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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE OFFICIAL TEACHING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ON MORAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

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Originally cast against the backdrop of the pan-Protestant public school, the manuscript follows Catholic magisterial teaching on religious/moral education in schools as the Church confronts the growing influence of the secular state in schooling in the latter stages of the 19th century and into the 20th.

Moral education is an ever-present reality in schooling, whether public or private, independent or church-affiliated. This presence is so because a fundamental purpose of schooling is the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next, and this heritage includes a set of morals, both beliefs and practices. It is also so because of the widespread belief that to maintain, or restore, values and virtues in society, one must begin with the schools.

Historian Michael Katz has argued convincingly that "...public schools have always been more concerned with morals than with minds.... (It) would constitute a minor educational revolution if the emphasis or primary goal of public schooling shifted from the development of character to the cultivation of intellect" (1976, p. 403). The American common school, "fathered" by Horace Mann, looked to the devotional reading of the King James version of the Bible coupled with the teaching of "common-core" Christianity to inculcate "American" virtues of the pan-Protestant variety in its youthful charges. Mann strongly opposed the attacks of his opponents that his school was not religious; he maintained that it was indeed religious, but not sectarian (Cremin, 1957). The so-called "parallel institutions" strategy, as the Protestant historian William B. Kennedy has phrased it (1966, p. 27), looked first to the common school and then to the denominational Sunday school to

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accomplish this primary moral mission of public schooling. As the 19th century progressed, a "compound of evangelical Protestantism and Enlightenment deism" (Michaelsen, 1970, pp. 121-122) served as the underlying moral principles of the common school enterprise.

Abounding recent evidence supports Katz's position quoted above. There are the Gallup Polls of the 1970s and 1980s which attest to the emphasis on behavior in the concerns of the public with its schools (Hunt, 1986). Witness the attention given to the moral development theories of Lawrence Kohlberg, so popular in the 1970s and 1980s; consider the reception given Sidney Simon and his colleagues' work on values clarification; the attention awarded the citizenship education programs advocated by R. Freeman Butts; and in our own day the character education movement under the leadership of Thomas Lickona.

What, exactly, do we mean by the term "moral"? According to the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (1970), moral is "of, pertaining to, or concerned with right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong" (Stein, 1970, p. 930). "Education" then is the process of teaching and learning in accord with that distinction.

How does moral education fit in the mission of Catholic schools? How, if at all, are its nature and place different from those of its public counterparts? First, it is important to note that the Catholic Church, in its official teaching, has not and does not distinguish between religious and moral education; it does not assign religious education to the home and Church, and moral education to the school, as some public educators have done and do. In the conclusion of their widely acclaimed book, Bryk, Lee, & Holland (1993) refer to moral education in what they term the distinguishing features of Catholic secondary schools in our day. Under the heading "Communal Organization," they contend that there is a "set of general moral commitments," which underlies the "set of shared beliefs about what students should learn, about proper norms of instruction, and about how people should relate to one another" (p. 299). Going on, Bryk and his colleagues maintain under "An Inspirational Ideology" that Catholic schools adhere to a "belief in the capacity of human reason to arrive at ethical truth" (p. 302). Finally, these schools hold to the principle which "affirms a public place for moral norms" (p. 302). It is the purpose of this paper to present the modern history of the official teaching of the Catholic Church on moral education for its schools. This task will be carried out by viewing that teaching against the backdrop of American society in general and its public schools in particular, because of the critical influence that society and those schools had on the development, existence, and operation of Catholic schooling in this country. The paper will begin with the Catholic position on moral education in the era of the common school in mid-19th century, and conclude with that position as it existed in the 1980s.

THE ERA OF THE COMMON SCHOOL

Horace Mann, as noted above, sought to maintain religion in the schools, minus what he believed were the socially divisive conflicts caused by sectarianism (Culver, 1929). Founded on the three pillars of Protestantism, capitalism, and republicanism (Kaestle, 1982), the common school was designed to form a new American character and bring social harmony to the nation. These schools, in their orientation, texts, personnel, and practices, were frequently biased against Catholics (Stokes, 1950; Tyack, 1974).

It is interesting to note the position of the American bishops as they confronted the moral/religious program of the common school and the advice/direction they provided the Catholic faithful in that regard. The First Provincial Council of Baltimore, meeting in 1829, attempted to motivate parents to see to the religious education of their children by reminding them of the words of Christ: "Suffer the little children to come unto me"; described Hell as "too frequently the necessary consequence of improper education"; and warned parents that if they did not adopt the proper hierarchy of values, "What will it avail them to gain the whole world if they lose their soul?" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, pp. 52-53). The "Pastoral" of the Second Provincial Council of Baltimore, held in 1833, called attention to the great efforts made by the bishops to "provide schools...united to a strict protection of their morals and the best safeguards of their faith" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 56). Four years later, in the Third Provincial Council of Baltimore, the bishops urged the faithful "to unite your efforts to ours for upholding these institutions which we have created for the education of your children" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 56).

