Catholic Education

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Edited by

Andrew B. Morris

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Dedication

For Moyra Healy

who died unexpectedly just before publication of this book:
a respected friend and colleague who, motivated by
a deep and compassionate understanding of the Christian imperative,
"let the little children come to me" (Luke 18:16),
devoted her professional life and considerable expertise to
helping troubled and troublesome children become
the best learners that they could be

Contents

Foreword

Explicitly or implicitly, issues of ethics underpin every aspect of life, as public institutions and private individuals make decisions that will inform their own welfare and the lives of others. The ethical impulse and its determination has recently gained considerable intellectual attention, as many in the academy seek to understand the moral challenges and opportunities their own subject area presents. This series, which flows naturally from Liverpool Hope University's unique mission, is distinctive in its multidisciplinary range and encompasses arts and humanities, social sciences, business and education. Each volume is informed by the latest research and poses important questions for academics, students and all those who wish to reflect more deeply on the values inherent within different disciplines. Bringing together international subject specialists, the series explores the complexities of ethics, its theoretical analysis and its practical applications and through the breadth of contributing subjects, demonstrates that understanding ethics is central to contemporary scholarship.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful for the help given by Benedict McHugo, Barbara Daley and Dr Hannan Medanat to Fr Imad Twal in translating his contributuions to this book from Arabic into English

Preface

Andrew B. Morris

Applied ethics is a discipline of philosophy that attempts to apply ethical theory to real-life situations and is dependent on meta-ethical discourse about general normative principles governing human behaviour and the origins of rights and duties. Honderich (1995: 42) notes that, while it has become of increasing interest in both teaching and research within academic circles since the 1960s, it is not new but represents a revival of an ancient tradition, and has developed several specialist areas of study in recent years. One such area of interest is that of education though, of course, any understanding of teaching must rest upon a conception of the nature of humanity – itself a contended matter. It has been argued that teachers have been initiated into the practice of a profession that

> has its own principles of conduct and values. These are frequently implicit, but they embody a commitment to helping young people to learn those things which are judged to be worthwhile. Of course, views differ on what is worthwhile, or what sort of books or activities are more worthwhile than others. Teaching, then, reflects the very moral divisions of the wider society – and teachers, in making choices about the content of learning or about ways of promoting learning, are inevitably caught up in the moral debate. (Pring, 2001: 105–106)

This collection of essays takes as its starting point a particular form of education, namely Catholic education. The encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929),[1] it can be argued, is the Church's first clearly articulated and extensively defined perspective of education's underlying purposes. Thirty-five years later, at the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church reasserted in its Declaration on Christian Education[2] (1965) its own educative role in the light of its understanding of what human flourishing entails:

> For her part Holy Mother Church, in order to fulfil the mandate she received

> from her divine founder to announce the mystery of salvation to all men and to renew all things in Christ, is under an obligation to promote the welfare of the whole life of man, including his life in this world insofar as it is related to his heavenly vocation; she has therefore a part to play in the development and extension of education. (Preface)

> True education is directed towards the formation of the human person in view of his final end and the good of society to which he belongs, and in the duties which, as an adult, he will have to share. (§1)

The essays in this book explore the application of the Catholic understanding of its education role in the socio/legislative circumstances found in different locations in the world. Collectively, they seek understanding of the ways in which a universal education ethic for the common good[3] (which is what the Catholic Church claims) is expressed locally. The book is divided into three main sections. The first explores, briefly, Catholic teaching on education, its ethical basis and the Christ-centred nature of Catholic school leadership. The second considers some of structural characteristics of Catholic educational systems of England, the United States of America and Jordan. The third section illustrates how the universal precepts underpinning Catholic education are implemented in a variety of national and international circumstances.

I am extremely thankful to those colleagues and friends who have contributed essays and, in doing so, have greatly extended my own knowledge and understanding of Catholic education beyond my rather narrow background, limited as it is to the circumstances that pertain in England. I trust this collection will also provide useful insights for others.

