

## INTRODUCTION

As Western societies became increasingly secularised, many people have attempted to draw upon Christian principles for conduct while dispensing with the narratives, scriptures, doctrines and devotional practices that have traditionally been associated with such ethics. These sets of stories, beliefs and disciplines are sometimes viewed as 'baggage'; they are considered by many to be burdensome, out-of-date, unsubstantiated, unnecessary and therefore merely optional. Surely, it might be thought, one does not need the institutional and communal trappings of religious faith in order to display a concern for truth, honesty in communication, integrity in all dealings, consideration for others, tolerance of their shortcomings, care for the environment or a responsible exercise of freedom.

The attempt to promote a broadly Christian morality without being encumbered by its attendant metaphysics and mysticism, however, turns out to be a much more complex and frustrating process than at first seemed likely. No sooner are 'limbs', that look like being useful 'tools' for the moral life, torn from the 'body' to which they really belong, than the life-force ebbs out of them. Concepts, qualities and virtues that take much of their meaning and significance, their character and shape, their 'tone' and 'colour', from being integrated into a particular and comprehensive religious way of life, become distorted, shallow and endlessly plastic. In this process they appear to lack consistency, purchase on our lives and any capacity to direct and guide our actions. The failure to attend to the overall 'architecture' of the Christian life, in an effort to accommodate a public who believe less and less in the edifice as a whole, has led to the opening up and selling off of 'rooms' that lack ceilings, or walls, or floors. In picking and choosing, from the debris of a discarded religious lifestyle, merely those behavioural 'bricks' or traits that seem attractive, many people soon find that they have constructed habitats that are unserviceable, ramshackle and inhospitable.

In marked contrast to this narrow and minimising focus on principles for conduct that have become separated from their originating worldview, a more 'full-blooded' approach to Christian discipleship requires us to attend to the communal setting and personal lifestyle that underpin a set of beliefs and a code of practice. To be a follower of Jesus the Christ, in any age, entails a pattern of behaviour, a code of conduct, a form of morality; but this is a *response* to one's prior reception of the gospel of God's unconditional love. We do not earn our way into God's favour by living rightly. Only through endless conversions, with the help of grace and by availing ourselves of the power of the Holy Spirit do we open ourselves in an expectant and active receptivity to God. Such behavioural discipleship is also part of the way one appropriates the resources of the living tradition of the church. The

church mediates the gospel message and embodies its teaching in a community where the mixture of human and divine is so entangled that it is impossible to be sure where the dividing lines are between the two dimensions. In discipleship we find that relationship, affiliation, and belonging are as integral to commitment as are belief or behaviour. Our affections and will are to be engaged. This demands of us that, over a lengthy period of time, we dwell within the group dynamics of significant others, that we share in a family of faith, with all the burdens and blessings of community life.

To the extent that this is true, Christian education will necessarily go beyond instruction; for inculcating a set of beliefs and doctrines, though necessary, is insufficient. It will also have to transcend mere training. Christian upbringing is not simply about ensuring that we become habituated into a particular collection of activities, such as reading scripture, saying prayers or performing charitable deeds, though it does require each of these elements as part of its 'repertoire'. Christian education, understood in a full sense, that is, education carried out with the development of Christian persons so that they are able to share in God's life as its goal, requires formation.

Religious formation has four essential dimensions. First, it draws upon a conceptual 'tool-kit', that is, a way of thinking. Integral to that way of thinking, for example, is a belief in the transcendence and immanence of God, plus a conviction that Jesus the Christ is simultaneously our best picture of and mode of access to God, as well as our best insight into what humanity can become, with the help of God's grace. Second, it requires a particular pattern or way of behaving. Cruelty, lying and selfishness, for example, are to be ruled out, while loving care for others, honesty and self-denial are to be aspired to. Third, it inducts adherents into ways of worshipping, both individually and collectively. Participation in the Eucharist and prayerful reading of scripture are typical examples, together with the capacity to express praise, thanksgiving, contrition and petition. The liturgy is potentially the church's most significant educational activity, but what it offers cannot be appreciated and appropriated if there is reliance solely on induction into and familiarity with a way of worship. In human terms, and for optimal educational efficacy, the liturgy depends upon the ways of thinking and behaving as much as it relies on the ways of praying of the people assembled. Of course, one can neither predict nor restrict the operation of divine power in the salvific fruitfulness of any particular liturgical celebration. The liturgy relies, too, however, on the character and quality of the way of belonging of a particular people. In order that such belonging has formative quality, constitutive of effective community life, members of a congregation need to spend time together, and over a long duration. They need opportunities to share their gifts and their needs, their joys and their sorrows, offering each other mutual support and jointly contributing to projects of service beyond the confines of their own limited community. They need to develop bonds of trust and a quality of relationships so that they matter to each other.

I have suggested that those who wish to separate out certain aspects of conduct and particular virtues from the multi-dimensional religious traditions, communities

and practices from which they take their nature, function and efficacy run the risk of performing a kind of vivisection. I have also argued that discipleship, and therefore formation and Christian education, should be seen in a holistic way, rather than as one-dimensional. If we hope to share in God's life and to prepare others to accept this life, then the context in which learning takes place is crucial. The context for learning deeply affects how the object of study is apprehended and received. Who we find ourselves learning with makes a significant difference to the quality of the educational experience. The life-style in which we are already embedded radically changes what we can comprehend. It is because the Catholic Church recognises this that she strives, wherever possible, to promote education in a Catholic environment. In many countries this means that there are Catholic schools, separate from others in important ways and offering, to varying degrees, a distinctive approach to education. Behind the provision of separate Catholic schools is not just the desire to communicate a set of religious beliefs that would not otherwise receive privileged attention, beliefs that are thought necessary for salvation. A strongly motivating factor that underpins the Church's efforts to maintain separate religious schooling is the keen sense that the environment in which learning takes place constitutes an atmosphere that can make all the difference to the outcome one wants. It can facilitate and enhance the formation of Christian persons. The atmosphere in school can also, however, inhibit and perhaps even destroy such a goal. This atmosphere will be made up of several elements: its cultural capital, its pattern of practices, its network of relationships, its emotional tone and its configuration of explicit and tacit assumptions, will all have a part to play. As theologian Delwin Brown says, 'inhabitants of a tradition enter its stories, enact its rituals, play its roles, explore its visions, try its arguments, feel its sensibilities.'<sup>1</sup>

The provision of separate schools based on a Catholic worldview, however, faces opposition and misunderstanding, both from within the church and from those who are external to its membership. First, key aspects of that worldview are deeply controversial. Disputes arise about how to interpret tradition, how to express doctrine, how to order worship, how apply moral teaching, how to build the ecclesial community, how to exercise authority within it, how to communicate with outsiders and how to assess relative priorities within all these areas. The task of establishing schools based on a distinctive worldview is not straightforward if that distinctiveness is open to question and if its parameters are unclear.

Second, at any one time, at least some aspects of the church's teaching and practice are in a state of flux; there is disruption and discontinuity as well as stability and continuity. A tradition and its canons tend to lay down what should be preserved. They also provide resources with the capacity to authorise creative responses to new demands.<sup>2</sup> The church exists in history; its boundaries shift in response to changing circumstances, emerging opportunities and new threats. Outside influences affect the internal balance at any particular moment.<sup>3</sup> Any social organisation maintains its cultural identity by adjusting to the changing practices of others as well as by the unfolding of its own internal logic. The church shares in that process. The task of establishing separate schools based on a distinctive

worldview cannot be settled or secured except temporarily and provisionally, since that distinctiveness derives partly from responses to circumstances, factors and developments that are outside the church's control and that are themselves undergoing constant change.

Third, to commit oneself too readily to any particular form of distinctiveness is to run the risk of idolatry. In such cases, human achievement is misread as the work of the divine, the signpost is treated as if it were the destination, provisional signs of promise are falsely taken as indicators of permanence and possession. True discipleship requires us to be open to a God who still speaks, one who is leading us, through the Holy Spirit, into a greater fullness of truth, and a God who transcends the church. This process of being led further into truth is unfinished. By turning inwards too soon, defending what we already have, we also run the risk of slipping into complacency, as if we believe we have all that is necessary and have nothing further to learn. Such a stance would lead to isolation, thereby contributing both to our own impoverishment and to a failure to communicate the gospel as effectively as possible.

