

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the third issue of *Roots & Wings* for 2017.

We remind you of a new feature this year in the form of two articles chosen for CPTD points. We have not yet received official endorsement from SACE but hope that it will be soon forthcoming.

As in the medical profession, readers will qualify for points by answering and submitting the questions on the two articles that appear at the end of this magazine.

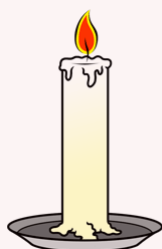
Again we offer a variety of articles, newsbytes and resources as an invitation to reflect on classroom practice and to try out new approaches.

We hope you enjoy the issue.

PAUL FALLER

ABOUT TEACHING

The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.



The great teacher inspires.

(WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD)

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REFLECTION

Feeding off Life's Sacred Fire

(Ron Rolheiser)



*See the wise and wicked ones
Who feed upon life's sacred fire*

These are lines from Gordon Lightfoot's song, *Don Quixote*, and they highlight an important truth, both the wise and the wicked feed off the same energy. And it's good energy, sacred energy, divine energy, irrespective of its use. The greedy and the violent feed off the same energy as do the wise and the saints. There's one source of energy and, even though it can be irresponsibly, selfishly, and horrifically misused, it remains always God's energy.

Unfortunately, we don't often think of things that way. Recently I was listening to a very discouraged man who, looking at the selfishness, greed, and violence in our world, blamed it all on the devil. "It must be the anti-Christ," he said, "How else do you explain all this, so many people breaking basically every commandment."

He's right in his assessment that the selfishness, greed, and violence we see in our world today are anti-Christ (though perhaps not the Anti-Christ spoken of in scripture). However he's wrong about where selfishness, greed, and violence are

drawing their energy from. The energy they are drawing upon comes from God, not from the devil. What we see in all the negative things that make up so much of the evening news each day is not evil energy but rather the misuse of sacred energy. Evil deeds are not the result of evil energies but the result of the misuse of sacred energy. Whether you consider the devil a person or a metaphor, either way, he has no other origin than from God. God created the devil, and created him good. His wickedness results from the misuse of that goodness.

All energy comes from God and all energy is good, but it can be wickedly misused. Moreover, it's ironic that the ones who seem to drink most deeply from the wellsprings of divine energy are, invariably, the best and the worst, the wise and the wicked, saints and sinners. These mainline the fire. The rest of us, living in the gap between saints and sinners, tend to struggle more to actually catch fire, to truly drink deeply from the wellsprings of divine energy. Our struggle isn't so much in misusing divine energy, but rather in not succumbing to chronic numbness, depression, fatigue, flatness, bitterness, envy, and the kind of discouragement which has us going through life lacking fire and forever protesting that we have a right to be uncreative and unhappy. Great saints and great sinners don't live lives of "quiet desperation"; they drink deeply sacred energy, become inflamed by that fire, and make that the source for either their extraordinary wisdom or their wild wickedness.





This insight, saints and sinners feed off the same source, isn't just an interesting irony. It's an important truth that can help us better understand our relationship to God, to the things of this world, and to ourselves. We must be clear on what's good and what's bad, otherwise we end up both misunderstanding ourselves and misunderstanding the energies of our world.

A healthy spirituality needs to be predicated on a proper understanding of God, ourselves, the world, and the energies that drive our world and these are the non-negotiable Christian principles within which we need to understand ourselves, the world, and the use of our energies: *First*, God is good, God is the source of all energy everywhere, and that energy is good. *Second*, we are made by God, we are

good, and our nature is not evil. *Finally*, everything in our world has been made by God and it too is good.

So where do sin and evil enter? They enter in when we misuse the good energy that God has given us and they enter in when we relate in bad ways to the good things of creation. Simply put: We are good and creation around us is good, but we can relate to it in the wrong way, precisely through selfishness, greed, or violence. Likewise, our energies are good, including all those energies that underlie our propensity towards pride, greed, lust, envy, anger, and sloth; but we can misuse those energies and draw upon life's sacred fire in very self-serving, lustful, greedy, and wicked ways.

Sin and evil, therefore, arise out of the misuse of our energies, not out of the energies themselves. So, too, sin and evil arise out of how we relate to certain things in the world, not out of some inherent evil inside of our own persons or inside of the things themselves. The wicked aren't evil persons drawing energy from the devil. They're good people, irresponsibly and selfishly misusing sacred energy. The energy itself is still good, despite its misuse.

We don't tap into evil energies when we give in to greed, lust, envy, sloth, or anger. No, rather we misuse the good and sacred energy within which we live and move and have our being. The wise and wicked both feed off the same sacred fire.