Notes

1 The encyclical represents the response of Pope Pius XI to the rise of fascism, communism and Nazism in Europe. He argued that these ideologies, by seeking to remove Christian influences in education, undermined the very nature of education itself. He argued for the primacy of parents in the education of their children, for what he regarded as the rightful collaborative role of the state and for the fundamental communitarian role of Catholic education. For the full text of the encyclical and a commentary upon it, see Franchi, 2007: 59-93.

2 Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Christian education (*Gravissimum educationis*) in Franchi, 2007: 107–120.

3 This concept is regarded by the Catholic Church as having universal application and is defined as the sum total of social conditions that allow people, as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and easily. There are three

essential elements within the concept: i) respect for the individual and the natural freedoms that are indispensable for their personal growth; ii) social wellbeing and development of the group; and iii) peace and justice. For a fuller explanation see Catholic Church, 1994: §§1905–1912.

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Part 1

Foundations of Catholic Education

In the first essay of the first section of this book, **Petroc Willey** explores what it means to be engaged in Catholic education. It is, he suggests, much more than a simple question about the choice of the content or delivery of one or more elements of the curriculum. To be a teacher in a Catholic school, he argues, is to be part of an enterprise which has an intrinsic ethical character rooted in the Church's given mission, found in the command of Christ to his apostles to "go and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:18–20).

The universal character of that mission is explored in the second essay, in which **Andrew Morris** reviews some of the many official Catholic documents published over the past 100 years or so pertaining to the Church's understanding and explanation of its educative mission. However, it is not intended to be an exhaustive and comprehensive discourse on their content and significance. The task of collating and commenting on the extensive body of Church documents in the English speaking world has already been undertaken by others (for example Nuzzi, 2001; Franchi, 2007). Its purpose, by judicious selection of the most pertinent passages, is to act as an introduction to, and background for, the separate analyses in later essays of ways in which the underlying universal ethical principles of Catholic education have been implemented in various socio/political circumstances in different parts of the world.

In an adaptation of sections of his booklet *Christ at the Centre* (2005) prepared for the staff and governors of schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham when he was Director of Schools, **Marcus Stock** summarizes some of the practical implications for Catholic schools that are, he argues, inherent in their role of fulfilling a vision of education that acknowledges God as the source and destiny of all human life, and in which Christ is the focus of what is, essentially, a communal religious endeavour.

Imad Twal then reflects on the role of the leader(s) of institutions that have Christ at their heart. He argues that, within the context of Catholic school provision in the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, developments in the educational field in the contemporary world requires those in authority over

the Latin Patriarchate schools in Jordan to understand the pivotal role that headteachers have as agents for social change and development a change agent in circumstances where the underlying culture is religious. Jordan is not a secular country. Since the establishment of the first Latin Patriarchate schools in Jordan in 1866, it has been central to their purpose firmly to establish their Catholic identity with Christ as their 'head and heart'. Hence, he argues, headteachers are called to act out a leadership role modelled on a vision or, as he expresses it, an icon-image of Christ as "King, Prophet and Priest" as they seek to witness to their faith of the Church in their schools, and provide a model for Christian formation and worship.

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Chapter One

Education as an Ethical Activity

Petroc Willey

The exploration of education as an ethical activity is broader than any question concerning the content or delivery of a specific curriculum area such as moral or character education. We are concerned here with the ways in which the educational enterprise is *per se* an ethical activity, the ways in which education is intrinsically and inescapably ethical at its heart.

We can lay out the heart of Christian convictions here very simply, and we can do so in the language of metaphysics, that which concerns the overarching properties and principles of Being. In these terms, we can say that ethics has to do most centrally with the pursuit and gaining of the *good*; education, on the other hand, has to do most centrally with the pursuit and gaining of the *true*. And there is a unity between the good and true, and therefore between ethics and education, in that the good and the true are ultimately convertible with Being. ('Convertible' here means that whenever the terms 'good' or 'true' are used one can substitute them for 'Being'.) This metaphysic, then, can help us to understand why education and ethics are inescapably united.