Fourth, the desire to provide separate schools that have a mandate to offer religious formation in a holistic manner can lead to the temptation to over-emphasise distinctiveness in various ways that are damaging. One can exaggerate distinctiveness both by ignoring how much has been borrowed from others who are outside one's community or tradition and also by downplaying how much is still shared with them. This is to distort reality. One can undermine the constructive potential of distinctiveness by over-protecting and isolating it. This leads to a failure to engage in dialogue and so to an abdication of responsibility for the educational welfare of others. One can promote distinctiveness so strongly in the pluralist marketplace of educational services that such promotion slips into appearing not so much a positive advocacy of a set of ideals, but more a negative critique of the stances of others. This can be divisive. One can construct the distinctiveness in such a way that schools based on it become elitist. High hurdles are set on entry, thereby ruling out many who students and teachers who could otherwise have benefited from membership. Expectations are so demanding that students and staff who fall short of these requirements experience defeat and despair. This type of emphasis could make faith-based schools vulnerable to the accusation that they are exclusive. It will be apparent that there is a paradox here. A gospel that focuses on the unending forgiveness and love of God for all, that invites saints and sinners alike to share in that love and life, and one that is inherently and inescapably inclusive, surely cannot be the basis for a form of education that is exclusive. This paradox is at the heart of what follows.

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<sup>1</sup> Delwin Brown, *Boundaries of Our Habitations*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1994, p.86.

<sup>2</sup> On tradition's creativity as well as its continuity, see Brown, op. cit., pp. 3, 45, 144.

<sup>3</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, Minneapolis, Fortress, Press, 1997, pp.36, 111.

## CHAPTER 1

### TWO POLARITIES: AN INTERPRETATIVE KEY

In this chapter, first I describe two polarities at work within Catholicism and indicate their relevance to an understanding of the enterprise of Catholic education. I then suggest that a critical appreciation of the relationship between these two polarities has a significance for Catholics that extends beyond schooling. In this second section I also show how those outside the Catholic community, concerned with promoting liberal democracy in a pluralist society, might apply some of the conceptual categories and lines of approach adopted here to their own enquiries. Third, some of the new challenges facing Catholic schools are then summarised. This is followed by an attempt to show both loss and gain in the responses made by Catholic educators to changes in their environment. Fifth, consideration is given to the accusation that Catholic schools are insufficiently distinctive or counter-cultural. The need for a fresh articulation of the rationale for Catholic education is highlighted in section six and this is followed by a brief indication of the kind of balance that will be striven for throughout the rest of the book. The final section of the chapter is meant to serve as an advance organiser for readers, orienting them to the main angles of approach and the types of sources they can expect to encounter should they proceed further.

#### *1.1 Two polarities*

Conservatives in any religion often exaggerate the 'solidity' or fixed nature of their tradition, apparently being oblivious to the fact that it is in a state of flux, constantly open to development and subject to the vicissitudes of history. They are tempted to misread the tentative, provisional 'signposts' set up by a particular community as a result of the hard lessons of experience, falsely taking them as signs of arrival rather than as guides for the journey. They want to rest in the religious 'house' that has already been constructed by their predecessors and they are keen to preserve its décor and maintain the 'furniture' accumulated over the centuries. Tempted to have excessive confidence in the 'capital' invested by their forebears, they fear the risk that new speculation in the 'marketplace' of ideas might incur. They feel a deep sense of attachment and loyalty to their inheritance and wish to protect it from those who seem, only too casually, desirous of dismantling it. While they might be

delighted to welcome newcomers into the faith community, this process is expected to take place on the terms of those already enjoying 'possession'. They do not expect to learn from 'outsiders'. In acknowledging the experience of God that is mediated within the faith community, they assume that the divine is contained therein and so fail to attend to God's work beyond its borders.

'Fidelity', 'continuity', 'obedience' and 'tradition' are words with a positive resonance for conservatives, while 'creativity', 'innovation', 'liberal' and 'progressive' immediately signal threats and invite suspicion. Authority offers security and discipline keeps us on the right track in attending to a word that God has already spoken. Distinctiveness is sharply defined and strongly defended. Much less effort is expended on trying to be inclusive. As a result, to some observers, the claim to be religiously distinctive can resemble a willingness to be exclusive.

Those who are progressives in religion are alert to the signs of the times and quick to acknowledge the potential value in new ideas. They underestimate the part played by memory in the life of a community and they show impatience with those who seek to filter new proposals through the lens of past criteria. Earlier 'gold' standards, for example, in matters of doctrine, morality or worship, far from being held in awe, are regarded with some scepticism. Such progressives believe that they 'travel light', and being unburdened by the shackles of the past, they are ready to be responsive to the needs of the present. They do not want to be confined by the architecture of their predecessors; nor do they think it necessary to consult traditional wisdom when seeking to reconstruct the religious community. While feeling confident about the future, they fail to take adequately into account the role inexorably played by history, both in the lives of individuals and in that of the community. Although careful to avoid institutional idolatry internally, as they face outwards they can be naïve in their prematurely positive assessment of contemporary culture.

'Fidelity', 'continuity', 'obedience' and 'tradition' are words that, for progressives, have associations of a fearful caution and they serve to obscure an excessive desire to maintain control. 'Creativity', 'innovation', 'liberal' and 'progressive' indicate a positive 'reading' of the world as infused with the presence of God's grace and a willingness to step forward bravely in a spirit of freedom and authenticity. Distinctiveness tends to be blurred and under-emphasised in the interests of openness. As a result, to the ears of some hearers, the claim to be religiously inclusive can sound like a readiness to accommodate that slides into an abandonment of tradition and assimilation into secular culture.

Although I believe that these bold assertions apply to many different religious groups, I can only speak for the one with which I am familiar, that is Christianity in the Roman Catholic tradition. I shall seek to substantiate, later on in this work, and in the specific context of a study of Catholic education in England and Wales, the central claim that an understanding of the relationship between distinctiveness and inclusiveness offers a useful interpretative key to the nature of Catholicism. To be more precise, I intend to explore the bearing of this claim on the theory and practice

of Catholic education. Before doing that, however, I suggest (1.2., below) the wider significance, beyond that highlighted in my own enquiry, of a sophisticated appreciation of the ultimate compatibility of the two apparently contrasting emphases described above. In order to assist me in the development of a coherent argument about how these differing emphases relate to one another, I intend to treat distinctiveness and inclusiveness as polarities that operate in tension, both of which are required for a form of Catholicism (and Catholic education) that has integrity.

Neither conservatives nor progressives, as I have so crudely caricatured them, do justice to these polarities. As a result, both 'parties' tend to contribute to an unnecessary and damaging polarisation within the church. In this polarisation there is a temptation to assume too readily both that the virtues are displayed by the 'side' with which one sympathises and also that the defects are mostly owned by those from whom we feel distant. It will already be clear from my sketchy comments above that I believe both conservatives and progressives are partly right and partly wrong, and this in regard to both what they are for and what they neglect. Much, though not all, of what they defend should be taken more seriously; much, though not all, of what they neglect should be given a great deal more weight. I believe it is essential for the health, authenticity and fruitfulness of Catholic education that *both* polarities are given the utmost respect in future discussions. This will entail that the polarities are constantly held in a creative tension.

### *1.2 Wider significance of understanding the polarities*

That this issue might be a matter of deep concern to Catholics in general and for Catholic educators in particular is to be expected. A study of the relationship between distinctiveness and inclusiveness casts light on the enterprise of Catholic education for all age groups and in every kind of setting. It also offers assistance in the resolution of some of the sharply controversial debates that keep recurring over religious education in Catholic schools.<sup>1</sup> These often revolve around the respective weight to be given to the heritage of the past and the culture of the present. As a crossroads between theology and pedagogy, religious education is an arena that is simultaneously privileged, in terms of the importance ascribed to it by the faith community, and subject to extreme pressure because of polarisation within that community.<sup>2</sup> Jim Gallagher describes two different notions of faith that are operative behind this polarisation. There is an 'understanding of faith given at baptism, sustained by authority, threatened by inquiry, undermined by doubt, characterised by clarity, productive of certainty.' This is to be contrasted with an understanding of faith as 'a free and personal act, fostered by community, growing through ceaseless inquiry, seeming to need the tension of doubt for its development, walking in uncertainty, open to infinity.'<sup>3</sup> It is often difficult for religious educators who rely on one of these approaches to embrace the perspective of those who rely on the other.

Religious educators who build on the foundational principles analysed in this book should display a capacity to discern both the universality and the particularity



of Christianity. They will maintain a balance between witness and listening. They will be confident and comprehensive in their presentation, but neither defensive nor hectoring. Far from relying on fear as a motive for engagement in learning and hoping for conformity as its goal, they will create hospitable spaces for a critical appreciation and a creative appropriation of the living tradition of Catholicism by students. They will acknowledge the plurality of theological *loci*, or sources, rather than work only from the catechism, syllabus or textbook. They will be respectful of the insights, not only of the devout and committed, but also of the doubtful, those who deviate from the norms laid down as well as of those who are marginalised either in society or the church. In short, they will offer a view of faith that is both distinctive and inclusive.

