revelation, therefore, provided a theoretical basis to help catechists to move away from a kerygmatic approach and to adopt a more anthropological way⁹ of teaching religion.

Two additional developments provided further impetus for change. First, the processes used during the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council and the ideas approved by members of that Council legitimised the use of knowledge and techniques from non-Church areas of scholarship. Consequently, catechists increasingly began to explore and use insights generated within the social sciences, and particularly within the disciplines of psychology and anthropology.¹⁰

Secondly, several international catechetical conferences were held between 1959 and 1968. They included those in Nijmegen (1959), Eichstätt (1960), Bangkok (1962), Katigondo (1964), Manila (1967) and Medellin (1968).¹¹ Referred to as ‘study weeks’, the events provided fora for Catholic theorists and practitioners to express,

⁹ Earlier approaches began with what has been revealed, whether in ‘doctrine’ or the ‘kerygma’. An anthropological approach begins with a focus on human experience, particularly in terms of the student and their culture. Both approaches acknowledged a need to make connections in the classroom between divinely revealed truths and human experience.

¹⁰ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools* (Brisbane: Lumino Press, 2013), 95-99.

¹¹ B. Marthaler, “The modern catechetical movement in Roman Catholicism: issues and personalities,” in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, Vol. 1, ed. M. Warren (Winona, Minn: Saint Mary's Press, 1983), 280.

develop, and disseminate their understandings of catechetics.¹² About them, Trainor¹³ stated:

Between Eichstätt and Medellín, a quantum leap was made in the understanding of faith education. Between them was a distinct movement away from a self-preoccupied concern with the orthodox reception of the message (traditional catechesis), to an expressed intention that the Tradition should more clearly and directly address the anthropological and social realities of the local community (kerygmatic catechesis), and an affirmation of the human being as an authentic instrument of divine self-disclosure (experiential catechesis) and an emancipation (from Medellín). Importantly, they made clearer what was implied in the socio-political themes inherent in Vatican II and emphasised the need for an education in faith that would address the social injustices experienced by people.

A key organiser of the gatherings was Rev. Joseph Hofinger,¹⁴ a leading advocate, it will be recalled, of the kerygmatic approach. That involvement and the developments that occurred in catechetical theory during the 1960s suggest that he and other leading catechetical theorists recognised those developments as being important.

In Australia, the effect of the ideas developed by those who participated at the conferences, and especially the 1968 Medellín conference, was soon felt. About that, Trainor,¹⁵ writing in 1991, made several points. First, he identified three key aspects of the catechetical movement, namely, the Munich method, the kerygmatic approach, and the anthropological pedagogy. It was the later approach that came mostly to prominence in catechetics after the Second Vatican Council and also became the approach preferred by leaders of the Australian Church during the period under consideration.

¹² B. Pedraza, "Reform and renewal in catechesis: The Council, The Catechism, and the New Evangelization," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 19, no. 1 (2012), 1-31; M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism* (North Blackburn, Vic: Collins Dove, 1991), 87-88; B. Marthaler, "The modern catechetical movement in Roman Catholicism: issues and personalities," in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, 275-289; Pastoral and Catechetics Centre, "International Catechetical Congress," *The Furrow* 23, no. 1 (1972), 38-41.

¹³ M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism*, 90-91.

¹⁴ B. Marthaler, "The modern catechetical movement in Roman Catholicism: issues and personalities," in *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics*, 280.

¹⁵ M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism*, 95-97.

Next, Trainor argued, notwithstanding the catechetical movement's latter focus on the human dimension, leaders of the Church in Australia had always wanted catechetics to address the various life situations of people and to socialise a person into the faith tradition of the community. The 1968 Medellin conference, however, emphasised the first aspect explicitly, and in 1973 those at the Melbourne Catechetical Seminar investigated how to apply it to the Australian context.

Secondly, Trainor argued that the aim of each of the catechetical movements he identified was to make Catholic tradition¹⁶ more accessible than previously to believers. It was that concern that motivated many of those who began to seek out new methods. On that, Rev. Jungmann's kerygmatic theology and catechetical method presented the content of Christian faith using an historical and narrative approach. He promoted it, because he and others wanted to recover the meaning and life of Catholic faith from the abstract and lifeless approaches that, they held, had come to prevail in catechetics.

Thirdly, Trainor argued that during the 1970s, Australian Church leaders endorsed three major faith education documents, namely, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*¹⁷ (1970), *We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord: Handing on the Faith*¹⁸ (1977), and *Towards Adult Faith: Adult Education in Faith in the Catholic Church in Australia Today*¹⁹ (1983). They addressed all aspects of faith education in Australia. They also promoted a view of catechetics as being a process that was much broader than just being concerned with a child centred form of instruction. The documents

¹⁶ A theological term that refers to all that is believed by members of the Catholic Church.

¹⁷ Australian Episcopal Conference, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1970).

¹⁸ Australian Episcopal Conference, *We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord: Handing on the Faith* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1970).

¹⁹ Catholic Adult Education Association of Australia, *Towards Adult Faith: Adult Education in Faith in the Catholic Church in Australia Today* (Melbourne: Catholic Education Centre and the Catholic Education Office, 1983).

were of further importance because they demonstrated that Australian Church leaders were willing to persevere with their production at a time when the climate in which they were produced was become increasingly critical of the experiential, anthropological, and socio-political emphases that had been adopted in faith education.

A key contributor²⁰ to how religion as a classroom subject was understood and practised in Australia during the 1970s was a Jesuit and theologian from India, Father Duraiswami Amalorpavadass (1932-1990). He was an experienced missionary who after the Second Vatican Council played an important role in the renewal of the Catholic Church in India. On those views, he stated:

Revelation calls for faith. Faith is a personal and living encounter with the living God, a total acceptance of the revealing and giving person by a loving surrender of one's life according to His word. All this should result in the sealing of a covenant and the realization of a fellowship in love. Therefore our inter-personal relationship is one of dialogue, covenant and fellowship. Therefore man's response or reaction to God's Revelation will be essentially attention and responsibility, expectation and listening, openness and acceptance, and reciprocal self-gift in a total surrender and dedication of oneself. This is what we call faith.²¹

By the 1970s many of the ideas he promoted were influential within the Catholic Church internationally.²²

Amalorpavadass' international contribution was important. In 1974 he played a central role at an international synod of bishops that met to discuss evangelisation.²³ That was the *Third Ordinary General Assembly (27 September-26 October 1974): Evangelization in the Modern World*. Pope Paul VI convened it. Following the

²⁰ M. Buchanan, "Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education," *Religious Education*, 25-26.

²¹ D. Amalorpavadass, *Theology of Catechesis* (Banglore, India: National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1973), 19.

²² S. Bevans, "Witness to the gospel in modern Australia: Celebrating thirty years of 'Evangelii Nuntiandi'," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 6, Feb (2006), 1-22.

²³ Ibid.

deliberation of its members, he published his Apostolic Exhortation,²⁴ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*²⁵ (On Evangelization in the Modern World) in 1975. Of Amalorpavadass' contribution to those developments, Bevans²⁶ stated:

Amalorpavadass authored “a coherent, comprehensive, contextual theology of mission, drawing in both the bold new ventures of the majority and the questions of the cautionary minority,” but his contributions, for all practical purposes, were ignored by the persons responsible for the official draft that was to come before the bishops in the synod's final days. Amalorpavadass, when he realized this, had his own version duplicated and distributed among the bishops, who, when comparing it to the official draft, refused to approve it when it came to the final vote. It was four days before the closing of the Synod, and there was no time to write and then discuss another draft. It was then, as Cardinal Moreira Neves recalls, that Cardinal Karol Wojtyla suggested that “the Synod's recommendations be entrusted to the Pope so that he could transform them into the Synod's final document.”²⁷ The result, of course, was *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Prior points out that Paul VI's document actually incorporated much of what was in Amalorpavadass' draft, and so it is a document that is much broader in scope than the document rejected by the bishops at the Synod.”

Amalorpavadass' influence stretched to Australia, which he visited in 1973. At the Melbourne Catechetical Seminar, there, he and his ideas influenced leaders of the Australian Catholic Church and particularly those involved in the development of “a life-centered pedagogical approach to religious education”.²⁸ Further, in Australia for the period under consideration, those developments highlight many of the features identified in relation to Flynn's²⁹ third stage in his three-stage linear model, namely ‘experiential catechesis’.

²⁴ A papal document considered an important form of Magisterial teaching. It is the third highest form of official teaching a Pope provides and comes after Apostolic Constitutions and Encyclicals.

²⁵ Pope Paul VI, “Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelization in the Modern World),” 8 December 1975, *The Holy See*, 25 May 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

²⁶ S. Bevans, “Witness to the gospel in modern Australia: Celebrating thirty years of ‘*Evangelii Nuntiandi*’,” *Australian eJournal of Theology*.

²⁷ J. Prior, “Mission for the twenty-first century in Asia: Two sketches, three flash-backs and an enigma,” in *Mission for the 21st Century*, ed. S. Bevans and R. Schroeder (Chicago: CCGM Publications, 2001), 81-84.

²⁸ M. Buchanan, “Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education,” *Religious Education*, 25-26.

²⁹ M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Pauls, 1993).

The approach, as stated earlier in this chapter, found expression in official Church documents produced by the leaders of the Australian Church. Catechetical support materials were also produced. For example, it will be recalled, that in relation to the Melbourne religious education curriculum, guidelines were developed by members of the Catholic Education Office during the 1970s. Of those efforts, Malone³⁰ stated that “the period from 1973-1977 can be described as a very fruitful one in the development of religious education in Melbourne”. When developed, those guidelines provided the most explicit expression of what Church leaders in Australia had envisaged when they issued their official documents on the teaching of religion.

Malone,³¹ who was involved in the associated processes, wrote about the guidelines and their development. Of the process, she identified several important influences. One of those was the involvement of both international and Australian lecturers who “examined various models of religious education”.³² About them and their contribution, she³³ stated:

Father Nebreda and Father Amalorpavadass offered a framework for the language of education in faith and of the conversion process, Brother Kevin Treston, Brother Marcellin Flynn and Sister Carmel Leavey related the language of faith education to the language and expectations of parents and students as well as to the structure of the schools and the concept of them as ‘faith communities’. Brother Herman Lombaerts offered a sociological perspective within which the schools could be analysed as institutions and the relationships between the school’s stated religious goals and its actual structure and process of administration could be examined. Brother Gerard Rummery offered a strong educational perspective and challenged the appropriateness of the catechetical approach in secondary schools. He also shared the insights he had gained from his study in England into the process, objectives, and content of religious education in secondary schools.

³⁰ P. Malone, *Guidelines for Religious Education: Signposts of Change. A Study of the Development of the 1977-1978 Secondary Guidelines for Religious Education in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Monash University, 1982).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid

Those lecturers came from a range of disciplines, including theology, education, and sociology. Through their lectures, they brought “a depth of understanding of the religious education processes” and helped participants develop “the skills needed to analyse and evaluate these approaches”.³⁴

Another important influence was the contribution made by Church leaders to catechetical matters. That included the deliberations of two synods of bishops³⁵ and apostolic exhortations that followed. The first of the latter, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*³⁶ (On Evangelization in the Modern World), was written Pope Paul VI in 1975. The second, *Catechesi Tradendae*³⁷ (On Catechesis in our Time) was written by Pope John Paul II in 1978.

In Australia, episcopal conferences and diocesan bishops also issued several documents on matters related to catechesis and religious education.³⁸ About the impact those had on the development of the Melbourne guidelines, Malone³⁹ stated:

As well as looking at these models of religious education the members of the Religious Education Department and subsequently the teachers, were challenged by the new insights into evangelisation that were written by Pope Paul the Sixth after the Bishops’ Synod on Evangelization. The members of the Religious Education team with the help of the coordinators were involved in the gathering of data for the 1977 Bishops’ Synod on the Catechesis of Youth. The Synod documents highlighted the specifically cultural dimension of the process of religious education and the tension involved in responding to the needs of young people and yet of being faithful to the heritage that had to be expressed in a language that could be understood.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ *Third Ordinary General Assembly (27 September-26 October 1974): Evangelization in the Modern World; Fourth Ordinary General Assembly (30 September-29 October 1977): Catechesis in our Time.*

³⁶ Pope Paul VI, “Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelization in the Modern World),” 8 December 1975, *The Holy See*.

³⁷ Pope John Paul II, “Apostolic Exhortation: *Catechesi Tradendae* (On Catechesis in our Time),” 16 October, 1979, *The Holy See*, 25 May 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html.

³⁸ Australian Episcopal Conference, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*; Australian Episcopal Conference, *We Preach Jesus Christ as Lord: Handing on the Faith*.

³⁹ P. Malone, “RE Professional Development: Melbourne 1973 – 1977,” *Exploration of 25 years of religious education - CD-ROM*, 24 May 2021, https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20091027043826/http://rel-ed.acu.edu.au/mre/cdrom/1970_melbourne_inservice.htm.

Those took place at a time when Catholics and their leaders were troubled by what some viewed as the poor state of the Church within society.⁴⁰ The concern was illustrated in an article written in late 1974 about the synod:⁴¹

Citing “radical opposition,” the shortage of priests and “nearly empty seminaries,” and the “faithful who are no longer afraid to be unfaithful,” Pope Paul VI conceded sadly: “The church is in difficulty. It is more troubled than happy.”

In the same article it was also stated:⁴²

It didn’t take the 209 delegate bishops, archbishops, and cardinals from seventy-five nations more than a session or two to show the world the Pope was right. The announced topic of the synod was “Evangelization in the Contemporary World,” but the prelates turned the gathering into a platform for airing a lot of problems and conditions they saw as impeding evangelization or needing attention before evangelization can take place.

That example is important as it illustrates both that the deliberations of Church leaders and their official teachings were contested by some and that the challenges they experienced as leaders had an impact upon how they approached matters of theology and Church life.

Another important influence identified by Malone was the process employed by those responsible for developing the Melbourne guidelines. About that she stated:

The Religious Education Department developed a very strong consultative relationship with the secondary school religious education coordinators. During this five-year period a great emphasis was given to the training and development of these coordinators who worked with members of the Religious

⁴⁰ “What themes have been discussed at the Synods of Bishops?,” 4 October 2019, *Vatican News*, 25 May 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2019-10/themes-synod-bishops-faq.html>; J. Ziegler, “Evangelii Nuntiandi: ‘The Greatest Pastoral Document that has ever been Written’,” 12 December 2013, *The Catholic World Report*, 26 May 2021, <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2013/12/12/the-greatest-pastoral-document-that-has-ever-been-written/>; N. Punch, “Synod of Bishops on Evangelization,” 10 October 2012, *Thomas More Center*, 26 May 2021, <https://www.Thomasmorecenter.org/2012/10/10/synod-of-bishops-on-evangelization/>; S. Carter, “The Synod of Bishops – 1974,” *International Review of Mission* 64, no. 255 (1975), 295–301; “Catholic Synod: Binding the Bishops,” 22 November 1974, *Christianity Today*, 25 May 2021, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1974/november-22/catholic-synod-binding-bishops.html>; I. Shenker, “Bishops Reject Synod Report as Largely Lacking Substance,” 23 October 1974, *The New York Times*, 10, 25 May 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/10/23/archives/bishops-reject-synod-report-as-largely-lacking-substance-troubled.html>; D. Amalorpavadass, *Evangelisation of the Modern World (Synod of Bishops, Rome, 1974)*, (Bangalore, India: National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1975).