Education, the Good and the True

Let us come at these points by a slower route. We have said that, whatever else education is about, it has to do with the teaching and learning of truth. This teaching and learning serves the human person, for the knowledge and understanding with which education is concerned to provide access are goods of the human person, goods that fulfil the person. All human beings wish to know, and they seek knowledge not only as an instrumental good, as a means to a further end, but also for its own sake. Everyday examples, as well as the more academic, illustrate this point: I want to know who has moved into number 24 down the road and whether we have enough eggs for breakfast, as well as whether Bacon was the author of Shakespeare's plays or the properties of a chemical compound. And my desire for knowledge

cannot always be accounted for by such wider aims as economic betterment or species improvement. The mind is made for truth. This is the good that it seeks, and in which the mind finds its *telos* and place of contemplative rest.

Insofar as it is concerned with questions of truth, then, education has to do with the pursuit of a human good.

To participate in education is to make a series of moral commitments.[1] What, then, are the particular commitments and virtues asked of those involved in *Christian* education, personally and as communities of educators and of learners, for the educational enterprise to be founded securely in the pursuit of this good?

The most central commitment is that which characterizes research activity above all, although it is a feature of all education: a willingness to be open to reality and to receive, record and explore honestly and without distortion that which we find. In all research we are simply seeking to find ways to allow that which *is* to show itself to us, more truthfully and fully.[2]

At the institutional level this places responsibilities upon those involved in curriculum design, providing structure and order for the mind to grasp. A study of the order of the universe enables the soul to become ordered.[3] 'All things cohere in an order, and this is the form by which the universe is like God.'[4] Christian institutions have a particular challenge to meet in this respect because of the underlying commitment they make to the unity of knowledge. It is not only that individual disciplines need to be systematized and ordered for the sake of accessing truth, but also that disciplines need themselves to be integrated into a single 'universe' (hence, of course, 'university'). So, for instance, MacIntyre (2009: 16) argues that the university should be informed by

> the very notion of the nature and order of things, of a single universe, different aspects of which are objects of enquiry for the various disciplines, but in such a way that each aspect needs to be related to every other.[5]

It is this careful organization of the curriculum, coupled with a commitment to the interrelatedness of knowledge that allows the pursuit of truth in the Christian institution to be also a path towards Wisdom, i.e. towards an apprehension and grasp of the "whole".[6]

The morality of researching and teaching is paralleled by a morality of learning. We are inviting those being taught to join us in following certain rules of evidence and argument, so that it is possible for us to say, at length, in the teaching of a subject, 'If you believe the evidence in this case to be

such-and-such, and the canons of argument to be such-and-such, then you ought to believe *x* to be the case'. As a learner, I accept that I ought to listen to my peers, to take all sides of questions into account, and so on. Education follows rules of reasonable investigation and exploration, as these are understood in the different disciplines. Notice that by saying I "ought" to believe, to relate to evidence and so on, I am using language that is moral; for the rules of argument are at heart *moral* rules, since they describe the paths to the good of knowledge.[7] Not to believe in the face of appropriate evidence and argument is not to be rational, and this is to be other than one ought to be, for one ought to pursue the good of truth.

Community and the Transmission of Truth

We can, of course, deny this ethical core of education, refusing to accept that we are bound by any such rules, and renouncing any concept of an overarching set of rational standards by which we are bound to seek and to transmit. We might say that all such "rules" are merely self-imposed and that we can as easily release ourselves from such demands. We can claim that we work autonomously, according to our own lights, and set ourselves to be the measure of the truth or falsity of all beliefs. And we might say that we expect no more from our pupils, who are equally laws to themselves. My truth is my own, just as your truth follows your own pattern. Each is bound only by self-chosen rules of rationality. Each is his or her own measure of truth.

As may readily be appreciated, however, this refusal of any ethic other than that which I would impose upon myself would spell the end of education, for it would also be the end of any community of scholarship, even at the most elementary level. There would be no agreed set of expectations according to which we would be bound to receive and to hand on, faithfully and without distortion, the findings of authentic scholarship.