For the role of Catholics more generally in society, the tools developed in the following chapters furnish potentially useful guidance in pastoral and policy decisions in many different areas. These include questions such as the following. What stance is to be adopted in relation to the state? What kinds of partnerships can be established with other groups in matters of social ministry? How can a balance be struck between a prophetic and a pastoral emphasis in moral matters? A prophetic approach emphasises the counter-cultural challenge and the transcendent call to perfection from God in traditional religious teaching, while a pastoral approach starts with people where they are, accepting God's immanence and unending forgiveness in their complex and messy circumstances?

This study also provides some conceptual resources with which to address two other (closely related) topics currently under discussion in the universal church, topics that are not usually considered in the literature on Catholic education. The first of these is the need for and nature of *formation*, a term that deliberately implies a process that penetrates deeper into the psyche than training, the imparting of information or what often passes for education in mainstream schooling. Formation is described in a recent Roman document as an integral process, one that seeks a correlation between life and truth, between theology and the human sciences, between communicating a tradition and the hopes and values of young people.<sup>4</sup> Formation is usually associated with preparation for religious life in some particular religious order of men or women. It implies discipline, depth and long-term commitment. It is often carried out over a lengthy period and it takes place away from the world and its distractions. Programmes of formation attend to specific teachings and practices, and their bearing on the spiritual life. They also give much emphasis to the benefits and responsibilities of belonging to a particular (religious) community. My exploration of the connections between distinctiveness and inclusiveness should prompt those charged with formation to ensure they maintain an appropriate balance. On the one hand they will, rightly, emphasise the particularity of the tradition into which people are being inducted. On the other hand, they should provide sufficient space for the flourishing of individuals who possess a diversity of needs, strengths and weaknesses. In the past, formation sometimes aimed for a degree of conformity from new members of a religious

community that stripped them of their individuality. Such an approach gave inadequate attention to the essential polarity of inclusiveness.

The second issue under debate in contemporary Catholicism that might benefit from my analysis of the two polarities, distinctiveness and inclusiveness, is the role of particular *charisms* in the Church. To identify a charism, whether of an individual or of a group, is to draw attention to a special gift or talent, one that can be deployed for the greater good of the church and the whole people of God. The notion of charism is linked to the notion of vocation: different people (and groups) have different parts to play in the drama of salvation.

In a sense we can claim that there is a general and a special dimension to being a Christian. We have a common need for salvation and we are offered a common Saviour. The Word is to be addressed to all, without fear or favour. The church should be open to all, whatever their station in life. Through baptism there is a common priesthood of all believers, who should attempt to be the eyes, ears and hands of Christ in the world of their time. This is the general aspect of being a Christian. Each person enjoys particular gifts and talents; each person also struggles with particular shortcomings. In responding to the universal call of God as they face particular historical, cultural and economic circumstances, each Christian also has a special, perhaps even unique, vocation. There is no one right way to live out one's Christian faith, just as there is not merely one instrument to be played in an orchestra. This is what I mean by the special aspect of being a believer. Part of the distinctiveness of Catholicism is shared by all adherents of that faith, while within that distinctiveness there is scope for some legitimate diversity in expressing this in the actual circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Throughout its history the church has encouraged people with similar 'specialisms' to join together in particular movements, organisations or religious orders. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) there has been, in many parts of the Catholic Church, a radical re-appraisal of the role of such religious groups and their distinctive charisms. In emphasising the universal aspects of the faith, for example, the vocation of all believers, there has been some loss of confidence within the church as to how to articulate and how to put into institutional practice the charisms of particular religious orders. Alongside a marked decline in numbers, it has been deliberate policy in many parts of the world for religious orders to hand over responsibility for activities previously run by them to lay people. Religious as well as lay people acknowledge that this process has often taken place without adequate arrangements for transition or continuity. As a result, some of the special aspects, or charisms, that were part of the distinctiveness of Catholicism have been neglected, downgraded or even lost. The 'orchestra' now plays without benefit of some interesting 'instruments'. In such cases, too narrow an interpretation of distinctiveness has been operative.

Why, however, should people *outside* Catholicism consider that my examination of the relationship between these polarities might repay their effort to 'listen in' to a controversy that is internal to one particular faith community? A simple and relatively superficial answer might be that the Catholic Church has been, and still is,

## CHAPTER 2

### DISTINCTIVENESS AND INCLUSIVENESS: INCOMPATIBILITY OR CREATIVE TENSION?

In bringing into a sharper focus the two polarities sketched out in Chapter One, I shall concentrate on Catholic schooling in the public sector. This means that I omit treatment of those contexts other than schooling which also provide opportunities for educating Catholics in their faith. Among these might be included sermons, liturgy, missions, catechesis, sodalities, sacramental participation, religious literature, pilgrimages, scripture study and other forms of adult and higher education. The crucial roles of the family and the parish in Catholic education are not addressed. I concentrate my attention on 'ordered learning' in formal educational settings, rather than the Catholic community's total range of processes for education and formation in faith, without assuming that my area of focus is either the most important or the most effective element within those processes. Such ordered learning is central to, but smaller in scope than, the faith community's total formative process.

More particularly still, in focusing on Catholic schooling I do not explore whether the Church should have alternative strategies for carrying out its educational mission nor whether current structures are the most appropriate ones for this purpose. The study *is* intended to be normative for Catholic education, but not in either of these ways, nor in terms of particular details of content; instead its prescriptiveness relates to the principles which should govern, guide and permeate Catholic schooling as a whole.

Among these principles an insufficiently acknowledged ambivalence is identified, one which is of major significance for the practice of Catholic education in the school context. In addressing this ambivalence in the following chapters, I draw upon historical studies of Catholic schooling in England and Wales, engage with recent philosophical analysis of educational issues and concepts which are relevant to the main question being posed here and examine the theoretical 'story' of Catholic education in the light of its potential internal contradictions, its practical implications and in the face of some criticisms which have been levelled against it. My aim is to articulate the tension between two particular, apparently contrasting, imperatives within Catholic education and then to suggest a way to reduce, if not entirely to resolve, the tension between them.

As part of this process, I also refer to theological developments within Catholicism and that for two reasons: first, because they constitute one of the factors influencing the changing context in which Catholic education is set and second, because they cast light on the foundational principles which govern Catholic education. It is beyond my scope to seek to *justify* these theological elements; my task is rather to establish the *bearing* they have on Catholic education. I do not seek to be comprehensive in my treatment of Catholic theology. Instead I restrict myself to those elements that are relevant to the framing, and, I hope, at least to the partial resolution, of the central issue at stake in this book - the relationship between distinctiveness and inclusiveness in Catholic education.

Catholic schools, funded jointly by the church and the state, represent approximately 10% of the total number of maintained schools in England and Wales.<sup>1</sup> Despite their current healthy attendance figures, popularity with parents and record of securing a very high incidence of positive inspection reports,<sup>2</sup> I believe that Catholic schools may well be weakened, both in the effective implementation of their mission and in their self-advocacy, by a failure to acknowledge and to resolve an internal ambivalence in their philosophy and purposes. This leads to confusion about the goals of Catholic schools and to lack of clarity when dealing with criticisms of them. Such confusion and incapacity to respond adequately to criticism, either from within or from beyond the church, applies, I believe, to varying degrees, in most countries where Catholic schools have been established.

The worldview underpinning Catholic education in any country and the key concepts that mark out its central features are drawn from a Catholic community that is universal, as well as from local interpretations which operate at both national and diocesan levels. Therefore I draw upon relevant authoritative Catholic educational literature, both from Rome, intended to guide the universal church, as well as material from the Conference of Catholic Bishops in England and Wales, applying central guidance to one particular national context. Unless I indicate to the contrary, I shall refer most frequently to this English and Welsh context.

In this chapter four steps are taken. First, two imperatives in Catholic education, to be distinctive and to be inclusive, are brought into focus and the problematical nature of their relationship is indicated. Second, a feature of the educational scene external to Catholicism is described and it is suggested that this feature both highlights and compounds the unresolved tension between distinctiveness and inclusiveness within Catholic schools. This feature I call 'managerialism'. As part of my critique of managerialism, I emphasise the central importance for education of some overarching 'story', which gives it a sense of direction and guiding values. Third, in building on the Catholic 'story,' I signal my employment, later on in this book, of the notion of 'living tradition' as a possible way of resolving the tension between distinctiveness and inclusiveness. Fourth, two contrasting responses to the current condition of Catholic education are considered in order to clarify further the parameters of the problem being addressed and the stand-point being adopted here. Each response, in different ways, highlights the need for greater clarity about both distinctiveness and inclusiveness and a better understanding of how these two

imperatives are interconnected.