REFLECTION

Sex and Our Culture

(Ron Rolheiser)



No generation in history, I suspect, has ever experienced as much change as we have experienced in the past sixty years. That change is not just in the areas of science, technology, medicine, travel, and communications; it is especially in the area of our social infrastructure, of our communal ethos. And perhaps nowhere is this change more radical than in the area of how we understand sex. In the past seventy years we have witnessed three major, tectonic shifts in how we understand the place of sex in our lives.

First, we moved away from the concept that sex is morally connected to procreation. With few exceptions, prior to 1950, at least in terms of our moral and religious notions around sex, sex was understood as constitutively connected to procreation. This connection wasn't always respected of course, but it was part of our communal ethos. That connection, while still upheld in some of our churches, effectively broke-down in our culture about sixty years ago.

The second severing was more radical. Up to the 1960s, our culture tied sex to marriage. The norm was that the only moral place for sex was inside of a marriage. Again, of course, this wasn't always respected and there was plenty of sex taking place outside of marriage. But it wasn't morally or religiously accepted or blessed. People had sex outside of

marriage, but nobody claimed this was right. It was something for which you apologized. The sexual revolution of the 1960s effectively severed that link. Sex, in our cultural understanding, has become an extension of dating and one of the fruits of that is that more and more people now live together outside of marriage and before marriage, without any sense of moral implication. This has become so prevalent today that sex outside of marriage is more the norm than the exception. More and more young people today will not even have a moral discussion on this with either their parents or their churches. Their glib answer: "We don't think like you!" They don't.

But the shift in our sexual ethos didn't stop there. Today more and more we are witnessing, not least on our University campus, the phenomenon of "hook-up" sex, where sex is deliberately and consciously cut off from love, emotion, and commitment. This constitutes the most-radical shift of all. Sex is now cut off from love. As Donna Freitas (*The End of Sex*), among others, has documented, more and more young people are making a conscious decision to delay looking for a marriage partner while they prepare for a career or launch that career and, while in that hiatus, which might last anywhere from ten to twenty years, they plan to be sexually active, but with that sexual activity consciously cut off from love, emotion, and commitment (all of which are feared as time-demanding, messy, and in the way of study, work, fun, and freedom). The idea is to eventually tie sex to love and commitment, but first to split it off for some years. Sadly this ethos is taking root among many young people



today. Of course, again, as with the other shifts in our understanding of sex, this too has always been around, to which the phenomenon of prostitution and single's bars attest. But, until now, no one has claimed that this is healthy.

What's particularly disturbing is not that there is sex taking place outside of its prescribed Christian ground, marriage. Human beings have struggled with sex since the beginning of time. What's more worrisome is that more and more this is not only being held-up as the norm, it is also, among many of our own children, being understood and hailed as moral progress, a liberation from darkness, with the concomitant understanding, often voiced with some moral smugness, that anyone still holding the traditional view of sex is in need of moral and psychological enlightenment. Who's judging who here?

This may not make me popular among many of my contemporaries, but I want to state here unequivocally that our culture's severing of the non-negotiable tie between sex and marriage is just plain wrong. It's also naïve.

I once attended a conference on sexuality where the keynote speaker, a renowned theologian, suggested the churches have always been far too-uptight about sex. She's right about that. We're still a long ways from healthily integrating sexuality and spirituality. However she went on to ask: "Why all this anxiety about sex? Who's ever been hurt by it anyway?" A more-sober insight might suggest: "Who hasn't been hurt by it?" History is strewn with broken hearts, broken families, broken lives, terminal bitterness, murders, and suicides within which sex is the canker.

Our churches have, admittedly, never produced a fully healthy, robust theology and spirituality of sex, though nobody else, secular or religious, has either. However, what it has produced, its traditional morality and ethos, does give a fair and important warning to our culture: Don't be naïve about sexual energy. It isn't always as friendly and inconsequential as you think!

REFLECTION

A Short History of Modern Terrorism

(J Brooks Spector)

The continuing roster of terror attacks goads J. BROOKS SPECTOR to try to put these things into a larger historical context. It does not make for an optimistic read, however.

In the past several years, we have become used to hearing and reading about an era (or for unlucky ones, living through such an event) where a kind of religiously infused terrorism carried out by nihilist, pathological thugs has thoroughly unhinged places around the globe. (For those protesting the use of the term "nihilist" in this context, we can argue that point. While the violence may speak to a goal, it seems brutally unconnected in any way to the point being made.) And so, for many, it seems we have entered a unique age where a new and terrifying form of militant action has come from nowhere to horrify us.