A classic analysis of this kind of subjectivist account of education is offered by Lewis (1947) which compares the standpoint of traditional educational wisdom (which has seen the central problem in life as being "to conform the soul to reality" and to enable human passions to belong to the order of "the Tao",[8] guided by "knowledge, self-discipline and virtue") with a new understanding of education, now seen as how to subdue reality to the wishes of humanity. In pursuit of this new end all moral values are themselves treated no longer as objective and eternally valid but merely as raw material for further manipulation. In the absence of objective moral standards, Lewis argues

that the springs of action must become fluctuating human impulses. Thus, the humans who set out to "conquer nature", to make it conform to human desires, themselves become no more than instruments of that very nature, and no more the kind of creatures who can choose between good and evil. The final conquest of nature leads, in Lewis' paradoxical terms, to *our* being conquered *by nature*, and thus to "the abolition of man".

While in the sphere of popular moral discourse pretensions to moral world-making are often lazily accepted,[9] few dare to practise such extreme individualism in education, preferring instead a broader appeal to canons of reason proposed by particular cultural communities and traditions. The social dimension of education is thus – to a certain extent – preserved. But the Christian educational vision insists upon a wider allegiance, to the community of the whole human race, in which the good of rationality is to be found. The educational quest excludes nothing that is human, and no part of humanity. The Christian insistence upon the ethical heart of education is intrinsically united to an equal insistence on the social nature of education. Truth is to be (i.e. *ought* to be) pursued in community. And this is a task rather than a simple statement of fact, for it requires a patient commitment to empathy and to seeking out the truth within the position held by the other. One suggestive image for education which may be helpful for our purposes here is truth as "symphonic", an image which emphasises both the relational and social nature of the educational quest as well as the harmony of disciplines and truths within a single universe.[10]

Virtue and the Pursuit of Truth

The Christian educational tradition places importance on what can be described as an "integral formation"[11] of the person. This perspective flows from both its commitment to the unity of knowledge and also its commitment to a view of the human person as a unity. The pursuit of learning involves an integration that includes the spiritual, intellectual, physical and affective dimensions of the person. This understanding of the educational path which has grown up in the Christian tradition draws originally from the Greek ideal of the *paideia* in which words and deeds belong together.[12]

Education involves what St Thomas Aquinas would call the pursuit of the difficult good.[13] It is difficult since, although one is attracted to truth, is drawn to it, virtuous effort is needed to attain to truth. So, accompanying the intellectual pursuit of truth is an inseparable call to grow in the moral virtues.[14] That which is true, by which the Christian tradition means that which

is *real*, that which *is*, is often hard to come by, requiring perseverance and persistence, and the willingness to look at things courageously in a fresh and as yet unconsidered way. That which we finally discover, after much questing, may be experienced as personally challenging, or unwelcome, or at least inconvenient. Thus we ask for chastity, but not yet.[15] Truth appears to us, as St Francis of Assisi would say, as Lady Poverty. She is not the bridal partner we thought we sought. The truth is, for now, too blinding for our sight; we cannot yet bear its demands, "cannot bear very much reality".[16] We shrink back into the shadows, away from the pure sunlight.

Education is thus described in terms of a journey of the whole person, demanding of us a purification, an asceticism of the senses and the passions as well as of the mind. The Christian tradition places the work of the Holy Spirit at the centre of this purifying process. So Clement of Alexandria (1994: I.6) writes of this gradual enlightenment as a participation in an essentially divine work:

> As those who try to remove a film that is over their eyes, do not supply to them from without the light which they do not possess, but removing the obstacle from the eyes, leave the pupil free; thus also we who are baptized, having wiped off the sins which obscure the light of the Divine Spirit, have the eye of the spirit free, unimpeded, and full of light, by which alone we contemplate the Divine, the Holy Spirit flowing down to us from above.