It was in the Fourth Provincial Council, held in 1840, that the hierarchy explicitly referred for the first time to difficulties with the public schools. (Note that Horace Mann was appointed Secretary of the State Board of Education in Massachusetts in 1836. The Common School originates with Mann's acceptance of that post.) They complained of textbooks and even the very system itself being directed against the Church, which, in their words, made it "no easy matter thus to preserve the faith of your children in the midst of so many difficulties" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 61). The bishops also protested against the practice of Bible reading in the schools, both because the King James version used was not authorized by the Church and because the circumstances in which it was read led to "contempt," rather than respect, for the word of God (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 60). Terming the proper education of the children a "dear subject," ideally to be conducted in Catholic educational establishments, the bishops complained that the Catholic people, while they were "disposed" to profit from these institutions, were "not always so ready to aid in defraying the expenses which should necessarily be incurred in having them secured and made permanent" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 58). The shepherds of the flock were even more

forceful in their denunciations of the kinds of moral education utilized in the public schools in their "Pastoral" of 1843. Accordingly, they exhorted parents to vigilance and reminded them of the seriousness of the obligations which emanated from their state in life:

> We have seen with serious alarm, efforts made to poison the fountains of public education, by giving it a sectarian hue, and accustoming children to the use of a version of the Bible made under sectarian bias, and placing in their hands books of various kinds replete with offensive and dangerous matter.... Parents are strictly bound, like faithful Abraham, to teach their children the truths which God has revealed; and if they suffer them to be led astray, the souls of the children will be required at their hands. Let them, therefore,...see that no interference with the faith of their children be used in public schools, and no attempt made to induce conformity in any thing contrary to the laws of the Catholic Church....(as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 63)

In 1852, following further immigration of Catholics, a majority of whom were Irish, the bishops returned to Baltimore for the first national or plenary council. Assembled in solemn convocation, the hierarchy again reminded parents of their God-delegated custodianship over their children and both warned and advised them: "...what terrible expectation of judgment that will fill his soul, should his children perish through his criminal neglect, or his obstinate refusal to be guided in the discharge of his paternal duties, by the authority of God's church" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 79). To assist parents in meeting this obligation, at the Second Provincial Council of Cincinnati, in 1858, the bishops of the Province placed the burden of erecting Catholic schools, where possible, squarely upon the shoulders of the pastors, "under pain of mortal sin" (as cited in Burns, 1912, p. 186). Three years later the Province's leaders followed this admonition up with a harsh description of the moral deficiencies of the public school system, and of its most severe effects, as they existed in 1861:

> Under the influence of this plausible, but most unwise system of Common School education, the rising generation has been educated either without any definite principles at all, or with false, at least, more or less exaggerated and fanatical principles. The system itself, if carried out, is well calculated to bring up a generation of rising indifferentists, if not of practical infidels; and, if not carried out, its tendency is to develop false or very defective, if not dangerous, religious principles. (as cited in Jenkins, 1886, p. 34)

To avert the evil of having their children perish, parents were urged to give their children a Christian education, that is an education based on religious influence.

> Be not led astray by the false and delusive theories which are so prevalent, and which leave youth without religion, and consequently, without anything to control the passions, promote the real happiness of the individual, and make society find in the increase of its members, a source of security and prosperity. Listen not to those who would persuade you that religion can be separated from secular instruction. (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 80)

The bishops then gave Catholic parents specific advice as to how they should ensure the religious/moral education of their children:

> Encourage the establishment and support of Catholic schools; make every sacrifice which may be necessary for this object; spare our hearts the pain of beholding youth whom, after the example of our Master, we so much love, involved in all the evils of an uncatholic education, evils too multiplied and too obvious to require that we should do more than raise our voices in solemn protest against the system from which they spring. (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, pp. 80-81)

In 1800 approximately 1% of the nation's population was Catholic (Daniel-Rops, 1967). The 19th century saw masses of Europeans flock to America's shores. Between 1821 and 1850 almost 2.5 million immigrants came, with 1,713,251 arriving in the decade of the 1840s. (United States Bureau of the Census, 1895). Many of these immigrants were Catholic, and they swelled the nation's Catholic population. Shortly before the First Plenary Council, five ecclesiastical provinces were created in the United States, two of them being Cincinnati and St. Louis, which were to form the two bases of the so-called "German triangle" in the midwest. Fresh from the church-state conflicts over education in their native land, the leaders of the Church in Cincinnati, especially, were quick to support the indispensable role of Catholic schools in the life of the Church and in forming proper religious/moral behavior in the young. Coming out against public schools and in favor of Catholic schools, the Church's leaders of Cincinnati declared in 1855:

> We admonish pastors of souls again and again to strive by all the means in their power to prevent the boys and girls entrusted to them from frequenting those schools which they cannot attend without grave danger to their faith and morals; and at the same time we exhort parents to aid and sustain parochial schools and others schools which are under Catholic direction. (as cited in Burns & Kohlbrenner, 1937, p. 138)

It is interesting to note the entrance of the ethnic factor in the bishops' words. They acknowledged with gratitude the example of the German parishes to establish parochial schools and they set them up as models to be emulated by their fellow Catholics:

> Our excellent German congregations leave us nothing to desire on this subject. The children attend at Mass every morning, they sing with one accord the power of God, they go from the church to the school. They are accustomed to cleanliness and neatness of dress, to diligent and affectionate respect of their parents, the Reverend Clergy, and their teachers. We have nothing more at heart than that the pupils of our English schools should imitate their example. (as cited in Burns & Kohlbrenner, 1937, p. 138)

A year after the Civil War ended, the bishops of the young nation convened once more in Baltimore for the Second Plenary Council. Again they took up the subject of education, reaffirmed the teaching of Baltimore I and added that "religious teaching and religious training should form part of every system of school education" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 82). They called attention to what they termed a "prevalent error," i.e., parents consulting their children's wishes as to which school they would attend. They instructed parents to: "Prepare your children for the duties of the state or condition of life they are likely to be engaged in; do not exhaust your means in bestowing on them an education that may unfit them for those duties" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 83). It was at Baltimore II that the bishops reminded the faithful that the Church was God's guide for the faithful in moral, as well as dogmatic, matters, unlike the "sects," in which the individual decides. The Church, as a "divine institution," taught what the "Law of God forbids or allows," and Catholics were to follow that teaching in forming their positions on issues in which the Church had spoken.

THE CONFLICT SHIFTS AND ESCALATES

Following the Civil War, and in part due to the mighty industrial colossus which the North became because of it, the basis for moral education in the public schools in much of the urban north shifted to nationalistic norms, based on good citizenship. Thus, William Torrey Harris, at one time Superintendent of Schools in St. Louis and later United States Commissioner of Education, could make the distinction between religious education, which was the province of home and church, and moral education, which was the responsibility of the school. Harris further identified seven virtues, which he called the foundation of morality in these schools: "punctuality, regularity, perseverance, earnestness, justice, truthfulness, and industry" (as cited in Troen, 1975, p. 48).

Confrontations with the civil state had been going on for some years in Europe. These struggles had contributed to the issuance of the controversial "Syllabus of Errors" by Pope Pius IX in 1864. In this document the Pontiff condemned a number of political, philosophical, and educational positions. Among those relevant to our purposes which received his censure are Propositions 45, 47, and 48:

45. The entire direction of public schools, in which the youth of Christian states are educated, except (to a certain extent) in the case of episcopal seminaries, may and must appertain to the civil power, and belong to it so that no other authority whatsoever shall be recognized as having any right to interfere in the discipline of the schools, the arrangement of the studies, the taking of degrees, or the choice and approval of teachers.
47. The best theory of civil society requires that popular schools open to the children of all classes, and generally, all public institutes intended for instruction in letters and philosophy, and for conducting the education of the young, should be freed from all ecclesiastical authority, government, and interference, and should be fully subject to the civil and political power, in conformity with the will of rulers and the prevalent opinions of the age.
48. This system of instructing youth, which consists in separating it from the Catholic faith and power of the Church, and in teaching exclusively, or at least primarily, the knowledge of natural things and the earthly ends of social life alone, may be approved by Catholics. (as cited in Helmreich, 1964, pp. 2-5)

That this document was to have universal application is clear from the introduction, in which Cardinal Antonelli wrote that the Pope ordered it to be sent "to all the Bishops of the Catholic world," so these prelates might "have before their eyes all the errors and pernicious doctrines which he has repudiated and condemned" (as cited in Hales, 1962, p. 206). Catholics, the Pope had declared in his encyclical "Quanta Cura," which was issued the same day as the "Syllabus," could not avoid sin if they refused "assent and obedience to those decisions and decrees of the Apostolic See which dealt with the Church's welfare, rights and discipline" (as cited in Clarkson, Edwards, Kelly, & Welch, 1955, pp. 85-86).