### 2.1 *Two imperatives*

What is the central problem to be addressed here? It arises from two apparently conflicting imperatives within Catholicism. On the one hand, the mission of the Church is to transmit something distinctive, a divinely sanctioned message for life (and eternal life). This imperative has overtones of the prophetic stance, of transcendence, of teaching with authority, of conveying truth in its comprehensiveness and without compromise. It suggests the notions of boundaries to be protected and of 'wine' to be preserved. The value of the 'currency' of Catholic doctrine is to be guarded by vigilant oversight of all 'issues' or pronouncements on behalf of the Church. This is to ensure that justice is done to the message to be conveyed. The purity and efficacy of the 'medicine' of salvation available through the Church needs to be relied upon by whoever avails themselves of it. Strong border controls and customs stations are to be maintained to prevent contamination from alien ideas which might be corrosive of truth and to assess carefully 'foreign imports' for their likely 'impact' on the 'economy' of the faith and the lives of the faithful.

On the other hand, an equally important imperative for Catholicism is to be fully inclusive, to be open to all types of people and to all sources of truth. The gospel to be offered is not only to be addressed *to* all people, which might simply require an unwavering and consistent effort to proclaim the message. It is also - and this is crucial for my argument - *for* all people and must take into account their differing situations and experiences, their insights and perplexities, their challenges and needs, their hopes and fears.<sup>3</sup> The salvific power of the message to be conveyed depends not only on its authoritative source, its accurate and comprehensive transmission, and due respect for its distinctive nature. It also relies on its capacity to embrace the concerns, to meet the needs and to address the perspectives of all God's people, in a way that is open to and inclusive of the diversity of their circumstances and cultures.

This second imperative implies or emphasises pastoral care, immanence, learning by listening, receptivity and accommodation, flexibility in the face of historical and cultural change and of vulnerability.<sup>4</sup> It seeks to avoid a fearful isolation from others and to encourage a full-hearted collaboration with them wherever possible and an involvement in the world rather than a retreat from it. This aspect of Catholicism acknowledges its own shortcomings, mistakes and sinfulness, its pilgrim status of still being 'on the way' and therefore its incompleteness, and, in parallel with this, it seeks to be attentive to the workings of the Holy Spirit beyond its 'borders'. As a result, it embraces liturgical variety, welcomes cultural pluralism, seeks harmony between different perspectives, recognises the spiritual truths and values inherent in other Christians and in other religions and encourages free and constructive dialogue with people of other persuasions. If these goods are to be secured, then defenders of distinctiveness and

guardians of orthodoxy must allow easy access to and for 'outsiders' and should seek neither to inhibit the exchange of ideas and experiences, nor to obstruct joint endeavours between Catholics and others.

These two imperatives do not sit easily together. The differing ways they coexist and interpenetrate one another and are expressed in the precepts and policies of Catholic educators have great significance for Catholics and for others in society. The degree of success with which they are held in balance will influence the acceptability of Catholic schools in a plural, mainly non-religious society. This balance is not easy to maintain. At times one imperative may appear to dominate Catholic educational thinking and practice, to the detriment of the other.

Where distinctiveness is emphasised, the integrity of faith is at stake. Catholic schools must endeavour to pass on the fullness of the faith. An undue willingness to be inclusive in the sense of accommodating the perspectives and priorities of those who cannot accept the message in its entirety might lead to a distortion of truth and a fateful damaging of the salvation prospects of those pupils who have been included but misled. Where inclusiveness is stressed, the welcoming nature of faith is at issue. In Catholic schools the particular (and diverse) academic, social, spiritual and other needs of pupils are to be addressed, regardless of their relationship to Catholicism. If too strong a priority is given to defending the distinctiveness of Catholicism, (and following from this, the distinctiveness of Catholic education,) there is a danger of exhibiting undesirable features, such as exclusiveness, rigidity, closed mindedness, intolerance, excessive confidence that truth is already fully possessed, and therefore of displaying an unwillingness to learn from others.

The two imperatives should be seen as complementary rather than in contradiction to one another. Instead of considering inclusiveness as something to be set against distinctiveness within Catholic education, one might claim that two kinds of distinctiveness are to be (simultaneously) of concern. The first is the distinctiveness of the Catholic tradition, which is to be maintained and communicated. The second is the distinctiveness (in the sense of the uniqueness and incommunicability) of each person (pupils, their families and staff) who comes into contact with Catholic schools. This second aspect of distinctiveness, being sensitive to the particularity of each person and being willing to welcome them and learn from them, should receive a high priority in Catholic education, not only because of respect for human dignity, but also because, in terms of their own theology, Catholics acknowledge God's presence *in* their pupils.<sup>5</sup> This way of considering the two imperatives only relocates the problematical nature of their relationship; it does not dissolve it. I shall therefore continue to refer to the polarity in the terms 'distinctive' and 'inclusive'.

Furthermore, from the point of view of the teaching act, communication and receptivity, like distinctiveness and inclusiveness, are correlative terms: one implies the other. We can distinguish, logically, if not chronologically, two phases in this correlation. First, as a teacher, my communication requires not only clarity about something distinctive and particular on my part, but also a receptivity from others, an openness on the part of my pupils. This is one aspect of their correlation. But,

second, if my communication is to be effective, I must be receptive to their situation and perceptions and I must attend to their communication with me. In the context of Catholic education, no awareness of distinctiveness is possible without awareness of difference, and no possibility of inclusiveness remains without there being a distinct body (of people and truth) to which one can belong and by which one can be included.

Although the problematic nature of the relationship between distinctiveness and inclusiveness arises internally, from within Catholicism, issues external to that faith exert considerable influence on the unstable tension between these imperatives. These issues provide part of the context for this work. They challenge Catholic education with a new and particularly sharp voice. But they also reveal in an interesting way that there are resources for education from within the Catholic 'story' that may be relevant to others.

## 2.2 *The managerial imperative*

In what follows I describe a problem that I believe is widespread in education and then suggest that it has particular relevance to my attempt here to resolve the tensions within Catholic education already indicated. In my work as an educational management consultant I have come to recognise more and more keenly the defects of 'managerialism' and the dangers posed for schools by too ready an adoption of the managerial imperative. What are these defects? Much of the managerial literature aimed at improving educational practice seems to display a universalism which is blind to cultural differences, curriculum specialisms, the climate of particular communities and the role of traditions as foundations for identity and our outlook on the world.<sup>6</sup> Such standardisation diminishes education, rather than enhances it. Atomistic objectives and competencies are described without reference to the perspectives and passions of the people involved.<sup>7</sup> A false sense of certainty and the dangerous illusion of control is hinted at as the desired outcomes if the relevant competencies are developed. In reality, there are so many variables involved in education that, no matter how confident a teacher is in employing a range of techniques, she can never claim predictive powers with regard to their effects with any particular group of pupils. This would not allow for a free response on their part. The ambiguity, complexity, particularity, creativity, unpredictability, open-endedness and essentially personal dimensions of educational practice can soon be lost sight of when too strong an emphasis is laid on 'managing' education.<sup>8</sup> In the industrial model of school, alongside line management and total quality control,

budgets are kept and scrutinised by accountants, press officers try to ensure a positive public image, and performance indicators are put in place to monitor output variables. Above all, there is concern that the product, that is the student, should be delivered effectively and efficiently in accordance with the requirements of the various customers, for example, employers, government, further and higher education.<sup>9</sup>

This is not to reject the important part that sound management can play in education.

## CHAPTER 3

### CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES

In this chapter I set my study of the relationship between distinctiveness and inclusiveness in Catholic education in the particular national context of England and Wales. First, I describe a Catholic school system that is both diversified and decentralised. Second, I comment on important changes in the composition of Catholic schools and in the position of Christianity in general and of Catholicism in particular. When combined with the effects of government legislation these changes present new challenges and opportunities to Catholic educators who now need to re-examine the rationale for Catholic schools and the foundational principles that should underpin and permeate all their work. Third, I summarise theological developments within Catholicism that are relevant to re-thinking about Catholic education. Fourth, I indicate factors which have a bearing upon the lack of clarity about the distinctive nature of Catholic education currently shown by many of those involved in Catholic schools and suggest why there is a need for greater clarity. Fifth, I make a preliminary analysis of types of distinctiveness. Sixth, I offer a personal summary of a Catholic view of education in anticipation of the more extended examination carried out in chapters four and five. Finally, I analyse those general characteristics of Catholicism which provide a foundation for the distinctive components in Catholic education which are explored in the next chapter.