The possibility of refusal of enlightenment is always before us as we are tempted by the temporary relief of appearance and of the virtual rather than of the real. This is a theme terrifyingly explored in the character of the historian Wentworth in Charles Williams' novel, *Descent into Hell* (1937), a figure who succumbs to the lure of the world of preferred fantasy in place of the world of unpleasant facts that he had never trained his heart to bear. The paths before us in education are those of our own deterioration or glory, since the pearl of great price, Wisdom, is not contemplated only as an object outside of ourselves: we not only seek the good and the true, but to *become* ourselves good and truthful. We wish not only to contemplate beauty, but to *be* radiant.

A sustained period of study requires other settled virtues. One needs perseverance when facing difficult ideas or challenges; hope to sustain one through setbacks and disappointments; tenacity in maintaining one's path; and wisdom and clarity of vision as to one's goals in learning. Then there is what has been called the virtue of studiousness, which has been described as a "sort of chastity of the soul", with its corresponding vice of curiosity, seen as a kind of "intellectual promiscuity" (Thomas Aquinas, 1947: 17).[17]

The French thinker Simone Weil (1978: 205) had her own account of this virtue, speaking of the importance of "attentiveness" in education. We can only see the value of something fully when we have our gaze focussed in an uncluttered way. This requires a state of attention, an inner peace and control, which prevents us straying restlessly away from the centre of our focus. Only the narrow path of attention leads to life, not a restless movement along the broad path.

We can think also of the cardinal virtues of fortitude and temperance: these are needed for the sustaining and ordering of one's development in learning. Justice is needed to assist us in maintaining a proper balance of giving and taking in the learning process, respecting and giving room to the views of others without becoming either lazy or overbearing, over-dependent or bombastic, but working with others in a spirit of respect that bears within it the seeds of friendship. Prudence is also needed: how much time should one devote to study, compared to other pursuits? Prudence leads us in seeking to address overarching questions of direction and balance, as well as practical questions of the implementation of learning in one's life. The Christian tradition on education, then, has emphasised the need for the cultivation of a range of intellectual, social and practical virtues – and above all, that of the fear of the Lord, which marks the beginning the path to true Wisdom.

Notes

1 For this view expressed from the standpoint of critical theory, see Trifonas, 2000: xiif.

2 We can see the link between the true and the good here, for an implicit belief in the goodness of reality accompanies all research. After all, how would it be if the end of all our seeking were to reveal meaninglessness or futility, or were to reveal that all we held most dear was inimical or irrelevant to the very structures of things? This is why the Christian tradition is insistent upon the central importance of belief in the almighty, good God as the Creator of all that is. See, for example, the statement on this in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1997), paras. 268–289.

3 On this see Augustine's *De Ordine Libri II* I, 2,3, (Augustine, 1948). On Augustine on the structuring of the curriculum, see also Kevane, 1964: 170–179.

4 Dante, *Paradiso* I, 103–105.

5 For another recent work arguing for the importance of the recovery of this understanding, rooted in a Thomist metaphysics, see Ashley, 2006.

6 From a Jewish perspective, Martin Buber powerfully argues for the restoration of this holistic understanding in his 1934 essay, 'Teaching and Deed' (reprinted in Buber, 2002: 234–240). Ben Sira, for example, focuses on the concepts of

wholeness and totality in learning, relating this to the importance of seeing God as the Creator of all (Calduch-Beneages, 2002). Parallelling the Jewish concept of *hokmah*, or wholeness, is the Greek understanding of *sophia* as the goal of education. Plato's dialogue, *Parmenides*, for example, is an exploration of the different kinds of unity that occur in being, are themselves 'parts' of a wider unified whole, demonstrating how true Wisdom encompasses all things.

7 For a development of this argument, see Clark, 1984, chs 1–3.

8 "The Tao" is Lewis' term for what the Christian tradition has tended to call "natural law", the rational participation of the human person in the wise, providential guidance of God over his creation.

9 "To a large degree people now think, talk and act as if emotivism were true, no matter what their avowed theoretical standpoint may be" (MacIntyre, 1981: 22). For a classic account of the impact of large-scale relativism on university education see Bloom, 1987.