Individual American bishops added their voices to that of the Pope. In 1872 Archbishop J. B. Purcell of Cincinnati stated:

> The Catholic school is the nursery of the Catholic congregation. The one should stand under the protecting shadow of the other. This duty they do not discharge who send not the children under their care to a Catholic school when in their power. We see not how they, who willfully and deliberately neglect this duty, can worthily approach, or be conscientiously admitted to the sacraments....their (the children's) souls while yet pure, their parents will not sacrifice for the kind of education received in Godless or sectarian schools. (as cited in Jenkins, 1886, pp. 82-83)

Bishop St. Palais of Vincennes presented his objections to the kind of moral/religious education (or absence thereof) in the public schools in a series of statements:

1. We object to the public schools on account of the *infidel* source from which they originated.
2. We object to those schools because the teaching of religion is excluded from them, and such exclusion will *inevitably* produce religious indifference, if not infidelity.
3. We object to these schools because religious instruction which is necessarily connected with the acquirement of secular knowledge cannot be introduced in them without interfering with the conscientious rights and wounding the most delicate feelings of the pupils.
4. We object to these schools again because the promiscuous assembling of both sexes of a certain age is injurious to the morals of the children, and because we dread associations which might, in time, prove pernicious to them and distressing to their parents. (as cited in Jenkins, 1886, p. 89)

Two Ohio bishops used their Lenten Pastorals in 1873 to address the educational conflict. Bishop Rosecrans of Columbus placed the frequenting of Catholic schools on the same level of importance with the Divinity of Jesus and the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist:

> ...(the implication) that Godless schools are good enough for Catholic children is condemned by the authority of the Church. He who holds it pertinaciously ceases to be a Catholic as thoroughly as if he denied the Real Presence or the Divinity of Jesus Christ. (as cited in Jenkins, 1886, p. 86)

Bishop Gilmour of Cleveland argued for the erection of the school before the church in a parish, on the grounds that "There is little danger of the old losing their faith, but there is every danger that the young will." Reminding his flock that there must be "no division" on the school question, Gilmour contended that "the public schools are organized and managed for the interests of Protestants" (as cited in Jenkins, 1886, p. 84-85). Archbishop Elder, Purcell's successor in Cincinnati, was even more forceful in his support of the Church's official position on the school question, stating that its declarations were so clear "that there is nothing for a Catholic to do but obey them, or renounce his religion; he that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican" (as cited in Jenkins, p. 86).

The state of Wisconsin was to become a battleground between church and state over education in the late 1880s. The ground for that strife was laid in preceding years by heavy immigration into the state. For instance, in 1870, of the 1,064,985 inhabitants of Wisconsin, 364,499 were foreign-born, with 717,832 having one or both parents foreign born. Of those with foreign nativities, 162,314 hailed from Germany (United States Bureau of the Census, 1872). Agitation to build Catholic schools, especially in German congregations, was strong. In his Lenten Pastoral of 1872, Archbishop Henni of Milwaukee reminded his flock of the moral importance of having parish schools: "Every congregation, therefore, is *in duty bound—a duty its mem-*

bers owe both to God and society—to have its own *parish school* established; because the attendance at Public Schools *generally* results in the ruin of the tender soul" (as cited in Jenkins, 1886, p. 100).

Bishop Heiss, to be Henni's successor in Milwaukee, while still at the helm of the LaCrosse Diocese publicly worried over the fate of Catholic youngsters in public schools:

> We grieve in our inmost heart when we look on the children growing up in our diocese!—for, far the greater number of them are either without any school, or go to the Public Schools, where so many of them imbibe in their tender souls the poisonous germs of infidelity and immorality. (as cited in Jenkins, 1886, p. 99)

Heiss's successor, Kilian C. Flasch, who like Henni and Heiss had been born in Bavaria, re-emphasized the theme of the necessity of Catholic schools for the children to receive the religious/moral education which was their divine right, in his 1882 Lenten Pastoral:

> The place where this divine right is secure to the children is the Christian school. There is no other chance for a sufficient Christian training and education of our youth. It is a mockery to say that the parents should instruct their children in catechism at home and prepare them for the holy sacraments. They have neither the time, nor the patience, and frequently not the ability, for such a task. (as cited in Biechler, 1958, p. 1)

Under the leadership of the bishops, Catholic schools in Wisconsin flourished. In 1880, with a membership of 306,000, they totaled 167 schools with an enrollment of 19,548 *(Sadlier's Catholic Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1880*, 1880, p. xxii).

Support for the indispensability of the Catholic school in the religious and moral upbringing of the young was not limited to bishops from the midwest. Bishop James Gibbons, while Ordinary of Richmond in 1873, later to be the Cardinal Archbishop of Baltimore, noted that the "religious and secular education" of Catholic children cannot be separated from each other without resulting in the "*loss of Catholic faith.*" Without religious education of the young, Gibbons maintained, "twenty years hence, it will be much easier to find churches for a congregation, than a congregation for our churches" (as cited in Jenkins, pp. 121-122). Ten years later, in 1883, as Archbishop of Baltimore he placed the future of the Catholic Church in the country in the "success or failure of our day-schools" (as cited in Jenkins, 1886, p. 122).