⁴¹ “Catholic Synod: Binding the Bishops”.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Education Department in preparing and presenting inservice for teachers at all levels of the secondary school.⁴³

That mix of consultation and teacher training that took place over a five-year period was most likely a recognition that without adequate preparation, reception of those materials would be limited and even possibly opposed. Further, the approach to implementation outlined for those guidelines reflected what is often referred to as the ‘spirit’⁴⁴ of the Second Vatican Council, and in Church matters invited participation⁴⁵ and collegiality⁴⁶ in decision making. Moreover, by the desire that teachers would be well educated and well trained indicated an expectation that they would be located at Beeby’s ‘Stage of Meaning’.⁴⁷

The wider context

The wider context and how that influenced religion as a school subject in Catholic schools in Australia, with particular reference to Western Australia, is also important for understanding the construction process for the period 1971-1982. It included the nature of the Catholic Church internationally and nationally, Catholic schooling, and the structure of society, technology, the economy, and political and philosophical viewpoints. In pointing that out it is helpful to recall Goodson’s⁴⁸ proposal that the

⁴³ P. Malone, “RE Professional Development: Melbourne 1973 – 1977,” *Exploration of 25 years of religious education - CD-ROM*, 24 May 2021.

⁴⁴ J. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁴⁵ This is based on a principle of Catholic social teaching, the principle of subsidiarity. For details see P. Devitt, “Principles of Catholic Social Teaching,” *The Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn*, 26 May 2021, <https://cgatholic.org.au/services-directory/councils-commissions/social-justice-commission/principles-of-catholic-social-teaching/>; “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, (Gaudium et Spes),” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: American Press, 1966), para. 25.

⁴⁶ This was an important guiding principle for those who participated in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council. It refers primarily to episcopal collegiality, a principle of Church governance. “Collegiality in the Catholic Church,” *Wikipedia*, 26 May 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collegiality_in_the_Catholic_Church; “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, (Lumen Gentium),” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott, (New York: American Press, 1966), para. 22.

⁴⁷ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

⁴⁸ I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum Collected Essays* (New York: Falmer Press, 1987), 260.

written curriculum is not a “neutral given”. Likewise, Hargreaves⁴⁹ proposed that a school subject is “a social artefact” that competes for “power, prestige, recognition and reward”.

The 1960s and 1970s was a period of significant change.⁵⁰ Indeed, according to O’Brien,⁵¹ the 1960s was “a time of revolution in culture, politics, education and faith”. Specifically, regarding the Church, that too underwent change, with leaders within the Church overhauling the institution and its approach to the modern world during and following the Second Vatican Council. That process led to important reforms being undertaken on how Catholics understood themselves and the Church.⁵² Catholics and their leaders were encouraged also to engage in dialogue with the wider culture. That latter development took place at a time when many societies around the world were also undergoing significant change.

While an exhilarating time for many within the Catholic Church, scholars such as Ireland and Rule⁵³ have argued that the Second Vatican Council “brought also diversity and division rather than a unified purpose to the Catholic Church in Australia”. In similar vein, O’Farrell⁵⁴ stated:

Until the late 1960s Australian Catholicism seemed to be in their grip of a kind of liberated euphoria, deriving not only from the extraordinary changes and spiritual revival associated with the Council, but also from the remarkable surge of public interest in the affairs of the church.

Yet, he⁵⁵ also added, that by the beginning of the 1970s:

⁴⁹ A. Hargreaves, *Curriculum and Assessment Reform* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1989), 56.

⁵⁰ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997* (Perth, W.A.: Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Australia, 1996), 203-206.

⁵¹ A. O’Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963-1980* (Melbourne: David Lovell, 1999), 20.

⁵² A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 203-218.

⁵³ R. Ireland and P. Rule, “The social construction of the Catholic Church in Australia,” in *Religion in Australia: Sociological Perspectives*, ed. A. Black (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 20.

⁵⁴ P. O’Farrell, *Catholic Church and Community in Australia: A History* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1985), 411.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Throughout the Catholic world, the Church had encountered problems associated with its policy of change – unsettling of comfortable certainties, an eruption of wild radicalism, illusions and false hope, sheer reaction, confusion, disillusionment, the whole gamut of difficulties inseparable from periods of profound and rapid change. So it was to be in Australia.

O'Brien⁵⁶ goes on to make several points about the implications of the changes for members of the Church in Australia. For instance, many leaders within the Church, along with Church scholars and Catholics in general, engaged with the changes initiated by the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council. However, that readiness for change and its reception “led to conflict between the hierarchy and the laity”.⁵⁷

While some within the Church were well prepared and at the forefront of changes occurring within the Church, not all were. The latter included particular Australian bishops and parish clergy. Some of those were reluctant to introduce any change while others resisted.⁵⁸ Some parish clergy also faced difficulties. Moreover, some bishops felt challenged by the pace and magnitude of the changes, and by “the demands of the modern world”⁵⁹ with which they were required now to be engaged. Communities of religious orders too experienced significant changes in terms of their personnel, way of life and purpose.⁶⁰

Specifically regarding Catholic schools, while “the Council did not change the Church’s commitment to the Catholic school”,⁶¹ some Catholics, including leaders of Catholic education, did question the very necessity of having Catholic schools in Australia. In other words, that questioning went beyond the financial viability of those schools, focusing on their relevance and purpose. About that, O’Brien stated:⁶²

⁵⁶ A. O’Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963-1980*, 20-28.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 20-28.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 23.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 23-24.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 20.

⁶² *Ibid*, 21; B. Crittenden, “The future of Catholic education,” in *Counterpoints: Critical Writings on Australian Education*, ed. S. D’Urso (Sydney: J. Wiley, 1971), 280.

Not all Catholics in Australia supported the continuation of Catholic schools, maintaining that the Church had invested all its resources in schooling to the detriment of other needs such as adult education and the instruction of children in government schools. They proposed instead that Catholics should accept the “common public school along with the rest of society”.

In the Archdiocese of Melbourne, that point of view became in fact particularly controversial during what O’Brien⁶³ referred to as the ‘Crudden affair’.⁶⁴

That latter development and its significance for Catholic education in Australia was examined in some detail by O’Brien.⁶⁵ About her work on that matter, Coyne⁶⁶ stated:

[It] is revelatory of the entire phenomenon of the ‘Temple Police’ element who are still very active in the Church today. As is still the case today, some bishops were ‘in it’ right up to their eyeballs. The successors of those mentioned in this extract have not given up today. While her principal focus in the book is what went on in Victoria, in many ways this is also a history with national significance – and she mentions many of the developments taking place elsewhere in Australia that also contributed to the system that finally emerged and what we have today.

Of the ‘Crudden affair’ and its associated developments also, several other important points need to be made. Fr John F Kelly, central in the development of the *My Way To God* series, resigned his position as Director of Catholic Education in 1968. He was replaced in 1969 by “Fr Patrick Crudden, his heir apparent” but that appointment was to a different position, namely, as “Director of the Catholic Education Office”.⁶⁷ Moreover, while well qualified his appointment was controversial:⁶⁸

⁶³ A. O’Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria, 1963-1980*, 63-65; R. Selleck, *Crudden: The Reluctant Rebel* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1970); P. Crudden, “To domesticate the Christian message or serve its revitalisation? A role crisis for Catholic schools,” *Dialogue* 4, no. 2 (1970); P. Crudden, “The myth of the Catholic school,” in *Catholic Education: Where is it going?*, ed. P. Gill (Melbourne: Cassell, 1972); B. Coyne, “A Bit of Fascinating Australian Catholic Church and Catholic Education History,” *Catholica: Catholic Spirituality for Adults*, 31 December 2020, <https://www.catholica.com.au/forum/index.php?id=96844>.

⁶⁴ R. Selleck, *Crudden: The Reluctant Rebel*.

⁶⁵ A. O’Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria, 1963-1980*, 60-65.

⁶⁶ B. Coyne, “A Bit of Fascinating Australian Catholic Church and Catholic Education History,” *Catholica: Catholic Spirituality for Adults*.

⁶⁷ A. O’Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria, 1963-1980*, 60.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 60.

[He] was imbued with the reforms of Vatican II. His main work was devoted to teachers. The delay in his appointment was caused by Crudden's views on the teaching of religion and his public comments on *Humanae Vitae*.

That diminution in role for Rev. Crudden was further emphasised by the way Archbishop Knox structured Catholic education. Effectively, Rev. Crudden was demoted to being an executive officer for Catholic education in Melbourne, not its leader.⁶⁹

In 1970, Rev. Crudden, already treated with some suspicion and increasingly marginalised by his superiors, added fuel to the fire by questioning the very necessity of Catholic schools. He argued "that planning be undertaken in order to gear our resources towards the day when the great majority of Catholic children will receive their religious education without the help of a Catholic school".⁷⁰ His point of view, while controversial with some, was not inconsistent with the views expressed by other's involved in education,⁷¹ including in Catholic education.⁷² In the State of Victoria, however, reaction to the position was mostly negative. That, in turn, led to his removal from his position.⁷³

The 'Crudden Affair' as well as other developments within the Church, including over the release of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, highlighted that controversy could emerge. Further, as illustrated by the Crudden affair, the potential for controversy existed within Catholic education, including in relation to religion as a school subject. However, it is also important to acknowledge that over most of the period under consideration, many engaged positively with the change process in

⁶⁹ Ibid, 61.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 64.

⁷¹ M. Sukarieh and S. Tannock, "Deschooling from above," *Race & Class* 61, no. 4 (2020), 68–86; "Deschooling," in *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, ed. D. Jary and J. Jary (Collins, 2006).

⁷² J. McCann, "Adult religious education: Why a faith community is not yet being built," *The Irish Catechist* (1983).

⁷³ Ibid, 65.

relation to Catholic schooling and remained committed to them even when there was challenge and resistance.

Directory not a catechism

The development of a *General Catechetical Directory*⁷⁴ and its publication in 1971, was important in the process of constructing religion as a subject in Catholic schools. Regarding that type of document, Devitt⁷⁵ referred to the 1970s as “the decade of directories”, a label earned because of work done at an “international and national level to produce worthwhile catechetical directories”.⁷⁶ He also added:

It might be fair to say that the seventies were a period of consolidation when the many new ideas had a chance to take fruit and blossom in many different gardens. Among the most noteworthy developments could be mentioned the concern for group-work (derived from a recognition that individual study is not always best suited to the context of faith education, faith being communitarian as well as individual), the ongoing critique of the role of the school in catechesis (sparked off by a desire to educate adults as well as children in faith) the new-found enthusiasm for the place of story in life and with the faith-life, and recently the growing awareness that both teachers and pupils are in need of ongoing spiritual formation.⁷⁷

In Australia too, the focus referred to here contributed to the development of *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*⁷⁸ (1970) and associated resources.

In late 1985, however, Pope John Paul II convened an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops. Soon afterwards, Marthaler⁷⁹ stated:

Many were apprehensive that the meeting would cool the enthusiasm and perhaps even reverse the direction of *aggiornamento* inspired by Pope John XXIII’s keynote address ... In 1985, however, voices of gloom were being heard on all sides, some expressing fear that the barque of Peter was once again in danger of capsizing, some anticipating that the Synod would betray the ideals and advances of the Council. Bishop after bishop felt it necessary to

⁷⁴ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), 6 May 2021, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_11041971_gcat_en.html.

⁷⁵ P. Devitt, *That You May Believe: A Brief History of Religious Education*, 72.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 73.

⁷⁸ Australian Episcopal Conference, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*.

⁷⁹ B. Marthaler, “Catechetical Directory or Catechism? Une question mal posée,” in *Religious Education and the Future*, ed. D. Lane (Dublin, Ireland: Columba Press, 1987), 55-70.

reassure all who would hear that the Synod would not, indeed did not have the authority to, repudiate the reforms initiated by Vatican II.

While the reforms undertaken were not undone, the apprehension in 1985 indicated the enthusiasm many Catholics and their leaders had for Church reform had not only waned but faced possible reversal. Accounting for that was the leadership of Pope John Paul II. Following his election in 1978, he led a Church that became more focused on what some Catholics considered the excesses of the Second Vatican Council. That contrasted with the leadership of Pope Paul VI, who was committed to overseeing the implementation of that Council.

Further, regarding developments at the synod mentioned above, Marthaler⁸⁰ added:

And now, in the wake of the Synod, many continue to be apprehensive ... It is when they look beyond the generalities, however, to the suggestions for specific action ... that they become apprehensive. They point in particular to one recommendation, namely, “the desire that a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding both faith and morals be composed” (II, B 4). In itself this suggestion seems innocuous, even wholesome, if it were not for the fact that the compilation of such a compendium seems to run counter to the spirit if not the letter of the Second Vatican Council. The idea of a universal catechism had come up in the preparatory phase, even before the Council convened, but commissions, after considering various aspects of the issue, mandated instead the issuance of a General Catechetical Directory.

His comments are important as they emphasise that the decision to develop the *General Catechetical Directory* rather than a universal catechism was important for those involved with the Second Vatican Council. It also indicates that its production was a deliberate choice made by members of the Council.

An overview of the history of the choice was provided by Marthaler,⁸¹ who stated:⁸²

The first Vatican Council had spent more time debating the desirability and feasibility of a universal catechism than it did discussing papal infallibility. In

⁸⁰ Ibid, 55.

⁸¹ Ibid, 56-70.

⁸² Ibid, 56.

the end Vatican I approved but never formally promulgated the decree *De Parvo Catechismo* which called for a universal catechism for children along the lines of the Bellarmine catechism in use in Rome. During the preparatory phase of Vatican II Bishop Lacointe of Beauvais, anticipating that many of his brother bishops would return to the unfinished project *De Parvo Catechismo*, urged instead the compilation of a catechetical directory which would establish principles and general norms to serve as guidelines for catechesis. He argued that a single catechism for the universal Church was not possible or, at least, not proper. Ultimately the Preparatory Commission *de disciplina cleri et populi Christiani* endorsed the idea of a directory which would describe the goals of catechesis, the principle tenets of doctrine and, the wording of formulas. It would leave to episcopal conferences the implementation of the general norms and their application to specific situations.

As detailed in Chapter 8 of this study, those deliberation then led to the development and publication in 1971 of the *General Catechetical Directory*. That in turn led to changes in how religion as a classroom subject for Catholic schools was constructed during the 1970s. Overall, those developments owe much to how catechetical theory evolved during and after the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, it was only from 1978 onwards that that work began to be questioned at an official level.

Adoption of Life Experience Catechesis

The adoption of experiential or life-centred catechesis by leaders within the Australian Catholic Church mirrored the official position promoted by Vatican officials.⁸³ That alignment suggests, that at that time catechetical theorists, members of the Church hierarchy in Australia, other national hierarchies, and leading Vatican officials shared a vision for catechetics. Indeed, in the forward to the Australian document, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*⁸⁴ (1970), Cardinal Gilroy⁸⁵ and Archbishop Knox⁸⁶

⁸³ M. Hagarty, *The Role of Experience in Religious Education/catechesis in the United States Since the Second Vatican Council: An Analysis and Critique* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Catholic University of America, 2000).

⁸⁴ Australian Episcopal Conference, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*.

⁸⁵ Archbishop of Sydney and President of the Australian Episcopal Conference.