#### *3.1. National context*

Ever since the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850, the Catholic Church in England and Wales has always given a high priority to its schools. To such an extent has this been so that, where a choice had to be made between building a church or a school, the preferred option was to be the establishment of schools.<sup>1</sup> For many years the Catholic community saw its schools as instrumental in the preservation of their identity. Given their memories of persecution and discrimination, their experience as a minority group who remained suspect in the eyes of many, the crushing poverty suffered by many of their members living at the margins of society and the heavy burdens of paying for separate schools,<sup>2</sup> it is little wonder that the Catholic community jealously defended the distinctive character of its schools. Their



independence from state interference was to be guarded with unceasing vigilance, while Catholics themselves would be compelled by church law to send their children to such schools.<sup>3</sup>

Such distinctiveness necessarily entailed a degree of exclusiveness, in the sense that the Catholic community envisaged for its schools a role in protecting children from contamination either by Protestantism or by secular ideologies. The focus was 'domestic' or inward-looking rather than seeking to serve the wider community, in so far as Catholic schools were primarily intended to educate the children of fellow Catholics. A fortress mentality for the institutional church prevailed both at the international as well as the national and local levels. Where Catholics were a minority group, as in England and Wales, this fortress mentality could lead to a ghetto situation where barriers to the outside world served also as protection from threat and as an assurance of safety for souls.

In the period between the restoration of the hierarchy and the 1944 Education Act, an Act which provided a solid basis for the continuation and extension of the 'dual system', the Catholic Church in England and Wales saw itself very much as a junior daughter within the wider Catholic world. She sought to be faithful in all things to Rome, accepted obedience as a cardinal virtue and strove to do justice to the ultramontane spirit in all matters, ranging from clergy-laity relations, styles of theology and spiritual and moral discipline.<sup>4</sup> Bishops in this country saw the damaging effects of a cultural struggle in Germany, of anti-clericalism in France, of the condemnation of attempts to adapt the church in America and the crushing of modernism generally in the early years of this century. Tight discipline was maintained, wherever possible, at all levels in the English and Welsh Catholic church. Indifferentism would be guarded against, obedience would be insisted upon, experimentation ruled out and uniformity enforced. All this was part of a wider counter-cultural stance adopted by the Catholic Church, one that was to be significantly modified by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).<sup>5</sup>

Despite the fact that Catholic schools have been considered crucial for the preservation of the identity and life of a highly disciplined and authoritarian church, it is perhaps surprising that both before and after the 1944 Education Act a feature of the Catholic school system in England and Wales has been the patchiness of its provision. Official church policy for education has been that all Catholic pupils should be taught by Catholic teachers in Catholic schools. The pressure on parents to send their children to church schools was 'on pain of sin'.<sup>6</sup> However, a significant number of Catholic pupils never attended Catholic schools. Provision has never matched the overall need for places.<sup>7</sup> This is mainly due to the enormous burden imposed by the increasing costs of building new schools and the uneven capacity of different Catholic communities and dioceses to meet these financial demands.

It is also partly a reflection of decentralisation in the decision-making bodies of Catholic schooling. At present there are twenty-two dioceses in England and Wales. According to Canon Law, each bishop has jurisdiction over the Catholic schools in his diocese. On some issues the bishops deliberate together and release joint statements about education (and other matters).<sup>8</sup> But over many issues there appears

to be no co-ordination of episcopal decision, action or oversight regarding Catholic schools. To complicate this picture further, one must take into account the roles of several other bodies.

The Catholic Education Service acts on behalf of the Bishops' Conference in the provision of general guidance about Catholic education and in negotiations with government (and, where appropriate, opposition parties) over the implications of current or proposed policies for Catholic schools. Each diocese has a Schools Commission, with clergy and lay representation, whose full or part-time officers advise on and, in partnership with schools, implement the education policy of their own particular diocese. This task is often shared with the diocesan Religious Education Centre (sometimes called Christian Education Centre).<sup>9</sup>

Also to be taken into account, there are many different religious orders, both of men and women, involved in Catholic education. Some of these run their own schools and therefore are trustees in law for the property and its governance.<sup>10</sup> The position is made even more complex by the fact that some of the religious orders responsible for Catholic schools in England and Wales are based overseas.<sup>11</sup>

Each particular Catholic school, whether independent or maintained, has its own governing body, which has some members appointed by the diocesan or order trustees, some elected by the parents and, in the case of maintained schools, some nominated by local political parties. The rights and responsibilities of governors are enshrined in law. However, where perceptions and priorities about Catholic education differ and where jurisdiction appears to be either unclear or overlapping, there can be serious tensions between parents, governors, trustees and diocese.<sup>12</sup> These might, for example, be about decisions relating to building programmes, closure, amalgamation, staff appointments, admission of pupils or proposals to change the nature of the school. Differences in perceptions and priorities can lead to conflict between parents, Headteacher, governors and local parishioners over staff performance, pupil discipline, and the degree to which the Catholic ethos should be maintained.

Diversification in the structures of the United Kingdom system of education increased after legislation (in the late 1980s and the early 1990s) removed sixth form and further education colleges from local authority control and introduced City Technology Colleges, Grant Maintained and other types of school.<sup>13</sup> Catholic schools have been affected by these developments, which compound the complex situation described above. The 17 Catholic sixth form colleges have been subject to a very different regime of funding, control and inspection since 1992, one which makes the promotion of their Catholic ethos harder to maintain than when their status was the same as voluntary aided schools. One Catholic sixth form college (De La Salle, in Salford) closed after an unsatisfactory (Further Education Funding Council) inspection report. Another (St Philip's, in Birmingham) was closed after protracted and painful internal debate about its Catholic nature and its multi-faith student intake. This particular episode proved extremely controversial among the wider Catholic community because the development of the arguments represented a clash between apparently incompatible models for Catholic education. It might be

argued that the college's closure represented a victory for an exclusivist, closed, elitist, unquestioning, inward-looking and defensive form of Catholicism. An alternative view might be that the trustees finally woke up to, and took a courageous, if unpopular, stand against, the effects of a creeping secularisation and a corrosive liberalism within Catholic education itself.<sup>14</sup>

Following increased pressure from government to diversify provision, to increase parental choice, and, in aid of that choice, to clarify the value basis and particular nature of their 'product' or 'service', schools have been encouraged to emphasise their differences from one another. A complaint made against the predominant comprehensive school system was that it emphasised the similarities between schools, leading to a bland uniformity, reducing parental choice and giving too much power to professional providers rather than to the 'consumers'.

As a response, most Catholic schools, at least since the late 1980s, have drawn up their own particular mission statement, or summary of fundamental principles, emphasising their *raison d'être* and indicating the ideals which they hope to embody through their curriculum and ethos. These mission statements are guided partly by the charism and tradition of a particular religious order (where that applies). They will also be influenced by the prevailing Catholic philosophy of education, which will be mediated through national guidelines and by diocesan and other authorities and advisers. This philosophy will meet with varying degrees of understanding and support from teachers in Catholic schools.<sup>15</sup> They also reflect the particular circumstances, perspectives and priorities of the people who draw them up. Flexibility in response to pastoral realities has not always been a marked feature of Catholicism. Recent encouragement from Rome of a pastoral approach in education, one that is sensitive to the diversity of situations and cultures encountered by teachers, sounds very different from an earlier emphasis on uniformity.<sup>16</sup> O'Keeffe (1992) refers to the current variety in provision as a 'patchwork quilt', one where a multiplicity of models of Catholic schools can be discerned.<sup>17</sup>

Diversified expressions of Catholicism, in schools as elsewhere, are inevitable, given certain social changes. Catholics are increasingly assimilated rather than living as a group set apart. There has been a new emphasis on acknowledging plurality in society. Within the church there is now less stress on the need for uniformity. Taken together, these changes allow more scope for the process of inculturation, or adapting the communication of the Gospel to diverse local circumstances and cultural conditions.