It was at this juncture that, in 1875, the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith issued its "Instruction," which was approved by the Pope, on Catholic schools. The Congregation was responding to a request from some American bishops on the matter, and, since the United States was officially a

mission country, it had jurisdiction in the affair. The Congregation declared that the system of public education was opposed to Catholicism since it excluded all religious instruction and thus constituted a great evil if children were allowed to be exposed to it. Since these schools were not under the control of the Church, teachers were selected "from every sect indiscriminately" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 122). Coeducation further endangered the children's morals. The danger of perversion of the faith must be rendered remote, for if it were not, natural, divine, and universal law dictated that Catholic children cannot in conscience attend such schools. The Congregation urged the bishops to use every means to prevent Catholics "from all contact with public schools," to establish Catholic schools, and to improve upon existing parochial schools (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 123). All Catholics were reminded of their duty of financially supporting Catholic schools. American Catholics were told that nothing prevented them from averting, "with God's help, the dangers with which Catholicity is threatened from the public school system," and having their own schools (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 124). It was up to the bishop to determine if parents were exempt from sending their children to Catholic schools. Pastors and parents were enjoined to provide the young, especially those in public schools, with religious training, and the latter were instructed to keep their children away from peers "whose company might be dangerous to their faith or morals" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 126). Parents who did not provide such training, or who sent their children to public schools without sufficient reason and without rendering the danger of perversion remote, could not "be absolved" (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, p. 126).

THE "AMERICANISM" PERIOD

As the 19th century neared its close, the secular state, which had replaced pan-Protestantism as the chief protagonist of the Catholic Church in educational matters, increased its activities in the field of education. Laws were passed relating to the use of English, compulsory attendance measures were enacted (sometimes in conjunction with the English language legislation), and various certification and accreditation measures were put in place. The immigration of 11.5 million people from southern and eastern Europe between 1890 and 1920 (Butts & Cremin, 1953) spurred these actions, along with the fact that in 1909, 57.8% of the students in 37 of the nation's largest cities were either immigrant or the children of immigrants (United States Immigration Commission, 1911). Catholic authorities were wary of these organizational activities, undertaken to "Americanize" the young into the "melting pot," viewing them as a means of limiting the Church's freedom to carry out its religious/moral mission to educate its young.

In 1883 the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore was convoked at least in

part to address salient educational issues. The "Pastoral Letter" which the hierarchy subsequently issued included reference to the school question. Noting that there were indeed three agencies—home, church, and state—which contributed to the fostering of civilization through education, to "shut religion out of the school," as was done in public schooling, constituted "a more false and pernicious notion" than could be imagined (as cited in Guilday, 1923, p. 245). The shepherds of the flock called attention to happenings in Europe, where the enemies of Christianity were "banishing religion from the schools," which should constitute sufficient warning for all Christians in America. The prelates then concluded their "Letter" with the decrees that required parishes to "establish schools *in perpetuum*" unless the bishop permitted otherwise, and that Catholic parents send their children to these schools unless they gave their children sufficient religious training at home, or, with sufficient reason, and with the bishop's permission, could send them to other schools (as cited in McCluskey, 1964, pp. 93-94).

The parochial school issue, with the basic concern of the religious/moral instruction of the faithful, was closely related to other questions as to proper church-state relations. Prior to Baltimore III, Pope Leo XIII had issued several encyclicals which dealt with these "mixed matters" that have a bearing on the education topic. In 1878, for instance, he had issued *Inscrutabili* (On the Evils of Society), in which he alleged that the removal of public institutions from "the salutary direction of the Church" was the source of evils present in the world. One of these institutions was the school, where the Church's right "to instruct and bring up youth (was) violated and obstructed in every possible manner." The Pontiff urged the bishops throughout the world to do their utmost to make all education in accord with the Catholic faith (as cited in Husslein, 1940, p. 3).

Two years later he promulgated *Arcanum* (Christian Marriage), in which he wrote that Catholic parents were "bound to give all care and watchful thought to the education of their offspring and their virtuous bringing up," which included forming of associations with non-Catholics. Clearly, this instruction of the Pope indirectly advocated attendance at Catholic schools (as cited in Husslein, 1940, p. 30). It was in *Diuturnum* (On Civil Government), however, that Leo XIII addressed more directly the proper relationship which should exist between church and state. He acknowledged that "all things that are of a civil nature" were under the "power and authority" of the state, and called for "harmony" between the two institutions "so that injurious contests may be avoided" (as cited in Yates, 1958, p. 10). He denied, though, that "all power comes from the people," maintaining that Catholics "affirm that the right to rule is from God" (as cited in Yates, p. 10).

He followed up *Diuturnum* with *Immortale Dei* (The Christian Constitution of States) in 1885. Herein he informed the world that the civil state should allow the superior authority of the Church to hold sway in what

the Church considered to be its fields. Education was without a doubt a field in which the Church laid claim. Additionally, he bemoaned the destruction of the fruitful alliance between church and state which had existed prior to the Protestant Reformation. The discord between the two units, which had sown the "tenets of unbridled license" was the Reformation, hardly a statement which would be received with joy by Protestant America (as cited in Ryan & Millar, 1922, p. 12). Catholics throughout the world were urged to "love the Church," and were bound to attempt to effect "public provisions for the instruction of youth in religion and true morality" (as cited in Ryan & Millar, p. 22).