⁸⁶ Archbishop of Melbourne and Chairman, Bishops' Committee for Education in Australia.

acknowledged their indebtedness to the Italian Hierarchy. About that, Cardinal Gilroy stated:

‘The Renewal of the Education of Faith’ is the translation of a monumental Catechetical work approved by the Bishops of Italy. Upon reading the original publication⁸⁷ the Bishops of Australia felt that a translation of it would be acceptable and helpful to teachers of Religion in this country.⁸⁸

Archbishop Knox expressed gratitude too for the work in question and a desire for further cooperation with the Bishops of Italy.⁸⁹

As detailed in the previous chapter, much of the content included in the Australian document had been translated and adapted⁹⁰ from *Il Rinnovamento della Catechesi*⁹¹ (The Renewal of Catechesis), developed and approved by the Bishops of Italy. Regarding that, Bishop Carlo Colombo,⁹² stated:⁹³

... we desire to point out two characteristics which we consider distinctive. The first is that it is part of and flows from our catechetical tradition, perhaps little known and appreciated for the wealth of its own experiences, pastoral achievements and advances in methodology. There has been constant concern about fidelity to the past, arising from the conviction that if renewal, without prejudice to continuity, should be maintained in every sector of pastoral activity, this is especially so with regard to Catechesis, especially when it can avail of highly positive traditions that often still retain their value. The second characteristic is its intense desire for generous and prudent open mindedness towards the changed spiritual, cultural and social needs of our people. A conscious endeavour has been made to keep the document attentive to ‘the signs of the times’, embracing the most vigorous and authentic pastoral aspirations of our day, encouraging the best undertakings, stimulating opportune experiments, considering with understanding the many apostolic stirrings of the Church in Italy today in order to incorporate them in the one salvific mission of Christ’s spouse, in a dynamic communion of faith and of charity.

⁸⁷ Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, *Il Rinnovamento della Catechesi* (Roma: Universita Salesiana, 1970).

⁸⁸ Australian Episcopal Conference, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*, x.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, xi.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

⁹¹ Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, *Il Rinnovamento della Catechesi*.

⁹² Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Milano, a member of the Italian Episcopal Conference and President of the Episcopal Commission for the Doctrine of the Faith and Catechesis.

⁹³ Australian Episcopal Conference, *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*, xvii.

The Italian document also had the support of the members of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy⁹⁴ and other senior Church officials in the Vatican, including the Pope.⁹⁵

Come Alive controversy

Following the adoption of an experiential or life-centred catechesis several different resources were developed in Australia to support the teaching of religion in the classroom. One of those was the *Come Alive* series that had been developed for use in senior secondary school religion classrooms in Catholic schools. However, the development⁹⁶ and use of that series soon generated significant conflict within some sections of the Australian Church.⁹⁷ It originated with some Catholics, including clergy and bishops, becoming increasingly concerned about the direction they perceived the leadership of the Church had taken during and after the Second Vatican Council.⁹⁸ Of the many areas of contemporary Church teaching and practice that concerned them, the adoption of a rather anthropologically centred approach to catechesis disturbed them. Bishop Stewart of the Bendigo Diocese, for example, had expressed concern from the late 1960s “about the innovative approaches and methodology of Religious Education as well as the texts that were being promoted”.⁹⁹

On that, Lawlor¹⁰⁰ stated:

⁹⁴ Ibid, xviii.

⁹⁵ Bishop Colombo was a close confidant of Pope Paul VI. D. O’Grady, “The Pope’s Theologian: Bishop Carlo Colombo May Reflect What the Pope Thinks ... or What He Will Think Tomorrow,” *National Catholic Reporter* 3, no. 37 (1967), 2. <https://thecatholicnewsarchive.org/?a=d&d=ncr19670712-01.2.10&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->.

⁹⁶ Lawler stated, “concerns about Come Alive actually began to develop before it was published, during its preparation”. K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis Bendigo: La Trobe University, 1999), 328.

⁹⁷ K. Lawlor, “Learning from Come Alive: Lessons for religious education,” in *Echo and Silence: Contemporary Australian Religious Education*, ed. M. Ryan (Katoomba, NSW: Social Science Press, 2001), 200-201.

⁹⁸ K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979*, 295.

⁹⁹ Ibid, iv.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 297.

The papers of Bishop Stewart contain several letters from Albers¹⁰¹ and copies of many of his papers, such as ‘Teillhard de Chardin and the Dutch Catechism’, ‘Humane Vitae’, and ‘Unacceptable aspects of modern catechesis’. Albers frequently reported to Bishop Stewart of activities in which he was involved, such as what occurred in a private meeting with Archbishop Little of Melbourne in 1978. Like Fr. Hayes, the theme of Modernism was common in his work, as was strong criticism of the perceived influence of the controversial Jesuit priest and palaeontologist, Teillhard de Chardin (1881-1955) who had tried to integrate evolutionary theory and Christianity.

The reference to modernism is significant since, it will be recalled from Chapter 3 of this study, that O’Malley¹⁰² indicated that it came to prominence in the early 20th century, as “the synthesis of all heresies”. Official concern about that ‘heresy’ led popes and other Church leaders to be suspicious of and oppose up until the Second Vatican Council to many related developments in Catholic thought and practice.

Adoption of the new approach in Australia also occurred at a time when leaders and members of the Church both nationally and internationally were expressing concern about new directions.¹⁰³ Overall, those most concerned about the direction in which the Church was being taken began to fear that the orthodoxy of religion teaching was seriously under threat.¹⁰⁴ Lawlor¹⁰⁵ illustrated this point with a quote from a letter written at the time by Bishop Stewart:

A course on the Catholic religion for senior pupils that omits among other things any teaching of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the structure and teaching authority of the Church, the Pope; a course that barely mentions the sacrifice of the Mass, that leaves out of concern for others the elements that make it Christian; a course that offers senior pupils facing a permissive society nothing to convince them of the validity of Catholic teaching on sexual morality – such a course is not only useless and misleading, but also quite dangerous.

¹⁰¹ Frits Albers was from Geelong in Victoria and was an outspoken critic of post-Vatican Council developments. K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979*, 295.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 267-268.

¹⁰³ K. Lawlor, “Learning from Come Alive: Lessons for religious education,” in *Echo and Silence: Contemporary Australian Religious Education*, 200.

¹⁰⁴ R. Rymarz, “Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s,” *Journal of Religious Education* 51, no. 1 (2003), 54.

¹⁰⁵ K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979*, 325.

Such thinking led to those representing the conservative element within the Catholic Church in the State of Victoria actively campaigning against the use of the *Come Alive* series and its associated approach.

The campaign commenced with individuals organising themselves into small groups of likeminded people. They then began letter writing campaigns and “engaged in angry exchanges with catechetical leaders at public meetings”¹⁰⁶. Soon, the teaching of religion in the period quickly became contested, disrupted, fragmented, and less uniform.¹⁰⁷ Further, the adoption of the life-experience approach to catechesis soon became controversial.¹⁰⁸

The Australian Catholic school soon became a central focus for those disputes. Of particular concern was the teaching of religion. Indeed, it has been commentated that the intensity of dispute over the teaching of religion in the Catholic school was only matched by “disputes arising in the Catholic community about the use by married couples of the oral contraceptive pill”.¹⁰⁹

One of the most dramatic aspects of the controversy over *Come Alive* was the display of public disunity amongst Australian Catholic bishops. On that, much has been written.¹¹⁰ At the centre of developments was Archbishop Knox, the Archbishop of Melbourne and Chair of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference Education

¹⁰⁶ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 93

¹⁰⁷ M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism*, 84-85.

¹⁰⁸ Pastoral and Catechetics Centre, “International Catechetical Congress,” *The Furrow*, 41.

¹⁰⁹ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools* 87.

¹¹⁰ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*; M. Buchanan, “Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education,” *Religious Education*; G. English, “Highways, byways and dead ends: School textbooks in Australian Catholic religious education,” *Journal of Religious Education* 53, no. 2 (2005); R. Rymarz, “Texts! texts! An overview of some religious education textbooks and other resources used in Catholic schools from the 1950s to the 1970s,” *Journal of Religious Education*; A. O’Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963-1980*; P. Garland, *Continuity and Conflict: Symbolic Mediation in a Religious Context: A Case Study of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (Melbourne) 1963-1975*; H. Praetz, *Building A School System: A Sociological Study of Catholic Education*.

Committee. Opposed to *Come Alive* too, initially covertly, was a group that included several bishops from rural dioceses across Australia.

Two key leaders who opposed *Come Alive* were Bob Santamaria, a lay man, and Bishop Bernard Stewart of the Diocese of Sandhurst. Like Archbishop Knox and many who worked on *Come Alive*, Santamaria and Bishop Stewart were from the State of Victoria. About Stewart's role in the dispute, Lawler¹¹¹ stated:

From the late 1960s, he became concerned about the innovative approaches and methodology of Religious Education as well as the texts that were being promoted. These texts mostly came from overseas and the nearby Archdiocese of Melbourne, in the post Vatican Council period where much of the Church's form and teaching was reviewed. He joined with several other concerned people in producing a disapproving critique of *Come Alive*, an Australian Religious Education program promoted by the Archbishop of Melbourne in the early 1970s. Copies of the critique were widely distributed around Australia and it attracted the displeasure of Melbourne's Archbishop. He also issued two significant Directives for his own Diocese that were critical of the new experientially based Religious Education and spelt out exactly what he expected would be taught in his Diocese. Throughout the 1970s, he continued to write and speak on the topic of Religious Education in very strong terms, which in turn provoked vigorous support and opposition. The shortcomings in his approach were that he did not develop any activities, systems or checks alongside these directives to promote or review their implementation. He appears to have relied only on the authority he understood his episcopal office provided. He failed to take account of the changes that were occurring in teaching and church allegiances and environment.”

Moreover, while the development of *Come Alive* was sponsored by the Australian Catholic bishops,¹¹² not all catechetical resources at that time were. In addition, dioceses¹¹³ and religious orders developed similar types of resources as supplements or substitutes.

Bishop Stewart totally forbade the use of *Come Alive*. Instead, he mandated for use in his diocese a text he had authored in 1970 entitled, *The Catholic Religion: with*

¹¹¹ K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979*, iv-v.

¹¹² K. Lawlor, “Learning from *Come Alive*: Lessons for religious education,” in *Echo and Silence: Contemporary Australian Religious Education*, 200-201.

¹¹³ For example, the Melbourne Archdiocese also developed another series titled *Move Out*. Dove Communications, *Move Out* (Malvern: Dove Communications, 1960).

Peter and Under Peter.¹¹⁴ While that publication represented a rejection of *Come Alive* and a life-centred approach to catechesis, many of the resources of others were consistent with its spirit and intention. In fact, it has been concluded that they represented the very essence of what was called for by the *General Catechetical Directory*, namely, resources and publications responsive to the local context and situation of the learner.¹¹⁵

Returning to Bishop Stewart, in addition to banning the use of *Come Alive* in his diocese, he went further. In 1971 he supported and promoted the publication of *What's Wrong With 'Come Alive'?*,¹¹⁶ a 26 page critique of *Come Alive* and its catechetical approach. That was “sent to every parish, school, diocese and religious order in Australia”¹¹⁷. It consisted of chapters, each written by different authors, from a team¹¹⁸ of “three priests, one nun and one brother”.¹¹⁹

Stewart played a leading role in a dispute that ensued. Archbishop Knox considered that unacceptable. First, he considered that it undermined his own position.¹²⁰ Secondly, Stewart’s actions had a negative impact in other dioceses. That in turn led to accusations that he was interfering with and undermining the legitimate authority of other fellow bishops.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ B. Stewart, *The Catholic Religion: With Peter and Under Peter* (Bendigo: Cambridge Press, 1970).

¹¹⁵ G. English, “Highways, byways and dead ends: School textbooks in Australian Catholic religious education,” *Journal of Religious Education*.

¹¹⁶ Ludovic, *What's Wrong with 'Come Alive'?* (Melbourne: The Authors, 1971).

¹¹⁷ K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979*, 410.

¹¹⁸ “‘Come Alive’ and the Bishops’ Directory” by Br. Ludovic F.M.S.; “Significant Doctrinal Omissions in ‘Come Alive’” by Fr. L P Fitzgerald, O.P.; “Defects of ‘Come Alive’ as a teaching aid” by Sr. M. Maur, S.M.; “The Life Situation of ‘Come Alive’ is Detrimental to Religious Instruction” by Fr. A. Fitzpatrick, P.P.; “The General Inadequacy of ‘Come Alive’” by Fr. W. Stinson, C.S.S.R.”. K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979*, 459.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 410.

¹²⁰ Archbishop Knox was Bishop Stewart’s ecclesiastical senior and metropolitan.

¹²¹ K. Lawlor, *Bishop Bernard D. Stewart and Resistance to the Reform of Religious Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst, 1950-1979*, 410.

Overall, the controversy that erupted around the development and use of *Come Alive* undermined confidence both in it and in experiential catechesis. At all levels of life in the Australian Catholic Church there was contestation. For example, in April 1971 Bishop Thomas, Bishop of Geraldton (1962-1981) in Western Australia, and Bishop Stewart's former Diocesan Inspector of schools, stated in a letter to Stewart:¹²²

Thanks for your letter, and enclosure, which I received today. I am pleased to have your comments on the catechetical scene in Victoria, even though it is not a pleasant scene ... I haven't a very good knowledge of what is going on in Perth Cath. [sic] Schools, but I have reason to think that many schools are not interested in 'Come Alive'. I'll be interested in the development of the counter-Come Alive activity and I hope it will be effective and widely appreciated.

About such matters, Di Giacomo¹²³ stated:

Things got so bad that many schools not only changed their curricula and textbooks but also modified their expectations. They cut back on content and class periods. This strategic retreat brought peace of a sort, though to some it looked more like a desert. Actually, it was always a mixed picture, with good news as well as bad news. Many learned to communicate better with their students. Some old mistakes were made less frequently. Some dead ones were abandoned. A sensitivity to the needs of the young contributed to a more pastoral approach to religious formation. But a heavy price was paid for this progress. The school religion department, beset by internal divisions, attacked often unfairly by unreasonable critics, understaffed in terms of professional competence, and stripped of class time and even academic sanctions, lost standing and respectability in the eyes of colleagues and students.

In addition, ecclesiastical disagreements brought to an end the consensus and collegiality shown by Australia's Catholic bishops on matters associated with religion as a classroom subject in Catholic schools. That consensus had been established in the late 1950s and had in the intervening years enabled them to develop a national approach towards the construction of religion as a subject.

¹²² Ibid, 329.

¹²³ J. di Giacomo, "Religious education in Australian Catholic secondary schools," *Catholic School Studies* 58, no. 1 (1985), 31.

Criticisms

Notwithstanding the turmoil created by the controversies noted, practitioners became disillusioned with the proposed pedagogical methods associated with the approach for other reasons.¹²⁴ Amongst those was an over-reliance upon discussion and a perceived need to always begin a lesson with a focus on personal experience.¹²⁵ Some teachers also lacked confidence, experience and training in the required understandings, skills and techniques needed to promote learning beyond having a focus on experience.¹²⁶

Contributing to the situation were several aspects of the life-centred approach. One of those was the novelty many experienced with the associated ideas and language. Another was the uncertainty created by what appeared for some to be a radical departure from past practice. Further, the introduction of a life experience approach occurred at a time when both society and the Church were undergoing significant change. For instance, amongst some Catholics there was already concern about a loss of priestly and religious vocations and about a more general decline in the observance of traditional Catholic practices, including Mass attendance.

What escaped many was that, in theory, use of the experiential approach by teachers in their classrooms was meant to suit the new circumstances because it “did not depend on an explicit faith commitment on the part of the student”.¹²⁷ However, it depended too upon the readiness of the students and their disposition in a classroom setting to be willing and able to engage with the process fostered by the approach. In

¹²⁴ M. Trainor, *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism*, 103-127.