This diversification has not yet been mapped provisionally, let alone adequately. It is not my aim here to remedy this situation. Instead, my focus is on those aspects of that philosophy of education that I believe Catholic schools should jointly subscribe to if they are to act in harmony with the church's teaching. This focus on their commonality in no way rules out scope for legitimate differences in their interpretation of how to express this philosophy in their particular circumstances, although it does restrict it. Limitations of space prevent me from exploring here issues arising from posing the interesting questions: 'what, if anything, makes a particular (Catholic) school unique?' and 'what, if anything, makes it Catholic in a

special way?' Anneke de Wolff points out that, in British, American and European discussions about the identity of Christian schools, of whatever denomination, such identity has been treated as a group phenomenon. Much more emphasis has been given to how they (jointly) differ from non-Christian schools as compared with how they differ among themselves. She also observes that the changeability or dynamic nature of the identity of Christian schools is neglected in studies of Christian schools because concern about their identity, being closely linked with concern about the continuity of the tradition, is seen in static terms.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.2. *Factors for change*

Many factors have contributed to important changes in the context in which Catholic education now takes place. These include the changing nature of the staff and student composition within Catholic schools, the position of Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular in society, government legislation and developments in theology. These factors will be briefly addressed in turn.

Catholic schools now have fewer staff from religious orders. Between the mid 1960s and the late 1980s the number of teachers from religious orders fell by three-quarters in the case of men and by nine-tenths in the case of women.<sup>19</sup> There has been a substantial increase in lay leadership, so that where most Catholic schools were at the beginning of the 1960s led by priests or religious, within less than two decades scarcely any remained in this position.<sup>20</sup> The percentage of staff who are not Catholic has increased to about 12% in primary and over 40% in secondary schools. More than 10% of pupils in Catholic primary schools and more than 16% of pupils in maintained Catholic secondary schools come from non-Catholic families. This change in composition presents new challenges to - and requires a fresh understanding of - distinctiveness within Catholic education. In particular, it prompts further consideration of how to relate the mission of such schools to staff and pupils who are not Catholics and how to include such people properly within the school community.

I leave on one side here the whole issue of how the 'religious' staff played a particularly powerful role in embodying the 'Catholic identity' of a school. They had a vocation that was made explicit, one that was marked by particular charisms and spiritual traditions. Their lifestyle was celibate, they wore distinct clothing and resided in a separate community. A lengthy period of personal formation prepared them to integrate faith and teaching. Many enjoyed international connections and a highly developed sense of belonging to the universal church. Not surprisingly, in many countries, including in Britain, the USA and in Australia, they contributed significantly to the development of the Catholic school system and they offered a counter-cultural, even a *contra mundum* stance. However, in the light of changes in Catholic understanding of the church since Vatican II, it is a little more problematic to assume that the presence of religious can give schools their Catholic identity, even if they were available in sufficient numbers. A major task still faces Catholic

## CHAPTER 4

### DISTINCTIVE COMPONENTS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

The central issue of this book is the coherence of the claim that Catholic education is both distinctive and inclusive. Are these two features of Catholic education, distinctiveness and inclusiveness, compatible, and, if so, how is their relationship to be understood? Does the claim to offer a distinctive philosophy of education, one which is seen as requiring, in the context of this country, the provision of separate, denominational schools, necessarily entail a degree of exclusiveness on the part of the Catholic Church? How does the claim that 'to be Catholic is to be inclusive' relate to the claim to be distinctive?

Before any of these questions can be satisfactorily answered, it is necessary to clarify the nature of and foundation for the claim that Catholic education is distinctive. Only when this has been done will it be possible to consider the kinds of exclusiveness and inclusiveness which necessarily follow from (or are debarred by) a Catholic philosophy of education. The main task of this chapter is to clarify the key components of the claim to distinctiveness. In the following chapter I delineate the distinctive worldview which underpins the educational principles described here. Taken together, in focusing on the components, foundations and implications of the claim to distinctiveness in a Catholic philosophy of education, these two chapters will indicate further the problematical nature of the relationship between distinctiveness and inclusiveness, before I suggest a way forward in chapters six, seven and eight.

First, I provide here a summary and analysis of the principal Roman documents that contain the Church's official teaching about Catholic schools. Second, I bring out the interconnectedness and coherence of the various themes and principles which together constitute a distinctively Catholic educational philosophy. Third, in order to demonstrate how some of the themes emerging from the documents can be held together without contradiction, in a creative tension, and in such a way that they mutually support and illuminate one another, I draw on the thought of a writer whose work has been almost completely neglected in the literature on Catholic education, Friedrich von Hügel (1852-1925). Von Hügel deserves careful study as part of this thesis because he demonstrated in his life and writings that the Catholic attempt to combine distinctiveness and inclusiveness is possible.

#### 4.1.1 *Declaration on Christian education*

I have already mentioned (in 3.3) the shift of emphasis brought about by the rethinking carried out at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). As a result of this shift of emphasis it is possible to discern a more positive attempt in church teaching to promote the fullest development of the human person and to integrate Christian education more closely into the whole pattern of life. God reaches out to us in all dimensions of our existence, not merely inwardly in our spiritual lives or via the workings of conscience. In the *Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis)* we read that

education should pave the way to brotherly association with other peoples, so that genuine unity and peace on earth may be promoted. For a true education aims at the formation of the human person with respect to his ultimate goal, and simultaneously with respect to the good of those societies of which he is a member.<sup>1</sup>

Preparing people to enjoy life with God does not in any way entail inviting them to turn away from this world, its needs and their responsibilities. Although they are to be illumined by faith, Catholic schools must also "have the same cultural aims as all other schools and be opened to the contemporary world."<sup>2</sup>

In addition to this positive stance towards the world, four further points can be picked out from this Declaration as having relevance to mapping the key concepts within a Catholic view of education. First, the special importance granted to parents as the primary educators of their children is underlined.<sup>3</sup> Second, the kind of community atmosphere to be created and maintained at school, one that is "enlivened by the gospel spirit of freedom and charity," is stressed. Third, attention is given to the importance of striving to relate all of human culture to the news of salvation.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the autonomy of the various branches of knowledge is affirmed. These are to be taught "according to their own proper principles and methods and with due freedom of scientific investigation."<sup>5</sup>

It can be seen that, taken on its own, *Gravissimum Educationis* does not constitute substantial building blocks for a Catholic philosophy of education. This was recognised within the document itself: "these principles will have to be developed at greater length by a special post-conciliar Commission and applied by episcopal conferences to varying situations."<sup>6</sup> The third and fourth principles mentioned above, namely that which concerns the relationship between faith and culture and that which defends the autonomy of the various disciplines, are particularly important for this study. They recur in later Roman documents and I will comment further on them in due course. The second principle, with its emphasis on freedom and charity, provides guidance on the ethos, 'atmosphere' or 'climate' which is necessary if education is to avoid being domineering and if it is to be open to the particular perspectives and needs of students.

In fact, that further development of principles hinted at the start of *Gravissimum Educationis* was delayed for some time after the Council closed in 1965. It may well be claimed that the progress of Catholic education after the mid nineteen-sixties

was influenced less by the Council's direct teaching on education than indirectly by piecemeal and partial assimilation of other Council teachings. A more responsible role for the laity within the church was encouraged. This would show itself in various ways. Greater participation within the liturgy and more familiarity with the scriptures would provide a sound starting point. From this Catholics should be stimulated to search for God's revelation in their own experience, rather than merely in sacred writings or in the past. They should be more open to fellow-Christians and to people of other faiths. As a result of these changes in attitude, it could be expected that they would show greater readiness to contribute to the transformation of the world. The Church shared in society's general advocacy of the need for freedom from coercion, with more allowance made for personal choice. This itself is a far cry from some of the pronouncements of nineteenth century popes such as Gregory XVI and Pius IX, who both rejected in their encyclicals freedom of conscience and the idea of tolerance.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.1.2. *The Catholic school*

It was not until 1977, twelve years after the Council closed, that a major document relating to education was issued from Rome. This was *The Catholic School*. It was to be followed by *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982), and *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988). A decade later, two further significant Roman documents relevant to Catholic education were issued. The first of these was the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997). The second, in 1998, was *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*.

In *The Catholic School* we find an acknowledgement of the existence of objections to Catholic education, including a general rejection of church institutions, accusations of proselytism, of outdatedness, class distinction, poor educational results and difficulties over staffing and finance.<sup>8</sup> None of these objections is given more than a cursory mention. This is a pity. First, they are grave allegations and merit a serious response. Second, there is some evidence from this country as well as from the USA and from Australia that children in Catholic schools generally receive a sound education, one that equips them well by comparison with the educational outcomes secured by secular schools.<sup>9</sup> Rather than face accusations of shortcomings in Catholic schools, the Sacred Congregation goes on to reiterate the need for Catholic schools to bear institutional witness for the Church and its values, especially in the face of certain damaging or debilitating influences in society. These include relativism, materialism, pragmatism, depersonalisation and a mass production mentality and cultural pluralism.<sup>10</sup>

Five positive principles or themes emerge, some taking up points from *Gravissimum Educationis*, others providing fresh nuances. The first of these principles is indicated in a phrase which has become more and more influential - or at least repeated - in the literature on church schools, the 'integral formation of the whole person'.<sup>11</sup> As yet this expression is still being treated in a fairly undeveloped way, without further description and without an attempt at analysis. It will be taken

up again in both the next two sources, each time being given a little more 'thickness' in treatment.