Pope Leo's major encyclical was to come in 1890 when he spoke out authoritatively in *Sapientiae Christianae* (On the Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens), in which he first instructed Catholics that their primary duty was to the Church, as the institution of God, not to any civil government. This duty included submission to the Church's teaching. Applied to education, the Pontiff repeated the position that parents have "exclusive authority in the education of their children." They were to exercise this authority in keeping with the Divine Law, which meant choosing schools which imbued their children with the principles of Christian morality, and by "absolutely opposing their children frequenting schools where they (were) exposed to the fatal poison of impiety." Most deserving of praise, he averred, were those "Catholics of all nationalities, who, at the expense of much money and more zeal, have erected schools for the education of their children..." (as cited in Husslein, 1940, p. 162). The letter was greeted with considerable criticism in the United States, where it was regarded as an intrusion of a church leader into the civic affairs of the nation.

Individual bishops, part of the teaching magisterium of the Catholic Church, also spoke out on schools and their religious/moral educational thrust in this era. For instance, the leader of the American Church, James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, penned that education without religion would be defective, and must needs inflict a "fatal wound upon the soul" (Gibbons, 1889a, p. 297). Later that year, speaking before the National Education Association (NEA), he contended that moral training was necessarily based on religion, and that it ought to be given at all times, not just once a week. The proper place for this to occur was in denominational schools (Gibbons, 1889b). Gibbons was followed on the platform at the NEA by Bishop John J. Keane, soon to be Rector of The Catholic University of America. He argued that the proper place for Christian training was the denominational Christian school, which he described as follows:

> What, above all, makes it a Christian school are the moral atmosphere, the general tone, the surrounding objects, the character of the teachers, the constant endeavor, the loving tact, the gentle skill, by which the light and spir-

> it of Christianity—its lessons for the head, for the heart, for the whole character—are made to pervade and animate the whole school-life of the child....(Keane, 1889, p. 117)

PAPAL TEACHING AT MID-20TH CENTURY

Confronted with the absolutes of "statisms" in the 20th century, namely Fascism and Communism and their claims of total control, Pope Pius XI wrote several encyclicals which addressed areas which had been and were the scenes of conflict between church and state. One of these encyclicals addressed education. In 1929 he issued *Divini Illius Magistri* (The Christian Education of Youth), in which the Holy Father set forth official Catholic teaching on education. Pius emphasized that education should be God-centered. The noted Jesuit educator Neil McCluskey has arranged some of the key passages of this papal letter around major educational points, which are germane to our purpose. These provide the "theological bases" for Christian education. The headings are McCluskey's; the passages are Pius XI's:

> ITS NATURE: ...there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end....
> IMPACT OF REVELATION: ...there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education....
> THE COMMON GOAL: The proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is, to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by baptism....
> THE RESULT: 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....
> BROAD SCOPE: Christian education takes in the whole aggregate of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social....
> SUPERNATURAL PERFECTS THE NATURAL: ... [Christian education takes in the whole aggregate of human life] 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. (McCluskey, 1959, pp. 77-78)

The Pontiff concluded his letter with an exhortation to Catholic parents that the ideal to be sought was "Catholic education in a Catholic school for all the Catholic youth" (as cited in Tracy, 1940, p. 61).

Enveloped by the culture of the Cold War in the 1950s, Pius XI's successor, Pius XII, speaking to a group of Italian mothers, urged them to choose "helpers who are Christians like yourselves" in the education of their children. Then he pointed out that the mothers were to "cooperate" with these

teachers so that their children's character could be formed properly and their piety fostered (as cited in Yzermans, 1957, p. xi). Subsequently addressing a group of Italian women engaged in Catholic education, the Pope maintained that the home needed the school—not just any school, but one with "teachers who side by side with Christian mothers...develop the training of their [the children's] minds, characters and hearts, bringing them up in a spiritual and moral atmosphere" (as cited in Yzermans, pp. 6-9).

THE TURMOIL OF VATICAN II

In 1959, Neil McCluskey wrote that "since the times of Archbishop Hughes of New York and the controversial 1840s, the Catholic position on education has remained substantially the same" (1959, p. 167). McCluskey's assertion was accurate; it was not destined to remain so. On October 6, 1962, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, which inaugurated a series of events which would envelop all things Catholic in a sea of change, including its schools.