¹²⁵ M. Crawford and G. Rossiter, “Historical perspective on religious education in Catholic schools: Towards a relevant religious education for the future,” in *Reasons for Living: Education and Young People’s Search for Meaning, Identity and Spirituality: A Handbook*, (Camberwell, Vic.: ACER Press, 2006), 375-377.

¹²⁶ M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools and the Communication of Faith: A Study of the Mission of Catholic Schools Today for Parents, Teachers and Students* (Homebush, N.S.W.: Society of Saint Paul, 1979) 60-61.

¹²⁷ R. Rymarz and B. Hyde, *Taking the Next Step: Teaching Religious Education in Catholic Schools* (Macksville, NSW: David Barlow Publishing, 2013), 7.

other words, students had to be prepared to use their own experiences and to try and make religious meaning of their lives in a classroom setting. Some teachers also found that the process was not straightforward and was repetitious. Also, contrary to the ideals embodied in the approach, leaders of Catholic systems and schools continued to have expectations that a student's religious learning would adequately prepare them for the reception of the Catholic Sacraments. That goal too was not consistent with the voluntary nature of the approach. Neither was the desire to see uniformity in what students in each year-level learnt.¹²⁸

Disagreement about the possible direction for religious education was also not just about underlying theory. The background to this contention is that the realities of Australian Catholic schools underwent change during the 1970s. For example, fewer religious personnel taught in those schools, and those who did often taught religious education only.¹²⁹ The diversity in the student population who attended Catholic schools also continued to increase. Many students too wished to question what they were being taught.¹³⁰ In addition, Catholics were less inclined than previously to unquestioningly follow those who held authority in the Church and their commitment to overt displays of Catholic faith declined. That situation resulted in many students, along with their families, becoming somewhat disconnected from their parishes.

Lay teachers were not immune from the developments. Some lacked an active Church life and faith. Many had a limited theological training. The new landscape, as a result, made the practice of teaching religion difficult. It also made the implementation of a life-experience approach particularly challenging for them with

¹²⁸ Ibid, 6-7.

¹²⁹ A. Finn, *Parents, Teachers and Religious Education: A Study in a Catholic Secondary School in Rural Victoria* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2009), 63.

¹³⁰ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 250.

students and teachers struggling to make meaningful links between life experience, Church tradition and faith.¹³¹

The new approach was not familiar to many parents, and they often perceived it as radically different to what they had experienced when at school.¹³² Many parents were also adjusting to the changes occurring in society and the Church.¹³³ That situation created a distance between many parents and their children, that in turn led some parents to become angry about the education of their children.

In Catholic schools use of that approach had unintended consequences. One of those was that teachers, students and parents began to perceive that classroom religion was different to other subjects and lacked sufficient academic rigour. Another led to some teachers trying to make their religion lessons more relational, enjoyable, and relevant for both themselves and their students. Yet another involved, “with limited success and even frustration”, some teachers trying to replicate in their classrooms the same “dynamics that were evident in retreats”.¹³⁴

Supporters and opponents mostly fought over matters associated with educational philosophy, theological viewpoints, and Church authority.¹³⁵ On that, Ryan¹³⁶ suggested that those on opposing sides were in essence arguing over two possible directions for religious education: “Was the approach to be about knowledge and understanding of the Christian way? Or, were nurture and enculturation in the

¹³¹ M. Buchanan and K. Engebretson, “The significance of theory in the implementation of curriculum change in religious education,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 31, no. 2 (2009), 142-143.

¹³² G. Rummery, “The development of the concept of religious education in Catholic schools, 1872-1972,” *Journal of Religious History* 9, no. 3 (1977), 314-315.

¹³³ A. Finn, *Parents, Teachers and Religious Education: A Study in a Catholic Secondary School in Rural Victoria*, 67.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 67-68.

¹³⁵ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*, 93-94.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 90-91.

Christian way of life to be the main emphases?” In addition, Finn¹³⁷ stated: “This approach was viewed by a conservative element in the Church as a threat to orthodoxy and tradition by allowing individuals freedom in exploring Revelation in this way. This was linked to the Catholic debate on the tension between authority and freedom – a constant in Church history.” A difference over ideals, however, was not just a matter of Church politics as theorists too were increasingly promoting alternative understandings and approaches to religion as a subject.

In 1966, Moran¹³⁸ had pointed out perceived deficiencies in the kerygmatic approach. In the next decade he¹³⁹ became a “key leader in an anthropological or experiential religious education”.¹⁴⁰ His contribution too was somewhat unique. About that, Elias¹⁴¹ stated:

Moran’s alternative theory bore many similarities to Protestant liberal theology and Deweyan progressive education...[but] his lasting contribution to the field of religious education was his broader vision of religious education, including not only activity of schools but also education within parishes, families, the workplace, and all of life itself.

That position led him to direct Church educators to focus on the faith education of adults.¹⁴² Elias¹⁴³ also added, that in matters associated with classroom teaching of religion, Moran resisted efforts to describe the field of the religious educator “as a ministry or a form of practical theology.” Instead he argued for “a concept of religious

¹³⁷ A. Finn, *Parents, Teachers and Religious Education: A Study in a Catholic Secondary School in Rural Victoria*, 67.

¹³⁸ G. Moran, *Catechesis of Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966); G. Moran, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966); G. Moran, *Scripture and Tradition: A Survey of the Controversy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963).

¹³⁹ G. Moran, *Design for Religion: Toward Ecumenical Education* (London: Search press, 1971); G. Moran, *Education Toward Adulthood* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); G. Moran, *Interplay: A Theory of Religion and Education* (Winona, Minn: Saint Mary’s Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 1981).

¹⁴⁰ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives* (Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002), 211.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² G. Moran, *Education Toward Adulthood*.

¹⁴³ J. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 212.

educator as distinct from the pastoral or priestly role contained in the concept of ministry.”

Other theorists during the 1970s proposed alternative approaches. Lee,¹⁴⁴ for example, sought to “separate religious education from too close a connection with theology.” Instead, he wanted to bring a “social science approach to religious education”, which he viewed as “a branch of education”¹⁴⁵. Marthaler,¹⁴⁶ on the other hand, wanted to add deep meaning to catechesis and he promoted the idea of “utilizing concepts from sociology of knowledge and cultural anthropology to explain the process of Christian learning”¹⁴⁷. He argued that “an education into the faith of a particular community” occurred through “participation in the symbols, rites, values, and lifestyles of members” and took place through “the interaction between learners and all activities and persons in their environment”.

In Australia, similar ideas were debated. For example, Rossiter,¹⁴⁸ writing in 1982 stated:

Religious education in Catholic schools has long been regarded primarily as education in faith or more intensively as catechesis. Consequently, the theory underpinning religious education in Catholic schools has been heavily dependent on catechetical theory, as if the school were a ‘natural habitat’ for catechesis. Religion teachers tended to interpret the wealth of church and theoretical writings on catechesis as if every word applied specifically to the school. However, while the interpretation of religion teachers remains relatively unchanged, there has been a shift in focus and emphasis in catechetical theory away from the school towards pastoral ministry in the church with adults.

¹⁴⁴ J. Lee, *The Content of Religious Education* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1985); J. Lee, *The Flow of Religious Education* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1973); J. Lee, *The Shape of Religious Education* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1971).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 212.

¹⁴⁶ B. Marthaler, “Catechesis isn’t just for children anymore,” in *Theological Education in the Catholic Tradition*, ed. P. O’Hare and E. Muller (New York: Crossroad, 1997); B. Marthaler, “Socialization as a model for catechesis,” in *Foundations of Religious Education*, ed. P. O’Hare (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 213.

¹⁴⁸ G. Rossiter, “The need for a ‘creative divorce’ between catechesis and religious education in Catholic schools,” *Religious Education* 77, no. 1 (1982), 21.

Those comments highlight an important development that had emerged during the 1970s; some exponents of the subject began moving away from a catechetical orientation towards an educational one that viewed religion in the classroom like any other school subject. About that Rossiter¹⁴⁹ stated:

Some religion teachers seek to establish religion as a subject in the curriculum with a status similar to that of other subjects. An emphasis on content, study skills, written work, assignments and assessment suggests that the pedagogy in this approach should be similar to that of other subjects. Such an approach to religion classes considers that the religious education curriculum should concentrate on communicating knowledge and understanding of religion, while at the same time, not neglecting the affective dimension and not disregarding the importance of other aspects of religious education outside the formal curriculum (e.g. participation in liturgy, community building, retreats, pastoral activities).

However, he also stated, that “by way of contrast, other religion teachers oppose the above”.¹⁵⁰

The latter situation contributed to confusion about the purposes of religion as a classroom subject.¹⁵¹ About that Rossiter¹⁵² stated:

This separation tends to leave Catholic school-based religious education limping and insecure, with symptoms of identity confusion – with a feeling that the school is no longer a suitable place for catechesis. This feeling compounds an earlier anxiety that much of the evangelisation through religious education in the school might be ineffective. Perhaps it would be even more disconcerting for Catholic religion teachers to realise that the 1977 Synod of Bishops, in its consideration of catechesis, gave little attention to schools, not only because few countries have well developed Catholic school systems, but because of a “conviction that catechesis is not a scholastic process (and that) the limitations of syllabus, timetable, compulsion, and discipline are too great, and overwhelm it”.

Concerns about the purpose, relevance, and effectiveness of religion as school subject for Catholics also led theorists and practitioners to consider alternative ideas and

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 30.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 30.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 30.

¹⁵² Ibid, 22.

approaches. That development further aggravated “a confusion of contexts” and “a confusion of paradigms”,¹⁵³ a matter which Rossiter¹⁵⁴ illustrated with an example:

In his book¹⁵⁵ that was well received by Catholic religion teachers in Australia, John Westerhoff claimed that the main problem with religious education was its dependence on a “schooling/instructional” paradigm, rather than on a “community of faith/enculturation” paradigm. He argued the importance of celebrative ritual as the primary means of communicating religious faith. Westerhoff’s interpretation of problems with voluntary Sunday school programs (in Protestant churches in the United States) was applied uncritically to (Catholic) schools. Without questioning the appropriateness of Westerhoff’s thesis for Sunday schools, a number of religion teachers in Australian Catholic schools misapplied theory and presuppositions for a voluntary, faith-sharing, non-school situation to a compulsory, classroom setting. Neither the common ground nor the distinctions between the two contexts were explored critically.

The confusion also made the teaching of religion as a classroom subject difficult for some teachers.

About the latter, and with reference to the work of Nichols¹⁵⁶ in England, Rossiter added:¹⁵⁷

I am convinced that it creates a deep confusion in the minds of many teachers. If they think of themselves as catechists they are pulled one way; if as professional teachers, another. In the eyes of most contemporaries, catechesis is a square peg in an educational round hole. So often, there develops a deep confusion about the role of the teacher of religion. Because of this, the teaching given often lacks direction and drive . . . I am sure that bits of all the doctrinal, devotional, Kerygmatic, ‘faith response’ eliciting and experiential approaches are lying scattered around the world of Catholic religious education, often at odds with each other, rarely held together by the kind of unifying philosophy which makes for good teaching in the subject . . . The present state of religious teaching in the Catholic sector is not good.

On a broader level, the related debates and the divergent paths chosen by theorists serve to support the second hypothesis that informed this study overall. Adapted from

¹⁵³ Ibid, 21-40.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ J. Westerhoff, *Will our Children have Faith?* (Victoria: Dove Communications, 1976).

¹⁵⁶ K. Nichols, “Continuity and change in catechetics,” *The Month* 11, no. 3 (1978), 88.

¹⁵⁷ G. Rossiter, “The need for a ‘creative divorce’ between catechesis and religious education in Catholic schools,” *Religious Education*, 21-40.

Goodson's¹⁵⁸ work, that hypothesis proposed that in the process of establishing religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic one. However, it also needs to be qualified since not all those pathways explored by theorists (for example those who wished to retain a catechetical orientation) were focused on developing an academic tradition. Instead, the wish was to promote a process of enculturation that is often described in Catholic literature as 'formation'.

In Australia there were also limits to how far any of the ideas promoted could deviate from what was familiar. About that, Rossiter also stated:¹⁵⁹

There may be, however, a natural resistance to this change wherever there is a well developed Catholic school system. In a country like Australia, where one fifth of the nation's schools are Catholic, there is a tendency to rely too much on them and to expect too much of them as a principal agency of evangelization, even though they cater for little more than half the Australian Catholic schoolchildren.

Attention to those matters led some to focus more on the Catholic school itself. That had the effect of less emphasis being placed on the classroom teaching of religion or to the use of the scheduled religion lesson as presenting another opportunity to apply in a special way the pastoral, faith sharing strategies of the school.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum* (New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1983).

¹⁵⁹ G. Rossiter, 'The need for a "creative divorce" between catechesis and religious education in Catholic schools,' *Religious Education*, 22.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 30-31.

The effectiveness of the Catholic school

Impetus to change was given by the publication of *The Catholic School*¹⁶¹ in 1977 and by the work of two Australians, Carmel Leavey¹⁶² and Marcellin Flynn¹⁶³. Publication of *The Catholic School* drew the attention of Church, system, and school leaders, as well as practitioners of religion in Catholic schools, to consider how the whole of school life contributed to a religious education. While always considered important, the culture of a Catholic school and the effectiveness of that culture now became a more explicit concern. Leaders were also provided with a theoretical and theological imperative to consider how the modern Catholic school could foster dialogue with the world and promote the integration of each student's faith and life. Overall, the ideas presented in *The Catholic School* also had implications for those responsible for the delivery of religion as a subject in Catholic schools. Now they were encouraged to shift their attention beyond the efficacy of the subject to considerations on how the school could build and support a distinctive Catholic culture.

In Australia, implementation of many of the above mentioned ideas was already underway. For instance in 1972, Carmel Leavey, a Dominican Sister, published her thesis, *Religious Education, School Climate and Achievement: A Study of Nine Catholic Sixth-Form Girls' Schools*.¹⁶⁴ Written as a sociological study, it was

¹⁶¹ The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, "The Catholic School (1977)," *The Holy See*, 9 May 2021, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html.

¹⁶² M. Leavey, *Religious Education, School Climate and Achievement: A Study of Nine Catholic Sixth-Form Girls' Schools* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Australian National University, 1972).

¹⁶³ M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools 2000: A Longitudinal Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic Schools, 1972-198; 1990-1998* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Catholic Education Commission, 2002); M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993*; M. Flynn, *The Effectiveness of Catholic Schools: A Ten-year Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic High Schools* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Paul Publications, 1985); M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools and the Communication of Faith: A Study of the Mission of Catholic Schools Today for Parents, Teachers and Students*; M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools* (Sydney: Catholic Education Office, 1975).

¹⁶⁴ M. Leavey, *Religious Education, School Climate and Achievement: A Study of Nine Catholic Sixth-Form Girls' Schools*.

designed to discern the ‘signs of the times’¹⁶⁵ and it broke significant new ground by applying the techniques of sociological research to the context of Australian Catholic schooling.

Religious Education and school climate were concepts central in her study.¹⁶⁶

About the former, Leavey¹⁶⁷ stated:

I am suggesting that Catholic schools were established in Australia with certain well defined purposes as to what religious education might mean, and that these purposes derived much from the general historical and religious milieu of late nineteenth century Australia. While there is comparatively little published evidence of change in the concept of religious education or of the Catholic school, at the ‘official’ theoretical level, the changed social and religious realities of Australia today; and of Catholics in Australia, render the older concept obsolete, and make new developments imperative. As it happens, these new developments have been obvious in the Church generally for nearly a decade. Out of these movements in the Church, it is possible to construct a new theory of religious education, without implying that it is, in anyway, the ‘official’ view in Australia at present.