The second principle is that Christ should be the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school.<sup>12</sup> An understanding of Christ will offer new meaning to life and will show how human values find their fulfilment and unity.<sup>13</sup> This centrality of Christ, although it is not unpacked or explained in this way, might nevertheless with justification be taken to imply three things. First, his teaching should be fully and faithfully conveyed, in order that children receive the *information* necessary for salvation, enabling them to hear and respond to the Gospel. Second, a personal relationship with Christ is aspired to. This relationship is advocated as an ideal for pupils to strive towards and it is encouraged as worthy of both communal and individual effort. It should be embodied in and witnessed to by the teachers, to ensure that children receive an appropriate *formation*. Third, the principal decisions and policies of the school are referred to both the teaching and the person of Christ in the context of personal prayer, corporate worship and joint reflection; this would ensure that Christ would truly serve as a reference point or *touchstone* within the school.

The remaining three principles will be treated briefly here since they will crop up again when we survey the next two documents. At first sight it might appear that there is some tension between the third principle and the fourth and fifth ones (which should be taken together as mutually supportive). The third principle states that, with regard to a Catholic school, "its task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian."<sup>14</sup> This is a compressed or dense statement; neither its meaning nor its implications are immediately apparent.

The relationship to be established between faith and culture presupposes a positive reading of and response to creation, stemming from the deeper appreciation of the implications of belief in the Incarnation which was shown both during and after Vatican II. Cultures vary enormously in their composition and they may, to varying degrees, contain features which do not harmonise easily with Christian beliefs, for example, in their attitudes or practices regarding the body, nature, gender, the environment, the individual, or people of other races. Therefore further guidance will be needed, both to facilitate accurate discernment of what is peripheral and what is central to a culture, and to give insight into what is compatible with and what is hostile to Christian faith. Cultural analysis in the light of Christian faith should reveal what should be shunned as essentially dangerous. It should also confirm what can be warmly embraced as positive and beneficial and what can be safely engaged with in an attempt to convert it from being merely neutral or perhaps only a minimal support for faith in its present state into a more secure ally.

Even on the most optimistic estimate of pupils' maturity and motivation, this analysis is beginning to sound like a task that is well beyond the capacities of most of them, and, indeed, of most of their teachers. The whole topic of inculturation has



become an extremely important one in the modern church, as attempts are made to relate the many different African, Asian and Latin American cultures to the Gospel in a move away from European cultural dominance.<sup>15</sup> The issue is complex, controversial, taxes the minds of the most sophisticated thinkers and is certainly still an area of church development that is unlikely to be resolved in the near future.<sup>16</sup> Schools will contribute to the discussion. They will provide a test-bed or arena for experimentation. How might this occur? One way is by appropriating the notion of living tradition within the academic and community life of the school. Another way is by extending the notion of differentiation to the realm of religious education and worship. If these two strategies are combined, pupils can be helped to develop their own response to and expression of the religious tradition, rather than be expected to conform to it unthinkingly or to assimilate it uncritically. This process will also have to take into account the diverse levels of familiarity with and commitment to the Catholic tradition prevalent among pupils (as well their parents and the staff).<sup>17</sup> But schools will also need much more guidance than is currently available.<sup>18</sup>

An outcome of a better understanding of the respective rights and values of faith and culture and their interrelationship might well be the emergence of a much more rigorous and radical critique of our own culture than we have witnessed so far. It would be ironic if, after praising the values represented by church schools, and lauding the success enjoyed by them, politicians were to find that, as they more truly discovered their own identity, such schools entered into a more confrontational mode with prevailing political values.

The fourth and fifth principles that we can identify in *The Catholic School* concern the autonomy of the various subjects taught and the development of the critical faculties of pupils. "Individual subjects must be taught according to their own particular methods. It would be wrong to consider (them) as mere adjuncts to faith or as a useful means of teaching apologetics."<sup>19</sup> The value in the subjects lies not only in the different types of knowledge they yield, the skills they demand of us, and the attitudes they foster, but also in their methodology. This means that the church cannot tell physicists how to do physics, historians how to practise history, artists how to work through their chosen medium, and so on. There cannot be a Catholic science, mathematics, music, sociology or physical education curriculum, in the sense that such subjects are studied differently from the way they would be studied in secular schools. There must not be any theological imperialism or undue pressure on the natural autonomy of the disciplines that would distort them.<sup>20</sup>

These subjects can be treated in such a way that they raise larger questions than the disciplines themselves directly address. I am not referring here to the selection of subject matter of specific interest to Catholics as exemplary material for study, for example in literature, music, art, history and so on. Would such selection consider those artefacts which are produced by Catholics or those which, whether produced by Catholics or not, addressed matters considered of great moment by Catholics? To move down this route would create difficulties for some areas of the curriculum and it would distort the nature of the different disciplines in a way clearly condemned by the Sacred Congregation. As John Haldane says, "a Catholic

## CHAPTER 5

### DISTINCTIVE WORLDVIEW

If Catholic schools are to be distinctive, then much of this distinctiveness will rest upon their displaying an appreciation firstly, that the whole curriculum has a religious dimension, and, secondly, that all the disciplines, although autonomous, have a part to play in promoting the integral development of the whole person. One would need to add to such an appreciation a desire to integrate faith with both culture and life. This distinctiveness will also depend upon a shared world-view and a shared concept of the sort of person that education should be aiming to develop, with Christ being taken as the prime role model. No attempt to articulate a consistently thought through approach to education could avoid implying at least a view of the nature of persons and their place in the general order of things, including some ideas about what it is important for them to be like. As Philip May has pointed out, "behind every educational system, its aims, curricula, teaching methods and organization, lie assumptions about the nature of man and the purpose of life."<sup>1</sup> From a rather different perspective, Fred Inglis comments, "by implying a view of what to do with knowledge, the curriculum, like the culture, implies a picture of how to live and who to be."<sup>2</sup>

#### 5.1 *Shared view of life*

Behind a Catholic philosophy of education there is an anthropology, a theology of creation, a Christology and an ecclesiology. I do not claim that the *content* of all these is distinctively Catholic. Many of the central elements within a Catholic worldview, for example, doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation and salvation, are shared by other Christians.<sup>3</sup> The official Catholic position is that these shared doctrines are more fundamental for Christian faith than areas of doctrinal differences among Christians. Furthermore, many elements within a Christian worldview are also shared by people of other faiths.<sup>4</sup> As examples of these shared elements, apart from belief in God, I will refer in this chapter to the voice of conscience, the notion of the soul, the interconnectedness of intellectual, moral and spiritual qualities, the acknowledgement of sin, the need for a disciplining of our powers and a receptivity to grace.

With so much of importance held in common, both with fellow Christians and with people of other faiths, a powerful case could be made for ecumenical Christian schools and also for inter-faith education shared between, for example, Christians, Jews and Muslims. Despite being sympathetic to, indeed enthusiastic about, such projects, I intend to leave them on one side, for my aim here is to explore the internal coherence of the claim that (separate) Catholic education can combine distinctiveness with inclusiveness. Given my particular focus, I do not consider here why some other Christians, who share substantially a great many beliefs with Catholics, do not think separate schooling is either necessary or desirable. This interesting and important question would have to be addressed if one sought to provide a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between Christian philosophies of education and particular forms of schooling, or if one aimed for a critical and well-founded justification for separate, faith-based schooling. Both of these aims are beyond the scope of my narrower exploration here.

It is not essential to my argument that the elements within a Catholic Christian worldview that I pick out should lead inexorably to a desire for separate schooling even on the part of all Catholics. This would require a marked degree of uniformity among Catholics in their understanding of and commitment to these elements and it would depend upon an approach by the church that was monolithic in its stance and pronouncements. There is no evidence of such uniformity among believers and much evidence of a high level of diversity within the church as a whole and within Catholic education in particular. This becomes clearer as soon as the context, composition and functioning of Catholic schools in other countries is examined.