10 The phrase is from Balthasar (1987). Pope John Paul II applied this symphonic image to the teaching office of the Church where, in his introduction to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, he speaks of "the harmony of so many voices" expressing "what could be called the 'symphony' of the faith" (*Fidei Depositum*).

11 For the notion of integral formation in the Catholic tradition, see, for example, Congregation for Catholic Education (1988), para.98 and Vatican Council II (1980), para 1.

12 See Jaeger (1939). This authoritative study of the Greek *paideia* defines the Greeks' ideal of human perfection as "that character which united nobility of action with nobility of mind". Jaeger draws attention to Phoenix's advice to Achilles who, when faced with a crisis in action, reminds him of this ideal in which he has been moulded – that is, "to be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds". Jaeger comments, "The later Greeks were right in believing this verse to be the earliest formulation of the Greek educational ideal" (1939: 8). The Second Vatican Council, in *Dei Verbum,* speaks of the "words and deeds" of Jesus, offering this as a description of the unified way in which the Lord educates and addresses himself to his hearers.

13 See the discussion of the virtue of hope in *Summa Theologica* II-II, Q.17, article 1.

14 This is a central theme, for example, in Plato's *Gorgias*: Socrates demonstrates through his discussions with Callicles that certain virtues are necessary if one is to pursue study in a serious way.

15 Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 8.5.12.

16 So T. S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton', in *Four Quartets*.

17 Although traditionally attributed to St Thomas, it is unlikely that this is the case (see Boland, 2007: x). In the twentieth century, A. G. Sertillanges (1947), inspired in part by this text, argued for a Christian understanding of study as a vocation, requiring the practice of humility, silence and prayer.

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Chapter Two

Selected Official Documents and Statements on Catholic Education

Andrew B. Morris

Education in Context

The word "education" has etymological roots both in the Latin *educere* (to lead out) and *educare* (to form). The first emphasises, among other things, the freedom and autonomy of learners to determine their own understanding, values and beliefs, the second the idea of teachers moulding the personality of pupils to appreciate truth, goodness and the relative value of different world views. Many people believe, therefore, that all schools must, inevitably and unavoidably, have an ideological character. They argue, for example, that just as Spartan education tried to develop effective soldiers (in comparison to the Athenian desire for good democrats) and, for most of the twentieth century, Russian schools sought to develop ideological committed communists, so, in England today, while so-called faith schools will promote their specific religious values, beliefs and practices, community and other types of secular schools will initiate pupils into the prevailing political, social and economic doctrines of the time, such as political liberalism, socialism or free-market capitalism. The degree to which the process may be unwitting or deliberately planned will vary, but every educational system must, necessarily, be rooted in a concept of what the particular society, or community, believes an educated person should be. From that understanding, its schools will seek to provide an environment and curriculum responding to the particular world-view and aim towards helping develop a certain type of person with particular attitudes and values consistent with its vision of the human condition and its corresponding "good life".

Catholic Education: Underlying Principles and Religious Culture

The Church's view of its educative role starts from two basic premises: that there is a God from whom all good originates, and that Jesus of Nazareth, Christ, is the Son of God through whom mankind is redeemed. In this context redemption implies liberation from a state of bondage caused by sin to the freedom that is brought by God's forgiveness and the promise of eternal life with Him. It is rooted in Christ's command: "Go teach all nations" recorded in Matthew 28:19. However, the term "Christian Education" does not appear until much later, about AD 96, in Rome. Later, towards the end of the second century, it is recorded that St Clement of Alexandria established a small school for young men in that city and that Origen was its first headmaster. He claimed that his school would enable students to combine the life of a Christian with that of a busy citizen, because its culture harmonized the faith of the gospel with secular learning and civilization. That concept of Catholic Christian education is still relevant today and, as such, has universal application.