Her study highlighted too that for the period under consideration, there was somewhat of a crisis to be observed nationally in religion, theology, and Catholic Church structures.¹⁶⁸ That situation, however, also had a positive aspect, she held, namely, “more intellectual and social vitality in the Churches”¹⁶⁹ and led to positive developments in Catholic education.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ An important principle put into practice by members of the Second Vatican Council. For details about that principle, see J. D’Orsa, and T. D’Orsa, *Explorers, Guides and Meaning-Makers: Mission Theology for Catholic Educators* (Mulgrave, Vic: John Garratt Publishing, 2011), 15-17.

¹⁶⁶ M. Leavey, *Religious Education, School Climate and Achievement: A Study of Nine Catholic Sixth-Form Girls’ Schools*, 93-96.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 97.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 97-98.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 97.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 98-99.

Leavey's study also included an exploration of education and religious education. In her analysis of education, she drew upon the work of several key education writers.¹⁷¹ Based on that analysis she stated two findings:¹⁷²

[First] the common element in all these writers' views is that education is concerned with the transmission of values, that it is specially concerned with knowledge and understanding and hence with the development of the mind... [Secondly] the general account of education outlined here implies: the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it, knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective and normally acceptable methods and procedures. It is an account of education, where the notion of the 'public world', 'the public language' and the conversations of Oakeshott¹⁷³ are given, and the one being educated, at least in theory, gradually recognises the structure of the public world and acquires the language and skills.

Further, when she explored the concept of religious education, she considered how a Christian education fits within the concept of education. On that, several points were made. First, she stated that both "secular education plus religious instruction" and "secular education plus the attempt to develop moral or religious habits will not amount to Christian education".¹⁷⁴ Secondly, she argued, Christians understand the world and the human person in "a specifically religious way" and those understandings are more "than the aggregate of all the insights of the various areas of human knowledge"; instead, those understandings are viewed in a specifically Christian way.¹⁷⁵

Leavey also considered how learning about religion and a religious education related to each other. For her, education is a discipline, but a religious education

¹⁷¹ "P.H. Hirst (1965), R.S. Peters (1966), A.D.C. Peterson (1960), M. Oakeshott (1962) and H.S. Broudy (1964)." M. Leavey, *Religious Education, School Climate and Achievement: A Study of Nine Catholic Sixth-Form Girls' Schools*, 101.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 101, 105.

¹⁷³ M. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1962).

¹⁷⁴ M. Leavey, *Religious Education, School Climate and Achievement: A Study of Nine Catholic Sixth-Form Girls' Schools*, 106.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 106.

involves more than that because its subject matter is Christian Revelation, that involves a call to conversion and commitment. On that she stated:

An understanding of Christian education in turn involves at least an understanding of this delicate balance between ‘teaching about’ religion and ‘teaching of’ religion on the part of the educator, and some understanding of the subtle relationships that exist between knowledge, belief and commitment on the part of the one being educated.

Additionally, she went on, the concept of religious education has several components.¹⁷⁶ For instance, she stated, it contributes to a breadth of learning and the development of a Catholic worldview without indoctrination. A teacher’s role therefore, in this position, is to model, develop and facilitate an education dialogue about religious concepts, and, specifically “the dialogue, which the believing Christian carries on with God”¹⁷⁷. That dialogue, in Leavey’s view, is appropriate in a Catholic school because, she assumed, “pupils” are members the Christian community.

For the reasons detailed, Leavey studied the relationship between religious education and school climate, and concluded:¹⁷⁸

Goal Satisfaction and Morale and that Parental Religion has important influences on students’ religious outcomes, though the school does appear to be making a contribution independent of the home. The consistent two-way relationships between achievement in religious education and in examinations/general education is compatible with the proposition that religious education can only succeed if general education succeeds. The consistent two-way relationship between achievement in religious education and school climate is compatible with the proposition that the content of religious education is mediated as much by procedures, teachers’ attitudes and personal relationships as by the curriculum of Christian Doctrine.

Further, she concluded, any response to faith or belief should be a mature free act of the person and has several implications for religious education.

About the latter, Leavey considered that adolescence is a “crucial time for the students’ religious development” because an act of faith is “psychologically

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 106-116.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 108.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, ii.

impossible before adolescence”¹⁷⁹. Therefore, she argued, those leading Catholic schooling must be open to the possibility that “unbelief and irreligion” and a student’s free choice may be inhibited by “childhood conditioning or inexperience of any religious faith community”.¹⁸⁰ She also stated:

faith, however, is still a divine gift and not the result of an exercise in history or philosophy or scripture study and the efficacy of religious education cannot be tested really by whether or not the student believes.¹⁸¹

Nevertheless, moral and religious training for her has a place in religious education and differentiation across age groupings is required. Last, and consistent with earlier Church documents, she emphasised that “religious education cannot take place apart from some particular faith community, a community which involves at least the family and the local Church, and in the context of the Australian Church, often the Catholic school”¹⁸².

Leavey also addressed the matter of what is success in religious education. That included how success can be measured and when. She accepted that measuring what being educated looks like in the field is difficult because there is an internal dimension which is complicated when personal commitment is considered. She added:

It is quite conceivable that a person may have gone through all the motions of religious education – may know his Scriptures and his theology, may worship God, keep the commandments and perform acts of service, and yet reject Christianity at some stage in his life.¹⁸³

Further, she asked, what is being measured, “orthodoxy” or “religiosity”?¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 108.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 109.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 110.

Inspired by Leavey's work,¹⁸⁵ Flynn began his own sociological research in the 1970s. That grew into a large longitudinal study¹⁸⁶ spanning 3 decades.¹⁸⁷ In 1975, he published results in his book, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools*.¹⁸⁸ His initial study had investigated "the ways in which Catholic schools communicate the Christian message and values" and had assessed "their religious and educational impact"¹⁸⁹. He examined "the environment and climate of Catholic schools and the degree of Christian community which students experience" and "probed the attitudinal and process dimensions of the Catholic school in action"¹⁹⁰. He considered too the role that both the family and the school environment played in the religious development of adolescents. Furthermore, he addressed the nature of the Catholic school and its curriculum, including its religious education curriculum. He also identified factors that contributed to an effective Catholic school climate, particularly in terms of religious development.

Regarding religion, Flynn distinguished between its formal¹⁹¹ or extrinsic aspects and personal commitment,¹⁹² which he considered to be intrinsic religion. For

¹⁸⁵ M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools*, xi.

¹⁸⁶ Result of that larger study were last reported in 2002. See M. Flynn and M. Mok, *Catholic Schools 2000: A Longitudinal Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic Schools 1972-1982-1990-1998* (NSW: Catholic Education Commission, 2002).

¹⁸⁷ M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools 2000: A Longitudinal Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic Schools, 1972-198; 1990-1998*; M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993*; M. Flynn, *The Effectiveness of Catholic Schools: A Ten-year Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic High Schools*; M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools and the Communication of Faith: A Study of the Mission of Catholic Schools Today for Parents, Teachers and Students*; M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools*.

¹⁸⁸ M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, ix.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁹¹ The formal aspects of religion included the "public, social, institutionalised ... formalised" aspects of religion. M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools*, 154.

¹⁹² The subjective expression of religion "consists of one's personal attitudes, commitment and loyalty to God, together with one's devotion, reverences and practices". M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools*, 154.

him, too, religious experience had five dimensions that “define what it means to be religious and comprise the ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual and consequential aspects of religious experience”.¹⁹³ Using those dimensions he then examined five facets of the religious development of “Catholic sixth form boys.” Those included religious beliefs and understandings, moral and religious values, religious practice, integration of religious and secular learning, and influences on students’ religious development.¹⁹⁴

Concerning the curriculum for religion, Flynn identified two interrelated features, the formal and informal. The formal relates to the curriculum of the religion class while the informal relates to the “Christian environment and community of the school”¹⁹⁵. About the relative importance of each, he stated:¹⁹⁶

The evidence of this study strongly suggests that the living community of persons which makes up the school’s informal Christian environment may well be a far more powerful religious influence than that of the formal religious education classes. It would appear that the Environment is, in many ways, the Message!

About the formal religious curriculum, he also noted that the classroom teaching of religion is “a relatively recent phenomenon”.¹⁹⁷ Quoting Calle,¹⁹⁸ he stated:

Religion became a branch of the classroom teaching, the catechist became a religion teacher, the catechism became a religion textbook and all catechetical activity became child-centred and school-centred.¹⁹⁹

About those matters, he concluded:²⁰⁰

Evidence of this study points to the need for administrators to examine carefully the dynamic interactions between the formal religious education classes within a school and the wider school environment ... Religious education takes place in a profoundly social and faith-community context ...

¹⁹³ Ibid, 155.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 157.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 190.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 190.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 189.

¹⁹⁸ J. Calle, *Catechesis for the Seventies* (Manilla: East Asian Pastoral Institute, 1975).

¹⁹⁹ M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys’ High Schools*, 189.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 191.

the social organisation and environment of the school, therefore, appears crucial to its role in the development of faith amongst its students. If it is congruent with the Christian message it seeks to communicate, it is expressive of religious truth and translates into practical, everyday terms the Christian doctrines and truths of the formal religious education classes.

Further, while he acknowledged that recent changes in formal religious education for Catholic schools had taken place, he argued that those had “achieved far less than they promised”²⁰¹. He also argued for a greater focus on the theology of Revelation, the role the school environment plays, and adult²⁰² religious education.²⁰³

Two future directions were outlined by Flynn for religious education. First, he argued for a shift in focus from the child to the adult. That was necessary, he held, because personal conversion and commitment requires a mature response typical of an adult. Further, religious education is a lifelong process that requires a whole of life education in faith. Consequently, the faith formation of parents, he concluded, should be given a priority because it has most influence on the faith of the child.²⁰⁴

A second direction involves grounding religious education in the theology of Revelation. That theology, Flynn stated, should lead school leaders to take several actions, including adopting an experiential method and giving attention to the Christian environment of the school.²⁰⁵ It would also help, he said, to help them determine the “selection of topics for religious education programmes” and aid the expression of the Christian message “in language meaningful to people today”²⁰⁶. The

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Australian Church leaders had relied almost solely on the Catholic school.

²⁰³ M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools*, 191.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ “The raw material of God’s Revelation ... for it is within this environment that the continuing act of God’s self-revelation to man in Christ occurs”. M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools*, 195-196.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 196.

theology, in turn, would also help them foster the development of a faith community where “attitudes and convictions grow and develop”.²⁰⁷

Flynn also analysed the effectiveness or success of the religious education classroom in the Catholic school. About that he stated:

Among the determinants of the success of these classes would appear to be the nature of the school environment and its climate, together with the quality of the relationship between the formal and informal systems in the school”.²⁰⁸

He also identified several issues requiring further attention. Those included a “pastoral need for expanded counselling”, “co-education at the senior levels”, “the role and place of the lay teachers in the school”.²⁰⁹ Regarding formal religious education classes, he concluded:

One of the challenges facing the Catholic school today, and, in some ways one of its most pressing problems, is the role of formal religious education classes in the school setting. Whereas in the past, advances and developments in religious education have usually been sought in curricula, new approaches, text books and courses, the evidence of this study suggests the need for administrators and teachers to examine more carefully the dynamic interactions between the school’s formal religious education programme and the wider school environment. Schools in which the Christian environment and climate are favourable, and where the formal and informal structures of the school merge easily and freely, would appear to be uniformly more successful in their religious education endeavours.²¹⁰

Further, he argued, that change was already identified in some Catholic secondary schools where retreats, seminars, student groups and other student-centred dialogical processes were used, and where both students and teachers energised by those practices.²¹¹ He acknowledged, however, that teachers of the subject had become worn out, wary of controversy, and tended to direct less attention and energy towards the delivery of the formal religion curriculum than previously. In some cases, the

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 212.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 288-289.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 288.

²¹¹ Ibid, 201-205, 288.

curriculum delivered in the religion classroom disappeared, he said, and was replaced by other types of religious activities that already took place in and out of school time.²¹²

Finally, earlier in this chapter it was stated, that the construction of religion as a classroom subject for the period under consideration demonstrated many of the features identified by Flynn's²¹³ third stage in his three-stage linear model, namely 'experiential catechesis'. While that remains true, there was also official and theoretical attention given to ensuring that the climate and culture of a Catholic school explicitly created an environment for fostering a religious education. That suggests that for the period 1971 to 1981, Flynn's model either needs to be expanded to include that dimension or that an alternative model was in fact evident in both theory and practice, namely a model of enculturation.

Specific Western Australian developments

Prior to the 1970s, Catholic education in Western Australia, as in the rest of Australia, did not operate at a systemic level.²¹⁴ While ostensibly under the control of each diocesan bishop, there was a reliance upon a decentralised network of religious communities to provide leaders and staff for each school. It was those personnel who thus assumed responsibility for the operation of a Catholic school.²¹⁵ About that, Fogarty²¹⁶ stated:

²¹² Ibid, 191-194.

²¹³ M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993*.

²¹⁴ H. O'Connor, *They Did What They Were Asked to Do: An Historical Analysis of the Contribution of Two Women's Religious Institutes within the Educational and Social Development of the City of Ballarat, with Particular Reference to the Period 1950-1980* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2010), 140.

²¹⁵ Order owned or run Catholic school were all under the authority of an ecclesiastical ordinary, a bishop, and in the case of parish schools, the responsibility of a parish priest. However, operationally, it was congregational leaders and their members that determined the educational practices of a school. B. Hellinckx, F. Simon, and M. Depaepe, *The Forgotten Contribution of the Teaching Sisters* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009).

²¹⁶ R. Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia: 1806-1950, Vol. 2* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1959), 423.

In very few dioceses had the school work itself been organized on a diocesan plan. The schools continued to be more or less under the control of the Hierarchy, but whatever organization existed was due not to diocesan direction but to the religious orders operating in their own group of schools.

Similarly, O'Brien,²¹⁷ writing about Catholic education in Melbourne stated:

Relieved that the religious congregations assumed responsibility for secondary education, bishops made little attempt to interfere with them, even though this meant haphazard growth and the loss of a certain amount of diocesan control ... Catholic education in Victoria in the 1950s thus consisted of a network of primary and secondary schools controlled essentially by sub-systems of religious.

In Western Australia, a similar pattern existed.²¹⁸

The situation changed in 1971 when the bishops of Western Australia established a State-wide structure to oversee a new Catholic school system. Implementation of the decision was a significant undertaking and presented leaders of the Church and of Catholic schooling in the State with many practical challenges. Those included, allocating resources to new or existing schools and, where required, to amalgamate or close some schools.²¹⁹ Such matters occupied them for much of the rest of the decade. It required them to negotiate with a diverse group of interested parties within the Western Australian Catholic community who had invested energy for many years in maintaining the existing approach to Catholic education in the State. They included key lay groups like the P&F Federation, priests, religious from a multitude of different religious orders, and the bishops of each diocese.

Where lines of responsibility lay, how new governance structures worked, and how to adapt existing practices and structures to the requirements of the new system all had to be worked out. In that process, leaders of the Church in Western Australia had the benefit of observing developments in other states. In Victoria, several public

²¹⁷ A. O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria, 1963-1980*, 10,13.