There is, however, a central or 'mainstream' position within Catholicism that defends the right of the church to maintain schools under its aegis and guided by its own educational philosophy. Of course, there are alternative viewpoints on both the composition and weighting of the 'ingredients' of a Catholic worldview. There are also different views about the need for, and indeed essential nature of, Catholic schools. Despite this, for the purposes of my argument I assume that the 'mainstream' position described here is representative and authoritative. The *salience* of the elements referred to in this chapter is so highly marked within Catholicism and their implications for education are so strongly emphasized, that a Catholic interpretation of them has *often in practice* been the foundation for a policy of separate schooling. It has frequently been assumed that Catholic education is to be provided to ensure that these elements receive due attention and appropriate treatment. Without the opportunity to provide such a religiously informed context for education, the Catholic Church believes that prevailing assumptions in society and education will undermine her teaching, hinder a sufficiently rounded development of persons and even distort in some way an understanding of those truths and values held in common with others.

Within Catholic theology, ecclesiology, an understanding of church, plays a key role in the distinctive configuration and weighting of these elements. In ecumenical dialogue it is often different understandings of church which prevent agreement, rather than theological differences over personhood, creation or Christ. There is not

scope here to analyze the multiple, complementary, mutually correcting and sometimes conflicting models of church which are available within Catholicism, for example, models of the church as institution, as herald, as Body of Christ, as sacrament, as servant or as mystical communion.<sup>5</sup> However, I would contend that her ecclesiology provides Catholicism with a particular way of bringing together thinking about human nature, the person of Christ and God as the source and goal of creation. It also establishes a context for understanding the relationship between the material and the spiritual, nature and grace, faith and reason, freedom and authority, discipline and development, and the individual and the community.<sup>6</sup> These polarities are important elements of a Catholic worldview. Any attempt to grasp the meaning, scope and significance of Catholic doctrine, morality and spirituality is likely to be deficient if these are not interpreted in the context of a Catholic ecclesiology. The overall shape of Catholic education, likewise, can only be appreciated if it is related to a Catholic understanding of the church and its mission. In the light of my claim about the importance of ecclesiology, it should not be surprising if I seek to resolve some of the problems arising from an ambivalence within Catholic education - the twin imperatives to be both distinctive and inclusive - by retrieving in a later chapter a deeper sense of church, specifically through drawing upon the notion of living tradition.<sup>7</sup>

It is because the Catholic understanding of human nature, purpose and destiny differs in crucial respects from some other accounts that are predominant in society, that many Catholics seek a separate context for the education of their children. Within the friendly space provided by separate schooling, there is an opportunity to educate for a different world than that envisaged by secular society to aim for a different ideal of what persons are meant to become. From the perspective of a Catholic approach to education, alternative worldviews are deficient in one or other respect in their 'reading' of human nature and destiny: perhaps through omission, imbalance, exaggeration or under-emphasis. This position does not directly *contradict* certain Catholic beliefs that might be considered essentially inclusive, but it does co-exist in some tension with them. This inclusive dimension of Catholicism embraces the following beliefs. First, there is much truth and value in worldviews outside the church. Second, the church herself is damaged by sin and should always be open to reform. Third, the church should always be ready, not only to communicate her message but at the same time ready to learn from others in order to augment and penetrate more deeply into what she already possesses.

The presentation of any set of beliefs is bound to be influenced by the prevailing assumptions of the people being addressed; that is, it will not be 'free-standing' in the sense that it is irrelevant who the debating partners are. What they are for and what they neglect will both frame and modify the presentation, what is emphasized and omitted, the 'shape' or ordering of the presentation and the implications drawn from it. *Recent* arguments for the continuation of an educational policy of separate Catholic schooling within England and Wales have been conducted with the perceived shortcomings of liberal, secular and market-led ideologies principally in mind, rather than any perceived shortcomings of other Christian or religious groups.

In the light of this my focus on conscience, soul, the interconnectedness of intellectual, moral and spiritual qualities, sin, discipline and grace as key aspects of a Catholic worldview which provide a foundation for those key elements of Catholic education which were outlined in chapter four, may appear less strange. They will *not* add up to an adequate summary of Catholic beliefs. Nor will they distinguish clearly Catholicism from other parts of the Christian church. They should, however, display *important features of the worldview* which underpins the key concepts analyzed in the previous chapter and in casting light on the *distinctiveness* of the worldview Catholic education, some of its parameters and requirements, they should *signal the problematical relationship between distinctiveness and inclusiveness*.

In order to bring into focus some of these key aspects of a Catholic worldview which underpin a Catholic philosophy of education, I take the following steps. First, I draw upon the thought of Newman in emphasizing the importance of conscience and the moral dimension of the search for truth. Second, I consider the central role of religion in education. Third, I identify elements that contribute to the integral development of persons. Fourth, I explore some of the connections between an understanding of human persons, the personhood of Christ and the formation of character. Fifth, I comment on some of Maritain's work in seeking to achieve a deeper understanding of personhood by relating this concept both to individuality and to our relations with others. Sixth, I draw out some of the implications of the belief that we are made in God's image. Seventh, I distinguish several aspects and implications of the belief that all people have a vocation from God.

## 5.2 *Newman and Christian education*

Newman, writing in the nineteenth century, interpreted some of the intellectual assumptions of his time as implicitly undermining of a Christian understanding of the relationship between religion and education and between faith and reason. He anticipated the threat to religious believers caused by the tendency within liberal education towards both reductionism and apparent neutrality which in reality marginalised religious considerations and priorities.

In *The Idea of a University* Newman argued forcibly, not only for comprehensiveness in the range of disciplines available for study in a university and for the preservation of a sense of the unity of knowledge, but also for the essential presence of theological study within that unity. Theology is required, not only as a subject which offers worthwhile academic knowledge in its own right, but also as a necessary condition for the development among students of a holistic understanding of the interrelationships between character formation and the acquisition of knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Newman analyses (among other topics) the mutual bearing on each other of theology and other knowledge and the corresponding duties (regarding intellectual development and spiritual growth) owed to one another by the church and the academy.<sup>9</sup> One might fairly paraphrase Newman's view of the role of theology and religion within the circle of knowledge as one which was simultaneously academic, edificatory (or existentialist) and architectonic. Although

Newman wished to preserve the freedom of the investigator (we all need 'elbow room' in the domain of thought), he stressed the real possibility that intellectual gifts will be abused if they are not disciplined by appropriate habits, lifestyle and formation.<sup>10</sup>

For Newman, one of the ways that secular and liberal approaches to education fail to do justice to a Catholic view of human nature and needs is their neglect of the voice of conscience in prompting us to look out for revelation.<sup>11</sup> He strongly emphasised the role of religious knowledge in building up the personality and also paradoxically the development that was necessary, before religious knowledge could be attained. He particularly dwelt on the working of conscience which, he claimed, makes humans aware of the presence in their lives of a divine Judge. His view was that there is something *in* us which is not merely *of* us, which points us beyond ourselves, if we can only discern its operations sufficiently clearly.

It is more than man's own self. The man has no power over it, or only with extreme difficulty; he did not make it; he cannot destroy it;...he can disobey it, he may refuse it, but it remains.<sup>12</sup>

Not only does the conscience, according to Newman, represent for us the divine voice, but the more we follow its dictates and heed its warnings, so much the more clearly will we hear its tones, understand its message, love its commands and be more consciously present to the speaker.<sup>13</sup>

For some religious educators the apprehension of truth necessarily precedes the adoption of a religious life-style and the practice of a particular morality. The reverse is true, at least in the order of life, if not in the order of logic, for Newman. The attainment of truth in the religious sphere is the fruit rather than the root of virtue. Moral life makes possible the recognition of religious truth. In recent years there has been a stress in religious enquiry on the notion of a 'the long search'. Valuable though this has been in its implications for inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism, for the development of a historical perspective and for encouraging greater openness to and respect for the views of other people, it needs to be balanced by the reminder that the journey is also a moral one. It is not an intellectual game. As Newman says: "no enquiry comes to good which is not conducted under a deep sense of responsibility, and of the issues depending on its determination."<sup>14</sup>

The search for religious truth that has been tested for its reliability will be dependent in part at least for its success upon the moral state of the searcher. The search will sometimes be painful, because it will necessarily involve scrutiny of the self, not merely the observation of other religious persons. According to such a view, the search will entail interrogation of our own consciences; access to truth is only made possible through moral living and a right state of heart.<sup>15</sup> Newman states that the right state of heart both gives birth to faith and also disciplines it. The right state of heart protects faith "from bigotry, credulity, and fanaticism."<sup>16</sup> While we live under the sovereignty of sin our minds are clouded and our discernment of truth cannot be clear, confident or consistent. It is only in the wake of a faithful existence, after a conversion that is simultaneously intellectual, moral and spiritual,