Proponents of Catholic education argue that their schools have a distinctive educational philosophy and purpose based on a religious understanding of the nature of humanity and upon their function supporting the role of the Catholic Church in society. The basic principles were set out in the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* (Pius XI, 1929). It was a defence of the Church's responsibility for Catholic youth in the face of increasing pressure on them to embrace the militarism and amorality of Fascist movements in Western Europe. At the same time in Eastern Europe young people were being prepared for a soviet-style secular future.

Though the encyclical was, primarily, a message for Italians it also set out the essential principles of a Catholic education for the faithful of all nations. In particular, it described Catholic thinking on the nature of the Church's mission, its understanding of the nature and dignity of the human person and its teaching about the agents of education, that is, the relationship between parents, the Church and the state. In particular, it argued that education is part of the central mission of the Church which cannot be separated from its wider evangelical mission to humanity. That mission, it argued, was one specified by Jesus Christ himself, the essential purpose of which was to teach what people should do and how they should act in their mortal lives in order that they might achieve the purposes for which God created them. Scripture speaks of the purpose of existence in terms of the development of the person to the fullest extent of human nature. It speaks

of life with God on earth and in eternity and describes the human race (created by God the Father, redeemed by his Son and sharing in the life of God through his Spirit); what humans are to become ("be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect", Matthew 5:48); and the means by which they are to achieve it ("love God and your neighbour as yourself", Luke 10:27).

In respect of education, the Church's understanding was made clear. Parents held prime responsibility for their children's growth and human development. From that premise it argued that any form of compulsory education determined by the state must only be carried out with their free co-operation. It was recognized, however, that parents shared their responsibilities with the state, which had a legitimate concern for the welfare of its citizens. Nevertheless, given the social circumstances at the time, Pius XI was wary of any claim by the state to have control over the education and nurturing of children and young people.

The Second Vatican Council and Education

The main purpose of the second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1962–65), called by the then Pope, John XXIII, was to highlight the Church's apostolic and pastoral mission, and re-present Christian doctrine in such a way as to make it more accessible, not just to the faithful but to the world generally. Its declarations and directives were intended to renew Catholic thought, action and practices (John Paul II, 1992). In respect of education, while the underlying principles formulated by Pius XI in 1929 were being retained in subsequent years, the emphases given to them in Church documents altered to some degree in response to changing social conditions. *Divini lllius Magistri* was a defensive document, primarily addressed to the Catholic faithful. The educationally orientated conciliar and post-conciliar documents of the Second Vatican Council were outward looking, addressed to the world as well as to the Church.

The Vatican Council Declaration on Christian Education *(Gravissimum Educationis)* describes the Church's involvement in education as follows:

> For her part Holy Mother Church, in order to fulfil the mandate she received from her divine founder to announce the mystery of salvation to all men and to renew all things in Christ, is under an obligation to promote the welfare of the whole life of man, including his life in this world insofar as it is related to his heavenly vocation; she has therefore a part to play in the development and extension of education. (Vatican Council II, 1965a: Preface)

> That as a baptised person is gradually introduced into a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, he may daily grow more conscious of the gift of faith which he has received; that he may learn to adore God the Father in spirit and in truth especially through liturgical worship; that he may be trained to conduct his personal life in righteousness and in the sanctity of truth, according to his new standard of manhood, i.e. the new creation given through baptism. (Vatican Council II, 1965a: §2)

Consistent with this view, it was argued that

> true education is directed towards the formation of the human person in view of his final end and the good of society to which he belongs, and in the duties which, as an adult, he will have to share. (Vatican Council II, 1965a: §1)

The Declaration also re-affirmed the primacy of parents and the family. While it retained its suspicion of the state's secularising instincts it was no longer its main feature. However, the Church clearly remained anxious to delineate the boundaries of legitimate state involvement in education. In doing so, it has argued, more recently, that the correct relationship between state and any school, not just Catholic schools, is based not so much on institutional relations as on the right of each person to receive a suitable education of their choice. It argues further for this "right" on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity,[1] according to which the state's duty to protect and defend the liberty of its citizens and to guarantee distributive justice should "ensure that public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to select schools for their children in accordance with their conscience".[2] It is worth noting, perhaps, that the human rights recognized and asserted in the secular declarations of the United Nations assume that any state monopoly of education is not conducive to good government.