It was a book authored by a Catholic laywoman, Mary Perkins Ryan, entitled *Are Parochial Schools the Answer?*, which was to be a portent of things to come for Catholic schools and their role in the religious/moral formation of the young. Briefly, Ryan wrote that the parochial school had contributed to parents' failure to develop sufficient confidence in their ability to instruct their children in religion; that while in theory the Church had affirmed the primary right of parents in the religious/moral upbringing of their children, in fact the parochial school had been substituted for them. With the emphasis on the formative role played by the liturgy and with the changing theology of the 1960s, which featured involvement in the world (incarnational) rather than withdrawal from it (separational), Ryan opted for focusing on adult education, the liturgy, and instructing parents that the task of religiously and morally educating children is theirs, not the parochial school's (Ryan, 1964).

In Vatican II itself, the Church fathers' most direct response to the role of Catholic schools was in *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Catholic Education). In this document the bishops declared that "Parents, who have the first and the inalienable duty and right to educate their children, should enjoy true freedom in their choice of schools" (as cited in Abbott, 1966, p. 644). They declared that the "Church's involvement in the field of education is demonstrated by the Catholic school." They stated further that the Catholic school was to be "evidenced by the gospel spirit of freedom and charity"; that it was to prepare the young so that their development would be matched by growth in their supernatural life due to Baptism; and that the school "strives to relate all human culture eventually to the news of salvation, so that the light of faith will illumine the knowledge which students gradually gain of

the world, of life, and of mankind" (as cited in Abbott, pp. 645-646). The purpose of the Catholic school, which "fittingly adjusts itself to the circumstances of advancing times," is so the graduate "by living an exemplary and apostolic life," can become "as it were, the saving leaven of the human family" (as cited in Abbott, p. 646). Turning to parents, the assembled prelates reminded them of their duty to "entrust their children to Catholic schools, when and where this is possible, to support such schools to the extent of their ability, and to work along with them for the welfare of their children" (as cited in Abbott, p. 647).

The decade following the conclusion of the Council was a difficult period for Catholic schools and their religious/moral mission in this country. Confronted with charges that investment in Catholic schools represented misplaced priorities; that the Church was not meeting the challenge of social justice to the poor and minorities; that the Church was not living up to the teachings of the social encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI in paying a living wage to the lay teachers who had replaced departed vowed religious and priests in the teaching ranks; that some of its urban schools had become havens for "white flight"; that its secondary schools, in particular, were catering to the rich and had substituted academic excellence for religious mission as their primary goal; that plummeting enrollment (from 5.6 million in 1965 to 3.9 million in 1972) had led to financial crises and consequent school closings; and that even their own educators had lost their sense of purpose, the mission of Catholic schools faced what appeared to be insurmountable obstacles.

REAPPRAISAL AND RENEWAL

In the midst of pessimism, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement in 1967 entitled "Catholic Schools Are Indispensable." They predicted that the current "trials and troubles" which beset Catholic schools "will be seen for what they really are, steps toward a new era for Catholic education" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1968, pp. 25-27). Five years later, writing against the background of the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on Christian Education," the bishops published their influential pastoral entitled "To Teach As Jesus Did." In this letter they identified a threefold educational ministry: 1) to teach doctrine, the message of hope contained in the Gospel; 2) to build community, not simply as a concept to be taught, but as a reality to be lived; and 3) to serve all mankind, which flows from the sense of Christian community (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1973). The bishops asserted that the Catholic school is the "unique setting within which this ideal can be realized in the lives of Catholic children and young people. Only in such a school can they experience learning and living fully integrated in the light of faith" (National Conference of

Catholic Bishops, 1973, pp. 28-29). They maintained that the "integration of religious truth and values with the rest of life" is affected not only by the school's "unique curriculum, but, more importantly, by the presence of teachers" who model such an "integrated approach to learning in their private and professional lives," as well as by the interaction among the students. In the bishops' judgment, "This integration of religious truth and values with life distinguishes the Catholic school from other schools" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1973, p. 29). Taking note of what they termed "The Crises of Catholic Schools," the bishops reaffirmed "their conviction that Catholic schools which realize the threefold purpose of Christian education—to teach doctrine, to build community, and to serve—are the most effective means" for the education of the young and called "upon all members of the Catholic community to do everything in their power to maintain and strengthen Catholic schools which embrace the threefold purpose of Christian education" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1973, p. 33). Lastly, the bishops called upon the Catholic community (if it was "convinced of the values and advantages of Catholic schools") to "seek and adopt" solutions to the difficult challenges to be faced and, in particular, "to avoid a defeatist attitude" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1973, p. 34).

This strong statement of support by the bishops served to build the morale and strengthen the resolve of Catholic educators. It also provided direction for the religious/moral teaching of these schools, and served as a catalyst for a number of responses by the Catholic educational community, e.g., "Giving Form to the Vision," a document prepared by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA).