²¹⁸ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 203-220.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 220.

controversies involving Catholic education, including the Crudden affair and developments associated with the *Come Alive* Series had taken place. In contrast, leaders in the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth tended to avoid displays of public confrontation in matters of both Church and State since the time of Archbishop Clune.²²⁰ Instead, they preferred to take a more pragmatic and less ideological approach. Also, being a large but remote State with a relatively small Catholic population, the process of decision making tended to be less complicated, involved fewer people and could be done more discreetly. Leaders in the Catholic Church in Western Australia tended to rely on the efforts of a few trusted individuals who made use of committee processes and the production of official reports to navigate decision making and avoid disagreements. While not transparent, those processes were efficient and allowed for few displays of public disagreement.

The latter was the approach that Archbishop Goody took when first considering how to address the needs of Catholic schooling in Western Australia. He gave responsibility²²¹ for that task to his Director of Catholic Education, Father²²² James Nestor and Dr. Peter Tannock. Rev. Nestor (1926-2016), it will be recalled, was an Irish born and trained priest who arrived in Western Australia to work for the Archdiocese of Perth in 1956. In 1960 he enrolled²²³ to study²²⁴ at the University of Western Australia for a Diploma of Education. By 1967 he had become Director of Catholic Education, a position he held until 1985.²²⁵

²²⁰ P. Tannock, "Catholic education in Western Australia 1829-1979," in *Education in Western Australia*, ed. W. Neal (Nedlands: University of WA Press, 1979), 145.

²²¹ Ibid, 165.

²²² Later Monsignor.

²²³ P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008* (Inglewood, W.A: Victor Publishing, 2008), 213.

²²⁴ Nestor held a National University of Ireland degree in Celtic Studies.

²²⁵ R. Curry, "Obituary: Monsignor James Francis Nestor," *The Record Magazine* 3 (2016), 26-27, 17 June 2021, https://issuu.com/archdioceseofperth_therecord/docs/the_record_magazine_issue03_july_1/26.

Dr. Peter Tannock (1940-), was born in Western Australia and educated in Perth by the Loreto Sisters and the Irish Christian Brothers. He began tertiary studies at The University of Western Australia before completing his Doctor of Philosophy degree as a resident Fellow at Johns Hopkins University in the USA.²²⁶

Tannock's early career involved working as a teacher for the Education Department of Western Australia. He was then seconded to co-write with an Irish Christian Brother, Linus Bowler, a report²²⁷ entitled *Report on the Needs of Catholic Schools in Western Australia, 1970-1974*.²²⁸ That appointment also became the foundation for his extensive career as a local and national leader of education, including of Catholic education. On that, Coyne and Furtado²²⁹ stated:

[He has an] enviable legacy in what he has achieved for the Catholic Church in this country in the realms of the infrastructure of primary, secondary and tertiary education.

His involvement in writing the report was soon followed by his appointment to the *Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission*, a project of the national government chaired by Dr. Peter Karmel. That, as has already been detailed in Chapter 8, led to substantial increases in State aid²³⁰ for Catholic schools nationally.

Bowler and Tannock had two goals when writing their report,²³¹ namely, to ensure that Catholic schools were funded in the same way as government schools and to enable Catholic schooling to expand to meet the “demand of Catholic parents for

²²⁶ M. Ebbs, “Lifetime Commitment to Shaping Catholic Education in Australia Rewarded,” *Media Release Archive* 925 (2013), 17 June 2021, https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/media_release/925.

²²⁷ According to Pental, the process involved extensive consultation and was produced by the Education Department of Western Australia. For detail about why the report was commissioned, see P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 227.

²²⁸ Western Australia. Education Department, *Report on the Needs of Catholic Schools in Western Australia, 1970-1974*, (Perth: Govt. Print, 1970).

²²⁹ B. Coyne and M. Furtado, “The legacy of Dr Peter Tannock,” *Catholica*.

²³⁰ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 234.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 230.

an education in Catholic schools for their children”²³². A sub-text too was to relieve pressure upon a struggling government school system.²³³ About the report overall and Tannock’s involvement, Pandal²³⁴ stated:

Nestor’s insistence that Tannock become involved was to be a critical moment not only professionally for Tannock but for the future of Catholic education in Western Australia ... the outcome was a powerful amalgam not only of nuts-and-bolts deficiencies in Western Australian Catholic schools, but also something of a radical overview of the organisational structure the Catholic hierarchy needed to create to deal with a situation which now was critical.

The report comprehensively identified the needs of Catholic education in Western Australia and how the Catholic Church in the State could manage them across five dioceses.

About the latter matter Pandal²³⁵ stated:

It was the ultimate decision to be addressed by the five Bishops and the Abbot – to forgo any desire for local ‘home rule’ and, instead, to go with the Report’s recommendation for a single, “educational policy making and administrative body for Catholic schools throughout Western Australia”. To underscore the need not only for reform and a body cutting across Diocesan lines, the Report made it clear that the establishment of such a single authority was needed. It would cater for the new era and still preserve what it saw as the ‘essential’ character of the Catholic system. It was but a small step away from the creation of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia.

The authors also advanced an argument for establishing a system of teacher preparation to address the specific needs of Catholic education in Western Australia.²³⁶ As with those who developed the Melbourne guidelines, they wanted to see teachers of religion and those working in Catholic schools better educated. Thus, they aspired to the system being at Beeby’s²³⁷ ‘Stage of Transition’.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid, 227.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid, 231-232.

²³⁶ Ibid, 230.

²³⁷ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

In 1970, it will be recalled, the bishop of Western Australia decided to establish a Catholic Institute Constitutive Committee (CICC).²³⁸ Appointees to it developed a plan for addressing the preparation needs of Catholic school teachers in the State. Central to their plan was the creation of a Catholic Pastoral Institute of Western Australia in 1975. At that time some degree of tension existed within the local Catholic community concerning the creation of the Catholic pastoral institute and its terms of reference.²³⁹ Indeed, we are told that on those matters “there was not unanimous acceptance”.²⁴⁰

When it came to curriculum, neither members of CECWA nor of the CPI when first instituted, were primarily concerned with such matters. CECWA was created primarily to address the governance and organisation of Catholic schooling in the State and its officials and school leaders had responsibility for determining curriculum matters. Leaders of schools were responsible too for addressing the requirements of the State-prescribed curriculum.

For Catholic school leaders and teachers, the 1970s involved engagement with significant change. For example, Carter²⁴¹ identified several developments that required the authorities of schools of the Loreto Sisters in Western Australia to adjust their curriculum. For instance, to meet the needs of the local economy required that school leaders pay greater attention than previously to the provision of vocational education. They had greater freedom too to devise the curriculum of their schools and were required to take more responsibility for overseeing the use of school-based

²³⁸ The Committee was chaired by Bishop Thomas, Bishop of Geraldton. Rev. Nestor was a member of the committee and most other members were religious or priest, except two, a lay woman and Richard McSweeney. J. Collins, *One of a Kind: A Social History of the Catholic Institute in Western Australia 1975-1999* (Perth, W.A.: Catholic Institute of Western Australia, 1999), 11.

²³⁹ Ibid, 15-16.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 15.

²⁴¹ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 238, 249-251.

assessments. They also had to provide suitable forms of sex education, drug education, social outreach programs and, as part of school amalgamations, to introduce coeducation.²⁴² Some school leaders and teachers embraced those developments and experimented with new curriculum offerings and alternative approaches to teaching and looked for ways to reinvent their schools through innovating with such matters as open area learning.²⁴³ Others struggled to adapt and, in some cases, resisted change.²⁴⁴

In matters concerning the teaching of religion, government officials in Western Australia viewed the teaching of it on a denominational basis as incompatible with the State's provision of a secular education.²⁴⁵ In faith-based schools though, Church leaders considered it as essential. Moreover, Canon Law stipulated that in each diocese responsibility for teaching religion lay with the local bishop. About that, Pental²⁴⁶ stated:

While the promotion of such programmes was ostensibly a CECWA responsibility ... the reality was different. They were, in fact, still being provided separately by individual Dioceses in Western Australia ... One reason for this was that, while CECWA was a State-wide body, the accountability for religious education in both Catholic and Government schools was directly to each Diocesan Bishop.

In practice, however, the Bishops of Western Australia relied during the 1970s, on national initiatives and on the decisions made by leaders of each Catholic school.²⁴⁷

²⁴² Ibid, 249, 287, 306-307, 308.

²⁴³ Ibid, 240-241.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 308-311.

²⁴⁵ W. Nott, *Religious Education in the Government Schools of Western Australia: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Religious Education in the Government Schools of Western Australia, Under the Chairmanship of W.E. Nott, Perth, July, 1977* (Perth: Education Department, Western Australia, 1977).

²⁴⁶ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 260.

²⁴⁷ A. Carter, *Beyond all Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia 1897-1997*, 250, 300.

Carter described challenges encountered in relation to the teaching of religion in Catholic schools in Western Australia to do with amalgamation of several schools in the 1970s. About that, she²⁴⁸ stated:

In class, teaching religious education posed a considerable problem. St Louis School²⁴⁹ had a more Theological and Scriptural approach to its religious education programmes, while Loreto²⁵⁰ leaned more towards 'life experience' catechetics. Both schools were influenced by the catechetical movement of the 1970s and both were attempting new approaches. Here, again the problem of Vatican II rhetoric versus practice came to the fore. The perception that Loreto was 'soft around the edges' was assumed to be partly due to the religious education programmes, which lacked the input of contemporary Scriptural and Theological thinking. Loreto perceived St Louis School as tending to have too intellectual an approach and lacking the emphasis on the psychological needs of adolescents. These differences in thinking spilled over to the prayer and liturgical life of the amalgamated school ... and gave the impression at times that there was a degree of hostility concerning religious education and participation in liturgical prayer. St Louis School students had been through this 'anti-religion' phase during the 1960s, but by 1977 had largely moved away from this attitude and were taking a more in-depth approach, benefitting from the Scriptural and Theological emphasis in Religion classes. In this climate some teachers and many parents felt that the amalgamation could seriously affect the spiritual life of both boys and girls. Most teachers responded magnificently in building a Christian community at John XXIII College, but a small number of disaffected teachers again challenged the Catholic ethos of the new school. Their efforts at times de-stabilised the efforts of Father Day, Sister Bernadette and the Heads of the four communities to create a prayerful and caring atmosphere in the school.

This description highlights that teaching practice in the religion classroom varied across schools and that situation was informed by the traditions of religious orders, different philosophies of education, and recent developments in education theory. It also highlighted how in Catholic schools at the time the complexity of context had an impact upon the teaching of religion as a subject. Finally, during the 1970s also, the situation was further complicated by how individuals within the Catholic community perceived practices.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 308-309.

²⁴⁹ A school for boys established and run by members of the Jesuit religious order.

²⁵⁰ Schools for girls established and run by members of the Loreto religious order.

Overall, developments serve to uphold Goodson's²⁵¹ hypotheses that a school subject is not a monolithic entity. Rather, it reflects shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions. Furthermore, for much of the period under consideration, the nature of developments and debates which occurred about religion as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian Catholic schools also supports another of his hypotheses, namely, that school subjects reflect conflict over status, resources and territory.

Only towards the end of the 1970s did the bishops of Western Australia and members of the CECWA begin to pay close attention to religion as a subject in Catholic schools. Prior to that, their attention was directed towards the professional and spiritual needs of teachers who, some believed, had deficiencies in their theological learning, especially in post-Conciliar theology. Some also, including bishops and religious, believed that lay teachers in general were not adequately prepared for teaching in a Catholic school.²⁵² It was for those reasons that CECWA too began then to emphasise the need for appropriate preparation of teachers for religious education in Western Australian Catholic schools.

In that regard, by 1975, three of the State's Colleges of Advanced Education offered teacher preparation. That was a unique approach and the result of an initiative by the Catholic Pastoral Institute whereby secular tertiary bodies were offering courses for students wishing to work in Catholic schools in general, and also for those wishing to specifically teach religion.²⁵³

²⁵¹ I. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change: Case Studies in the Social History of Curriculum*.

²⁵² This was a principal reason for establishing the Catholic Pastoral Institute.

²⁵³ P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 249-252.

In 1978, the Archdiocese of Perth made funds available for four people to work within the CECWA.²⁵⁴ Their task was to focus on supporting religious education and to develop “special programmes of religious education for children attending non-Catholic schools”²⁵⁵. In 1979 the CECWA also decided to appoint a person to give spiritual advice and guidance to principals and other staff members. About that concern and the person who filled that position, Pental stated:

These measures were strong evidence of a rising concern of both parents and prelates that more needed to be done to focus better on the issues of Catholicity and what it was that a Catholic religious education was to achieve. Such a growing concern coincided with the return to the State of Father Gerard Holohan, a West Australian born priest now in his early thirties. He had graduated from Murdoch University and, at the insistence of Archbishop Goody, had undertaken post-graduate studies in education at Fordham University in the United States. Some years earlier he had been hand-picked by Goody to take charge of religious education in the Archdiocese with the request that he equip himself academically for what turn out to be a lifetime’s involvement in education... In 1981 he was appointed Director of Religious Education in the Archdiocese. Concurrently, Goody created the Perth Archdiocesan Department of Religious Education (with the aptly-formed acronym PADRE), naming Holohan as its head. Holohan, through PADRE, was now to be responsible for religious education and the Catholicity of the curriculum in Archdiocesan schools. As well, his role was to embrace the religious education of children in State schools. The staff in the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia (CEOWA), funded by the Archdiocese and working in the catechist area – that is, for children in non-Catholic schools – now became part of PADRE. As well, Catholic Institute staff who had been conducting in-service courses in Catholic schools now handed over that function to PADRE.²⁵⁶

Rev. Holohan’s appointment resulted in a range of initiatives being taken that, during the period 1982-1997, led to further developments in the construction of religion as a subject in Catholic schools. While those matters are not treated in this study, some aspects of them are now mentioned.

²⁵⁴ Father James Nestor in his role as Catholic Education Director for the Perth Archdiocese had been responsible for supervising programmes for children attending non-Catholic schools.

²⁵⁵ P. Pental, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*, 260.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 260.

Rev. Holohan's work focused first on defining and clarifying his role within the Archdiocese, and later, within the whole State.²⁵⁷ He began by convening conferences with school principals, clergy, and teachers of the subject. About those, it has been stated:

Early moves saw Holohan call separate conferences of primary and secondary principals in 1981 to hear how the responsibility of PADRE to promote religious education could best be met. "People wanted religious education to come much more to the fore", he recalled. "So I called the conferences and asked what they thought, where I needed to start." It was a period during which major religious congregations still maintained their own discrete religious education programmes. Thus, some diplomacy was needed. The objective, which was to take many years to achieve, was to establish a single, unified programme content. The teachers looked to the CEOWA for support and guidelines. "The first step was to produce a theology that people agreed was appropriate for children", Holohan recalled. It was from such consultations that 'The Truth Will Set You Free' was to emerge.²⁵⁸

Further, in 1982, he was appointed to the CECWA. Then a review committee on the future directions of religious education reported to the bishops. Moreover, Archbishop Goody, just prior to his retirement, announced "changes to the revised CECWA Mandate and the Terms of Reference"²⁵⁹. Those changes "now obliged the CEWA to promote religious education actively within the Catholic school system across Western Australia"²⁶⁰. While these decisions were made during the period under consideration, the impact that many of them had on the construction of religion as a classroom subject only became evident in the next period, 1982-1997.²⁶¹

Conclusion

Religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools underwent further, significant development during the period 1971-1982. This chapter and the previous

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 263.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 261.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid, 263-264.

one provided an outline and analysis of those matters. It also provided a detailed exposition of the construction process itself, explored associated developments and examined key related themes. The chapter that now follows concludes the study.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis has provided a historical analysis of how religion as a subject for Catholic schools in Western Australia was constructed over the period 1929 to 1982. The stimulus for writing it arose from an awareness that general patterns within the development of religion as a school subject for Catholic schools internationally have been discerned by scholars. At the same time, a detailed study of nuances, variation, and deviations from those patterns in Western Australia, as in various other jurisdictions, has not been undertaken to date. On that, the study reported here provides an account of three dominant constructions of religion as a subject for Western Australian Catholic schools, with each corresponding to one of three sub-periods: 1929-62, 1962-71, and 1971-82.