While the general tenor of the Second Vatican Council clearly acknowledged secular needs, the principal aims of the Church are still couched in religious terms.

> Christ did not bequeath to the Church a mission in the political, economic or social order: the purpose he assigned to it was a religious one. (Vatican Council II, 1965b: §42)

While co-operation with the state was now expected as the norm in educational matters, it is important to recognize and to hold onto the idea that, for the Catholic Church, education is primarily a religious activity and only subsequently does it serve social and economic purposes.

> When he [mankind] works not only does he transform matter and society, but he fulfils himself. He learns, he develops his faculties, and he emerges from and transcends himself. Rightly understood, this kind of growth is more precious than any kind of wealth that can be amassed. It is what man is, rather than what he has, that counts. . . . Technical progress may supply the material for human advance but it is powerless to actualise it. Here then is the norm for human activity – to harmonise with the authentic interests of the human race, in accordance with God's will and design, and to enable men as individuals and as members of society to pursue and fulfil their total vocation. (Vatican Council II, 1965b: §35)

This emphasis is in contrast to the understanding of most Western governments who during the last century have, arguably, made the economic function of education their over-riding priority. The distinction was subsequently emphasised in the statement from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education:

> Education is not given for the purpose of gaining power but as an aid towards a fuller understanding of, and communion with man, events and things. Knowledge is not to be considered as a means of material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977: §56)

Consequently, it can be seen that the distinctiveness of Catholic education derives from the specific characteristics of Catholicism and the Church's understanding of the nature of God and Jesus on which the Church builds its particular view of humanity and the purpose of human existence.

Human Life – A Catholic Perspective

The Church's view of its educative role starts from two basic premises about human existence upon which it builds its particular view of humanity and the purpose of human existence. They are a belief in the existence of a transcendental God and a conviction that an historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, is the Son of God through whom humanity is redeemed.[3] Those beliefs form the basis of the Church's understanding of the unique relationship each individual has with God before birth, during life and after death, and, consequently, its understanding of the purpose of human existence. It asserts:

> Man is by nature and vocation a religious being. Coming from God, going toward God, man lives a fully human life only if he freely lives by his bond with God. (Catholic Church, 1994: §44)

> When he [mankind] works not only does he transform matter and society, but he fulfils himself. He learns, he develops his faculties, and he emerges from and transcends himself. Rightly understood, this kind of growth is more precious than any kind of wealth that can be amassed. It is what man is, rather than what he has, that counts. ... Technical progress may supply the material for human advance but it is powerless to actualise it. Here then is the norm for human activity - to harmonise with the authentic interests of the human race, in accordance with God's will and design, and to enable men as individuals and as members of society to pursue and fulfil their total vocation. (Vatican Council II, 1965b: §35)

A Catholic understanding of the dignity of the human person is also rooted in those beliefs. The Church argues that all human life is concerned with a search for God. This fundamental impulse can be ignored, forgotten or denied but never eliminated because it is inherent to the human condition. In the context of education, it is expressed as follows:

> [Because] each type of education is influenced by a particular concept of what it means to be a human person. In today's pluralistic world, the Catholic educator must consciously inspire his or her activity with the Christian concept of the person . . . It is a concept that includes a defence of human rights but also attributes to the human person the dignity of a child of God; it attributes the fullest liberty, . . . the most exalted destiny, . . . establishes solidarity through mutual love and an ecclesial community . . . calls for the fullest development of all that is human, [and] proposes Christ, Incarnate Son of God and perfect man as both model and means. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982: §18)

The Distinctiveness of Catholic Education

Given its religious perspective on life itself, the Church asserts that a holistic or complete education must have a religious context. While they are civic institutions, their pedagogical methods and characteristics would be much the same as those in any other school. However, if they remain true to the primary purpose of Catholic education and aim to be Christian communities, their educational goals should be