The emphasis on the school as faith community received considerable support from church leaders. One of those sources was Pope John Paul II's *Catechesi Tradendae* (Handing on the Teaching). His focus on the "One Teacher, Jesus Christ," and the priority of developing a "community of believers" finds embodiment in the mission of the Catholic school (John Paul II, 1979). It is this Christocentricity upon which faith building rests, which accounts for statements contained in "Sharing the Light of Faith," the National Catechetical Directory for Catholics in the United States, such as, "Teachers in Catholic schools are expected to accept and live the Christian message and to strive to instill a Christian spirit in their students" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979, p. 143). This spirit also undergirds the bishops' call issued to Catholic schools to their "special role of giving witness and fostering evangelization" in the poverty areas of large cities (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979, pp. 144-145).

The 70s also witnessed other statements of the American hierarchy on behalf of Catholic schools. For instance, in "Teach Them," issued on May 6, 1976, the bishops reaffirmed their commitment to Catholic schools, repeating the words of "To Teach As Jesus Did," holding that "Catholic schools

which realize the threefold purpose of Christian education, to teach doctrine, to build community and to serve, are the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1976, p. 3). This letter was followed a year later by the publication of "The Catholic School," issued by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. This document developed the ideas of Vatican II's "Declaration on Christian Education," but limited itself to a "deeper reflection on the Catholic school" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, p. 3). In so doing it focused on the nature and distinctive characteristics of a school that calls itself Catholic and reemphasized the educational and apostolic value of a Catholic school, calling on:

> ... all who are responsible for education—parents, teachers, young people and school authorities—and urges them to pool all their resources and the means at their disposal to enable Catholic schools to provide a service which is truly civic and apostolic. (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, p. 3)

REBIRTH

The 1980s saw Catholic schools regain their momentum. Buoyed by papal and episcopal assurances, as well as by support from the laity, Catholic educators began to look to the future with optimism. The schools were imbued with a revised and revitalized platform of religious/moral education that was initiated in the days of Vatican II, which briefly may be said to be the espousal of Gospel values. In his address to Catholic teachers in 1987 while in New Orleans, the Pope spoke encouragingly to his listeners and readers. He called for justice and fairness in all matters; urged the continuance of providing a quality Catholic education to the poor; pointed out the challenge of understanding Catholic identity in education; discussed the opportunity open to educators to inculcate correct ethical attitudes and values in young people; and exhorted Catholic educators, of all ranks, to take Jesus Christ the teacher as their model (John Paul II, 1987).

There is one final instance of official teaching on Catholic schools for our consideration: the November 1990 statement from the American bishops. In preparation for the 25th anniversary of "To Teach As Jesus Did" in 1997, the bishops delivered a letter of support for Catholic schools. Recognizing the contribution that these schools had made to the Church and the nation, they acknowledged their conviction that the schools must exist for the good of the Church, and, looking toward the future, called on Catholic schools to continue to provide high-quality education for all their students in a context infused with Gospel values (United States Catholic Bishops, 1990).

CONCLUSION

In concluding this overview of official Catholic teaching on moral education in the schools, observations are in order on several constants as well as on the shifting emphasis in the Church's teaching. First the constants. Official Catholic teaching has steadfastly maintained that, according to divine and natural law, parents are the primary educators of their children. Parents have the responsibility, therefore, of seeing that their children are reared with the proper religious and moral influence. Parents have the duty of seeing that their offspring do not frequent places which are dangerous to their faith or morals. The Catholic school has provided, and still provides, a locus where parents can fulfill this God-given charge. Parents are to look to the Church for guidance in assisting them to carry out their God-given responsibility.

The Church's teachings are influenced by the conditions of time and place. Thus, in the 19th century battles over schooling with first the pan-Protestant and then the secular schools in this country, Church leaders framed their positions in accord with those realities. Thus, the denunciations, sometimes bitter, occurred over the moral thrust of these schools. The tone of the language used in the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* (Bouscaren & Ellis, 1946), contrasted with that of the 1983 version, illustrates the shifting social setting. The former reflects the besieged Church; the latter mirrors a Church in the mainstream of society. Each reflects cognizance of its mission as mandated by its Divine Founder with respect to the moral/religious education of its young.

In conclusion, two observations. First, in the 19th and well into the 20th century, Church leaders strongly urged, at times mandated under pain of serious sin, that Catholic parents send their children to Catholic schools. The school itself was viewed as a moral/religious agent, with true morality being based on revealed religion; no real distinction existed between the two spheres. The Catholic hierarchy presented no formal program of moral education to be followed in those times. The school itself, with its doctrinal and moral teachings, was seen at least implicitly as the sufficient moral/religious agent for the Catholic faithful.

Second, it is interesting to observe, as one reads the documents of the magisterium on Catholic schools, the influence of Vatican II on those pronouncements. The emphasis on the role of the school in evangelization, building community, and apostolic service is pronounced, along with the teaching of sound doctrine, which includes both faith and morals.

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