It will be recalled that three hypotheses were identified at the beginning of this study. There was never any intention that those were put forward for testing. Rather, their function was to guide data collection in an unexplored area. At the same time, it is helpful to revisit them here as they were valuable in helping one to engage in a meta-analysis of the results of the study. A consideration of these is now undertaken in order to provide an overview of the exposition provided in the previous chapters.

The first hypothesis stated that “Catholic schools and Catholic education in Western Australia for the period under investigation was not a monolithic entity but shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions.” The second hypothesis held that “in the process of establishing religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic tradition.” The third hypothesis maintained that “much of the debate

which occurred about religion as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian Catholic schools can be interpreted in terms of wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory.” Suggestions for future research, including in relation to curricular history aimed at improving religion as a school subject are then offered to bring the chapter to an end.

Meta-analysis of the Results of the Study

For each of the three sub-periods examined in the earlier chapter, a detailed analysis was conducted. That analysis was informed by three theoretical frameworks. The first of those was based on the work of Goodson.¹ That framework views curriculum “as a social artefact, conceived of and made for deliberate human purposes.”² It informed the development of the three hypotheses stated above. A second theoretical position drawn upon is based on the work of Flynn³ and Ryan⁴. Flynn⁵ proposed a three-stage linear model, namely, ‘traditional catechesis’, ‘kerygmatic catechesis’ and ‘experiential catechesis’. Ryan⁶ later adapted and updated that work by identifying two additional stages, namely, shared ‘Christian praxis’ and ‘religious education’.

¹ I. Goodson, *The Making of Curriculum Collected Essays* (New York: Falmer Press, 1987); I. Goodson, “The need for curriculum history,” in *History of Education: Major Themes. Vol. 3. Studies in learning and teaching*, ed. R. Lowe (London: Routledge/Falmer, 2000), 93-100; I. Goodson, *Learning, Curriculum and Life History Selected Works by Ivor F. Goodson* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 2005); I. Goodson, “Curriculo, narrativa e o futuro social,” *Revista Brasileira de Educação* 12 (2007), 241-52; I. Goodson, “Times of educational change: Towards an understanding of patterns of historical and cultural refraction,” *Journal of Education Policy* 25, no. 6 (2010), 767-75.

² *Ibid.*, 270.

³ M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools 2000: A Longitudinal Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic Schools, 1972-198; 1990-1998* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Catholic Education Commission, 2002); M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Pauls, 1993); M. Flynn, *The Effectiveness of Catholic Schools: A Ten-year Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic High Schools* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St. Paul Publications, 1985); M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools and the Communication of Faith: A Study of the Mission of Catholic Schools Today for Parents, Teachers and Students* (Homebush, N.S.W.: Society of Saint Paul, 1979); M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools* (Sydney: Catholic Education Office, 1975).

⁴ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools* (Brisbane: Lumino Press, 2013).

⁵ M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993*.

⁶ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*.

The third theoretical position drawn upon was Beeby's⁷ stages of development in education systems. This stage-theory focuses on the role of the teacher in facilitating progress through four key stages: the 'Dame School Stage', the 'Stage of Formalism', the 'Stage of Transition' and the 'Stage of Meaning'. Informed by those frameworks, each sub-period identified in this study were elaborated upon in the previous chapters. These were then subjected to a meta-analysis where they were considered in relation to the three hypotheses identified for the study. The results of that meta-analysis are now presented.

At this point it needs to be highlighted that the research questions stated at the outset were not specific questions that the author set out to answer. Rather, like the three theoretical frameworks put forward in Chapter One they were used to stimulate and organise thinking. Furthermore, specifically in relation to the frameworks, at no stage was there an intention that the study be about validating them or otherwise. Rather, they served to guide the collection of data from the outset that resulted in the exposition at the core of this thesis. Nevertheless, it would be remis to conclude without at least commenting that models proposed by Flynn and by Ryan can be contested in light of the results of this study.

The first hypothesis considered

The first hypothesis states that "Catholic schools and Catholic education in Western Australia for the period under investigation was not a monolithic entity but shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions." It was deemed to be upheld for all three sub-periods reported in this study. In support of that contention, it is helpful to recall that members of several different male and female religious orders established, led,

⁷ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

and staffed all Catholic schools in Western Australia. Moreover, that continued up until the 1970s when some lay people began to assume more responsibility than previously for some aspects of Catholic education in the State.⁸

At the same time, members of those religious communities were integral to the operation of Western Australian Catholic schools throughout all three sub-periods examined. Their lives, though, were diverse and had been shaped by a range of factors. Those included gender, geography, history, and training. Above all else, however, the most important influence upon the character and disposition of clerics was the unique way of life promoted within their religious communities. It was all pervasive. It determined routines, procedures, the governance of their communities, and how one conducted oneself in one's allocated work tasks.

Most important for religious men and women was that they were considered essential by Church authorities for ensuring that each Catholic school provided an education that was primarily religious in nature. An assumption was that they would create and sustain an ever-present Catholic culture within a school. Nevertheless, as stated above, that culture was not monolithic. Additionally, it was assumed that religious were much better placed than lay people to teach religion in the classroom. There, they could exemplify what it meant to be a Catholic as teachers of both the faith and secular subjects, and as exemplars of higher levels of what could be achieved by being good Catholics.

Finally, because of their experience working in different Catholic schools and in the teaching of religion to primary and secondary students, some religious men and women were recruited for tasks related to the development of the curriculum. That

⁸ P. Pandal, *Continuity in Change: The Journey of Catholic Education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008* (Inglewood: Victor Publishing, 2008), 238-239, 243-248.

included developing support materials and putting into practice innovations developed for use in the teaching of religion as a classroom subject. Examples of the former included the *My Way to God* series and the *Come Alive* series and of the latter included the Bushies Scheme and the Motor Mission.

Religious men and women recruited for all of those tasks were drawn from a range of different religious orders. In addition, each brought with him or her a diverse range of experiences from teaching religion. They also drew upon different education traditions and approaches to teaching methods”⁹preferred by members of their individual religious orders.

It was only after those in attendance at the Second Vatican Council had concluded their deliberations that the numerical presence of religious in Catholic schools began to wane. That led some leaders of religious communities to rationalise the deployment of their members. It led also to some re-evaluating the need for their members to work in Catholic schools. Nevertheless, developments did not negate the assumption held by many who led Catholic education in Western Australia that the ‘presence’ of religious in a Catholic school was considered important. In response, during the 1970s, leaders of Catholic education in Western Australia considered how best to provide a religious preparation for those lay teachers who increasingly began to take the place of religious in Catholic schools. In conceiving of such preparation, they aimed to instil a ‘new’ religious ‘character’ or ethos within lay teachers. It also led Church, system and school leaders to reemphasise the importance they attached to the religious character or ‘ethos’ of Catholic schools.

⁹ K. Williams, “Teaching, learning and the curriculum,” in *Education in a Catholic Perspective*, ed. S. McKinney and J. Sullivan (London: Routledge, 2016), 194.

The type of preparation envisaged by the latter was often referred to as 'formation'. Moreover, the processes they employed frequently borrowed from and made use of techniques valued by those who provided 'formation' for members of each of the different religious orders. For instance, where leaders of a school provided training for their staff, and where the school had been founded and operated by the Dominican Sisters, then the type of training provided drew upon Dominican formation practices.¹⁰

Differences of opinion amongst those who led Catholic education and Catholic schools also played a role in the construction of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools. For example, for the period 1929-1962, ecclesiastical differences of opinion and regional rivalry between authorities in the Archdiocese of Sydney and the Archdiocese of Melbourne prevented work proceeding on the development of a new catechism for use in Australian Catholic schools. It was only during the late 1950s and early 1960s that a consensus developed on the matter among the Catholic bishops of Australia. That involved them agreeing on the direction religion as a school subject should take in Australia and resulted in them approving the development of new catechisms and the *My Way to God* series. The consensus, however, was short-lived and by the late 1960s controversies associated with religion as a school subject led to public displays of disunity amongst some Australian Catholic bishops.

Regarding the latter in the case of Western Australia, there was some variation in relation to the general trend. In 1970 the Catholic bishops of the State agreed to create a State-wide body to oversee Catholic education throughout the State. Members

¹⁰ K. Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1996).

of that new body, the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) established a new centralised pattern of governance that removed oversight of Catholic education in the State from individual diocesan authorities and those leaders of religious communities who had traditionally held that responsibility. Nevertheless, it is important to qualify this proposition. Certainly, the creation of that centralised decision-making body did provide leaders of Catholic education in Western Australia with a means to bring a more uniform approach to the administration of Catholic education in the State than had previously been the case. The reality, however, was that membership of CECWA and the leadership of Catholic schools across the State continued to reflect shifting amalgamations of subgroups and traditions, especially in relation to religious teaching orders.

When Rev. McMahon was Director of Catholic Education, he promoted a comprehensive vision for religion as a subject. Yet he too had to navigate the various subgroups and traditions associated with Catholic education in the State when promoting his vision. Further, it will be recalled that during much of the sub-period, 1971-1982, the process of constructing religion as a subject received little attention from leaders of Catholic education in Western Australia. Two reasons likely account for that situation. First, in Western Australia leaders of Catholic education and Catholic schools were preoccupied with negotiating and implementing significant changes to the governance and administration of Catholic schooling in the State. Secondly, any new initiatives approved at an official level ran the risk of generating disagreement and controversy and thus tended to be avoided. The combination of both resulted in the former being given priority.

The second hypothesis considered

The second hypothesis stated at the outset is that “in the process of establishing religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools, there was a progression from promoting pedagogic and utilitarian traditions to an academic tradition.” This hypothesis is partly upheld in relation to how historically religion as a subject for Catholic schools in Western Australia was constructed over the period 1929 to 1982. Further, rather than viewing what eventuated as being in terms of a linear progression, the process was more circular, with religion as a school subject with an academic focus experiencing both advances and retreats.

The latter process, it is contended, was due partly to the existence of an unresolved tension between the purposes of the subject, namely, religious enculturation and learning about the Catholic faith. Additionally, upholding that dual purpose often led those responsible for religion as a subject to construct a hybrid discipline with proponents and practitioners wanting to improve the academic learning of the subject while also wanting to foster within children a personal commitment to the Catholic faith. To some, those aims were mutually exclusive. For others, they were not. As a result, they sought find ways to harmonise the aims and pedagogical methods appropriate to both.

At the heart of that matter was a Catholic view of education and its purposes. On that, Williams¹¹ identified several elements typically associated with a Catholic philosophy of education. Amongst those was the idea that the school complements the work of the home and extends the religious formation to be found in the home. The teacher too was considered to have a special role to play in the process of education,

¹¹ K. Williams, “Teaching, learning and the curriculum,” in *Education in a Catholic Perspective*, 191-207.

including modelling what it meant to be religious. Also, there was a view that there was a personal dimension to knowledge, with learning considered not to be a neutral process, that the curriculum should have “integrated character”, and “a conviction of possessing the truth and wishing to communicate this to the young generation”¹², should be embraced.

The latter matter can be illustrated by considering that during the sub-period, 1929-1962, Rev. McMahon, particularly in his early years as Director of Diocesan Inspector of Religious Doctrine, promoted innovations for religion as a classroom subject. Those were aimed at improving pedagogic practice and were informed by contemporary developments in education and catechetics.¹³ For example, for his innovations he drew upon psychology and “swung more towards pupils learning rather than teachers teaching”.¹⁴ He also promoted principles of learning that included beginning with concrete facts before moving to more abstract concepts, promoted classroom strategies that fostered active participation, encouraged the use of group work and identified age-appropriate teaching techniques.

Rev. McMahon grappled too with a perennial challenge encountered by many of those who led and taught religion as a subject in Catholic schools throughout all three sub-periods, namely, how to apply education principles in the religion classroom in a way that promoted rather than weakened the faith of the child, both during a child’s learning and later in their life.¹⁵ Addressing that concern accounts for an important change in his focus during the 1930s, when he began to emphasise for teachers the need to see personal faith as a key outcome for religion as a subject. That

¹² Ibid, 195.

¹³ R. Rummery, *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1975), 7-10.

¹⁴ Ibid, 8.

¹⁵ Ibid.

led him to develop and promote *Pray the Mass* as a religion text for use both inside and outside of the religion classroom. Another important stimulus for that was the teachings of Pope Pius X on the Mass and of Pope Pius XI teachings about education, specifically in the encyclical, *Divini Illius Magistri (That Divine Teacher)*.¹⁶

Another example pertains to the sub-period 1962-1971. During that time, the kerygmatic approach was endorsed as the preferred pedagogical approach by leaders within the Australian Catholic Church. The underlying premise of it was that religion as a subject needed to be renewed so that it promoted in each child a personal encounter with the kerygma and, in turn, a personal faith response to that message. To achieve that, the preferred pedagogy, content, and method for the subject were changed.¹⁷ Those who developed curriculum materials, like the new catechisms and the 'My Way to God' series, associated with that new approach all had that objective in mind. They also made use of contemporary principles of education and of contemporary pedagogical theory used for the teaching of secular subjects. Further, like Rev. McMahon before them, those who promoted the kerygmatic approach expressed a belief that achieving personal faith as an outcome depended upon sound educational theory and practice. Therefore, during both sub-periods, 1929-1962 and 1962-1971, those responsible for constructing religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools aimed to foster the development of an academic tradition within it.

During the third sub-period considered, namely 1971-1982, however, the latter aim changed. Both the practice of teachers and those who promoted the theory behind the new life-centred catechesis now became less concerned than previously about

¹⁶ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), 3 March 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html.

¹⁷ R. Rummery, *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society*, 11.

maintaining an academic tradition within religion as a subject. Instead, they opted for a process to be used in the religion classroom that aimed to promote a personal engagement with questions about life and faith. Thus, the subject was given a catechetical orientation.

At the same time, lack of clarity about the distinctiveness of religion as a classroom subject during that third sub-period, also undermined the academic rigour of the subject. Indeed, many considered the purpose of the time given to religion in the classroom as an opportunity for paying further attention to the pastoral and formative aspects of the Catholic school.

In considering the matter of the academic tradition further, it is instructive to look back to the sub-period 1929-1962 and note that it was evident in Archbishop Clune's decision to recruit Rev. McMahon. That initial decision was followed by McMahon's appointment to positions of leadership within Western Australian Catholic education, including as Diocesan Inspector of Religious Doctrine. Mostly during his first two decades in Australia, Rev. McMahon made significant contributions aimed at improving the quality of the religion curriculum and methods employed by teachers in the religion classroom.

The decisions made by Archbishop Clune and the contributions made by Rev. McMahon to the construction of religion as a subject were clearly directed towards advancing the subject in Catholic schools in Western Australia. That situation reflected a desire for religious education in Catholic schools in Western Australia to be located in Beeby's¹⁸ third stage of development in education systems, namely the 'Stage of Transition'. In other words, they sought to have teachers who were better

¹⁸ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

educated than those who had received a basic training and to have a curriculum that demanded more than previously of both the teacher and the student.

During the next sub-period, 1962-1971, too, those who were responsible for developing the new catechisms and the 'My Way to God' series were thorough in their preparation of new material to support religion as a classroom subject. The extent of those efforts demonstrated that across Australia there was a desire to improve the quality of religion as a classroom subject. That situation indicates also that those who led the changes aspired to the teaching of religion in Catholic schools to be located in Beeby's fourth stage of development, namely, the 'Stage of Meaning'.¹⁹

Beeby's fourth stage, however, assumes that teachers are well educated and well trained. Many teachers of religion in Western Australian Catholic schools, however, were not. Further, having only recently been required to adopt an alternative approach to teaching the subject during the preceding sub-period, many had not yet acquired the skills needed to try to move circumstances from Beeby's 'Stage of Formalism'. That is, having only received a basic training they were, during the 1970s expected to make sense of and use a newer and more demanding approach than that to which they were accustomed. In Melbourne, however, those challenges at least appear to have been appreciated and efforts were made by those responsible for implementing changes to religion as a subject to provide teachers with appropriate preparation.

To complicate the situation, during the third sub-period religion as a subject underwent further evolution. That development saw Catholic school leaders and teachers being encouraged to shift their focus from religion in the classroom to how a culture and climate can be created in schools to support the religious formation of students. That change re-emphasised a long-standing assumption that the environment

¹⁹ Ibid.

of a Catholic school should be religious and educative. About it, Crawford and Rossiter²⁰ stated:

The development of students' religious faith within the context of the Catholic faith tradition has long been, and rightly remains, a fundamental aim of Catholic school religious education. However, interpretations of what this means in practice have been problematic, especially with reference to use of the construct 'faith development'.

The usual effect, however, was that religion as an academic classroom subject either became diminished or the classroom became another space within the school where the desired culture and climate need for the personal faith of each student could be formed.

Referring further to the latter developments, Crawford and Rossiter²¹ identified the situation as a "quest for personalism and relevance in religious education" and stated:

Student-centredness is rightly judged to be a desirable quality of education; it has long been prominent in religious education in both theory and practice, with varying success. Within the last decade or so, new names have been coined for particular strands in traditional subjects – for example: Mathematics and Society, Contemporary English, People in History. The word 'Society' added to Mathematics illustrated the movement to try to make subjects more relevant. In some cases, an unintended consequence of the new terminology has been an implied labelling of these strands as 'low grade' for slow learners (for example 'Vege maths'). Nevertheless, the introduction of such units showed that curriculum developers and teachers were trying to relate subjects to the perceived needs and interests of young people. However, there was ambiguity about what constituted relevance. What were the criteria? Who would judge on relevance – teachers or students?²²

The latter questions remained unanswered although to address others of a similar nature, theorists and practitioners turned to psychology. Some, consequently, borrowed from the work of academics like Erikson (on psychological development),

²⁰ M. Crawford and G. Rossiter, "Historical perspective on religious education in Catholic schools: Towards a relevant religious education for the future," in *Reasons for Living: Education and Young People's Search for Meaning, Identity and Spirituality: A Handbook*, (Camberwell, Vic.: ACER Press, 2006), 410.

²¹ Ibid, 391-422.

²² Ibid, 391.

Piaget (on cognitive development), Kohlberg (on moral development) and Fowler (on faith development) to identify what were the perceived needs and interests of young people and how those could be best addressed when dealing with matters associated with personal faith.²³

Analysis throughout this thesis of the construction of religion as a subject in Western Australian Catholic schools was also informed by Flynn's²⁴ three-stage linear model, namely, that of 'traditional catechesis', 'kerygmatic catechesis' and 'experiential catechesis'. Ryan²⁵ subsequently updated that model, adding two stages, namely, 'shared Christian praxis' and 'religious education'. While the position of both informed the organisation of this study into three sub-periods, namely, 1929-62, 1962-71, and 1971-82, it was valuable also in stimulating thinking on possible nuances and variations in relation to the subject in the State. On that, it assisted in arriving at the conclusion that the dominant construction associated with religion as a subject in Catholic schools there during the first sub-period, 1929-1962, was 'traditional catechesis'. At the same time, and under the leadership of Rev. McMahon, some aspects of what Rummery²⁶ referred to as the 'pedagogical approach' were also imported into the construction of the subject. Within that broad category were the ideas from proponents of a variety of different schools of catechetical thought, including those associated with the Munich Method, Rev. Jungmann's kerygmatic catechesis, F. H. Drinwater's views promoted through his magazine 'The Sower', and those of

²³ Ibid, 391-422.

²⁴ M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools 2000: A Longitudinal Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic Schools, 1972-1998; 1990-1998*; M. Flynn, *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools, 1972-1993*; M. Flynn, *The Effectiveness of Catholic Schools: A Ten-year Study of Year 12 Students in Catholic High Schools*; M. Flynn, *Catholic Schools and the Communication of Faith: A Study of the Mission of Catholic Schools Today for Parents, Teachers and Students*; M. Flynn, *Some Catholic Schools in Action: A Sociological Study of Sixth Form Students in 21 Catholic Boys' High Schools*.

²⁵ M. Ryan, *A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools*.

²⁶ R. Rummery, *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society*, 7-10.

“Pierre Ranwez of the International Centre for Religious Education, *Lumen Vitae*”.²⁷

All, notwithstanding their differences, shared a desire to advance religion as a subject by improving pedagogical practice.

Regarding the second sub-period, 1962-1971, ‘kerygmatic catechesis’ was the dominant construction. Proponents of that approach too, wanted to improve pedagogical practice in religion classrooms. However, in contrast to other approaches, they wanted to also renew the content and purpose, and the principal texts used by teachers.

By 1962 leaders within the Australian Catholic Church held a common view that a kerygmatic approach was required. They therefore collectively oversaw the development of several different resources that were designed to support the full implementation and use of that approach in all Catholic schools across the nation, including Western Australia. Those materials were widely recognised at the time as containing a full expression of the principles promoted by advocates of the kerygmatic approach. Further, that construction, consistent with this study’s second hypothesis, further progressed the academic tradition of religion as a subject.

Flynn’s model identifies ‘experiential catechesis’ as the dominant construction associated with the sub-period, 1971-1982. Proponents of that approach wanted to further progress religion as a subject too. The direction in which they wished to take it, however, differed from what was typically associated with other Australian school subjects in that they wanted to see classroom religion teachers adopt an overt pastoral focus, with students being able to examine how their own experiences related to Catholic faith. In Australia during the 1970s that pastoral focus grew in importance to the point where religion as an academic subject lost its relevance and teachers turned

²⁷ Ibid, 8.

their attention from classroom learning of religion to providing experiences that were aimed at immersing each child in a religious atmosphere designed to inculcate Catholic faith and help each to integrate that faith into one's own life. In terms of Goodson's view detailed in relation to second hypothesis stated, then, that change suggests that while innovative, religion as a subject with an academic tradition did not progress during the sub-period.

The third hypothesis considered

The third hypothesis stated at the outset maintains that "much of the debate which occurred about religion as a subject in the curriculum in Western Australian Catholic schools can be interpreted in terms of wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory". That hypothesis was also deemed to be upheld for all three sub-periods reported in this study.

Throughout much of the period overall, those leading and operating Catholic schools throughout the nation were preoccupied with two key issues. The first of these was the need to find the resources required to build and operate schools. The second was to uphold the ongoing commitment made by the Catholic bishops in the nation to a denominational system of schools that would provide Catholic children with instruction in the basic precepts of the faith.

In Western Australia, as in other parts of Australia, maintaining the latter situation relied upon the teaching of religion in Catholic schools and the presence of a distinctive Catholic ethos. That in turn, required that there be leaders and teachers to marshal from within the Catholic community the resources necessary for establishing and maintaining Catholic schools. The resources available, however, were often not sufficient. As a result, there was a need to campaign for the renewal of state-aid. An essential part of that campaigning was having an ability to demonstrate that the

education provided in a Catholic school was similar, if not superior to that found in State schools. Therefore, teachers in Catholic schools found that they had to be familiar with and follow State-prescribed curricula and maintain or exceed the standards set by the State school authorities.

The matters stated above are pertinent to considerations of the third hypothesis stated. On that, those responsible for constructing religion as a subject in Catholic schools often were attentive to how teachers, students, parents, and clerics perceived the value and relevance of the subject. Often that was informed by their experience of other subjects and what they observed occurring in education more broadly at the time. Such thinking, it will be recalled, brought Rev. McMahon to note early in his tenure that teachers appeared to not take the teaching of the subject as seriously as they did secular subjects.

Finding and campaigning for sufficient resources to establish and maintain a separate school system also taxed Church and school leaders, parents, and Catholic school teachers as they had to constantly divert their energies to associated tasks. Complicating the situation was the changing nature of schooling in Australia, due especially to the advent of the Great Depression, World War Two, and a post-War population boom. At other times it was the result of changes in perspective on education nationally, like the advent of an acceptance within the community from around 1950s that students should receive a secondary school education.

Changes within the Church were also influential. Of particular significance was the departure of many men and women from religious orders during the 1960s and 1970s. That meant that the viability of a separate system of schooling sustained solely by the Catholic community in Australia became precarious. As a result, leaders and members of that community needed to find new ways and means to sustain

Catholic schools across the nation. Further, aside from where their focus lay, the situation meant that they could not always allocate all of the resources deemed necessary to support the development of religion as a subject and its teaching in Catholic schools. For example, leaders had to be mindful of the cost of texts for religion classes. They were also unable to provide teachers with a lot of preparation. Moreover, when efforts were made by Church leaders to address related shortcomings that was only when the more pressing demands of finding resources had been addressed to some satisfaction.

Another example of wide conflict was what took place in relation to the development of a new catechism. On that, leaders of the Australian Catholic Church throughout the sub-period, 1929-1962, were unable to agree on how the text would be written and on what to include and exclude. Indeed, it was not until the 1950s that they began to overcome their related ecclesiastical differences of opinion and regional rivalries. When that occurred during the second sub-period, 1962-1971, many of the perceived necessary developments associated with religion as a subject were then able to take place. Further, when those differences were overcome, leaders of the Australian Catholic Church were able to oversee the development of curriculum resource materials for religion that many at the time recognised to be comprehensive and world-class. Equally, when disagreements between Church leaders re-emerged towards the end of the sub-period, 1962-1971, and then festered during the third sub-period, 1971-1982, further innovation and reform undertaken in relation to the subject became controversial and eventually stalled.

In addition, during the sub-period 1971-1982, views held by theorists and practitioners about the nature of religion as a subject for Catholics began to diverge. Some, it will be recalled, argued for a more academic subject while others wanted to

improve its catechetical dimensions. Others yet again considered it more important to foster experiences of faith formation inside and outside of the school, with the religion classroom providing a dedicated space where associated activities could take place and be supported. Certainly, theorists and practitioners in previous decades had also promoted alternative viewpoints about possible directions for religion as a subject. However, the views they expressed then and the degree of divergence between them were less.

To clarify the latter contention, two points need to be made. First, it was not until the 1970s that theorists and practitioners consciously began to debate the presumed catechetical orientation of religion as a subject for Catholic schools. Both inside and out of the Catholic Church, theorists then began to argue that the teaching of religion could no longer presume that the student in the religion classroom was interested in faith, had a personal faith, and had an experience of faith practices outside of the school. Further, and in response to that situation and because the teaching of religion took place in a school setting, they argued that religion as a school subject should have its understandings of how best to teach religion drawn from education and not from catechetics.

Secondly, the degree and extent of difference in the views expressed by catechetical theorists prior to the 1970s tended to be more about where emphases should be placed. For example, about developments during the first sub-period, 1929-1962, Rummery,²⁸ stated:

... there are many instances of catechists who were dissatisfied with a narrow text explanation and memorisation as the chief criteria for the value of their work. Increasingly, however, in the spirit of the Munich Method, there were applications to the teaching of religion of the main advances in educational thinking, especially in the field of educational psychology and its application to learning ... Chronologically speaking, the pedagogic approach followed the

²⁸ Ibid, 7-8.

magisterial approach; perhaps at times it developed in reaction to it, as was the case with much of the work of F.H. Drinkwater through his magazine 'The Sower'.

Further, it will be recalled that while innovative in terms of pedagogy, Rev. McMahon during the same sub-period was criticised for maintaining the essential ingredients of traditional catechesis, notwithstanding his application of pedagogical theory.

Again, during the second sub-period, 1962-1971, further innovation saw dependence upon the use of a traditional catechism in the religion classroom replaced by a series of age-appropriate texts. Use of those by teachers was intended to shift the learning of the child from catechism dogma to learning about the 'kerygma'. Yet, even in those texts, traditional catechism dogma remained. Moreover, those texts developed for use by older children and teenagers were still called 'catechisms'. Where they differed from their predecessors was in the nature of the content covered.

At this point it needs to be highlighted that the research questions stated at the outset were not specific questions that the author set out to answer. Further, it should be emphasised that models put forward in Chapter One were used to stimulate and organise thinking. At no stage, however, was there an intention that the study be about validating them or otherwise. Nevertheless, it would be remiss to conclude without at least commenting that Flynn's model can be contested in light of the results.

Finally, returning to Rummery once more, it is important to note that his analysis of how religion was constructed during the first sub-period, contrasts with that proposed by Flynn's model. The latter holds that the first sub-period was dominated by traditional catechesis. Rummery, on the other hand, argues that from the 1930s another approach coexisted, namely, what he referred to as the 'pedagogical approach'. On that, he stated, "this was not simply the continuation of the traditional catechetical activity of the Roman Catholic Church; it was a resurgence and in many

ways, an innovation”.²⁹ In Western Australia, the construction of religion as a subject for the sub-period 1929-1962, is best understood in the light of this contention.

Conclusion

The aim of the study reported throughout this thesis was to produce an historical analysis of how religion as a subject for Catholic schools in Western Australia was constructed over the period 1929 to 1982. This is the first time such a comprehensive study has ever been undertaken specifically focused on the Western Australian context. It contributes to two main bodies of literature, namely, the existing corpus of research on the history of curriculum, and the existing corpus of research on the history of religion as a school subject.

The study reported is on the pre-active curriculum. Having examined the construction of religion, it would be valuable for others now to consider the interactive curriculum. That would provide richer insights into the relationship between the curriculum as constructed with what took place in Western Australian Catholic schools. A combination of insights would also be instructive for considering how the history of religion as a school subject continues to find expression in the current constructions and associated practices. It would be particularly so for policy makers and practitioners not only in Western Australia, but also nationally and internationally. Those involved with religion as a school subject in schools that are not Catholic would also benefit.

Further research in the field of curriculum history for other subjects would also benefit from drawing on research approaches used in this thesis. To do so would facilitate the making of comparisons historically between how different subjects were

²⁹ Ibid, 1.

constructed. Collectively, those could contribute too to a richer historical understanding of curriculum design, curriculum development and curriculum innovation, and more broadly, education change.

To conclude, the research reported throughout this thesis has provided the first comprehensive study of religion as a school subject for Catholics in Western Australia. Thus, it has filled a gap in the curriculum history of religion as school subject in the State. It now remains a challenge for others to study the remaining period, namely, 1982 to the present.

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