The point of this commentary, of course, will be that great transnational waves of activity are not unique to our own age, although the speed and extent of their impact have become new and particularly challenging issues, separate and apart from the death and destruction they have caused. We will return to those aspects in a minute, but first let's take a quick look at some history.

During a seventy-year or so period, from roughly 1775 to 1848 (although British historian Eric Hobsbawm began his study, "The Age of Revolution" in 1789, thereby ignoring the American one), a revolutionary fervour took hold in many societies. These included most of Britain's North American colonies, France's Caribbean Sea colony of Haiti, France itself, the vast Latin American lands held by Spain from Mexico to Chile, Greece's struggle to gain its independence from the Ottoman Empire, and then, finally, the wave of revolts that broke out in 1848 all across Europe – from France to Hungary. Originally inspired by the ideas of John Locke, Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and then on to Americans like Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, the impetus eventually spread with the march of Napoleon's armies as their campaigns thoroughly upended old political hierarchies and well-entrenched rulers – and drew upon and inspired the ideas of the Romantic Movement in the arts. Some of these revolts were, of course, more successful than others – those in 1848 were ultimately put down by loyal armies or by foreign intervention, even if the ideals were never quite fully stamped out.

Forty years later, with the rising tides of ethnically exclusive nationalisms, and growing industrialisation and urbanisation across Europe (and to a considerable degree in America as well), a new wave of activism took hold in many nations. This time around, besides ethnic nationalist groupings and trade unions, some activists chose more violent means of direct action. For a generation and more, some radicals aimed their anger and frustration on the established political and economic order to provoke a fundamental reordering of the social, economic, and political structures of the affected nations. For some it became a wave of sometimes violent strikes and labour agitation, while for others it led to political assassinations of presidents, prime ministers, royals and – ultimately – the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, the act that set off the conflagration that became World War I.

Ten years ago, *The Economist* had written presciently, "Bombs, beards and backpacks: these are the distinguishing marks, at least in the popular imagination, of the terror-mongers who either incite or carry out the explosions that periodically rock the cities of the western world. A century or so ago it was not so different: bombs, beards and fizzing fuses. The worries generated by the two waves of terror, the responses to them and some of their other characteristics are also similar. The spasm of anarchist violence that was at its most convulsive in the 1880s and 1890s was felt, if indirectly, in every continent. It claimed hundreds of lives, including those of several heads of government, aroused widespread fear and prompted quantities of new laws and restrictions. But it passed. Jihadism is certainly not a lineal descendant of anarchism: far from it. Even so, the parallels between the anarchist bombings of the 19th century and the Islamist ones of today may be instructive."

Then, over a half century later, in the 1960s, in many nations around the world – the US, Western Europe, and China, among other places – a vast upwelling of activism was fueled by the "baby boom" generation as young people became big enough forces to assert real heft in the politics of their respective nations. This ranged from the anti-war protests in the US as well as the civil rights struggle in part; a broader, more violent social-economic critique in Western Europe by such groups as the Baader-Meinhof Gang, in addition to the vast waves of student strikes in that part of the world; and even the sometimes violent and thoroughly



disruptive Red Guards of China's Cultural Revolution. Here again, the assumption by many was that this was a unique moment in history.

And so we come to our own present era. Over the past two decades or so, there has been yet another wave of activism, this time ostensibly tied to Islam and encompassing lands stretching from Morocco to Southeast Asia. These now include al Qaeda and its various affiliates ranged across North Africa, Boko Haram in Nigeria and nearby nations, and ISIS/IS/ISIL/Daesh in Syria/Iraq, as well as groups in the southern Philippines, southern Thailand, Chechnya in Russia, Xinjiang in China, and various groups operating out of Pakistan, among other spots.

There is little evidence that there are organised, or that there are real, tangible connections between most of them. Instead, the connections seem more to be from a shared knowledge and encouragement of each other's efforts, transmitted quickly by reporting by international media of these respective actions, as well as from their own efforts to make use of the Internet and social media. It is the ideas and inspirations that are shared. This seems largely true, even if some weaponry has been moved across some very porous borders – as with the spread of sophisticated arsenals from Libya southward, after Qaddafi was deposed.

Of course, it is also true that there is a sense of grievance – and often-shared grievances – on the part of many of the proponents of this latest wave. Even so, these grievances are wide-ranging and varied. Paradoxically, it is the very people who have had real economic and social opportunities in their lives that express these grievances so forcefully in their actions. However, it has been all too easy for some to claim it is all about the inherent violence of Islam; or that the tensions of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle are the central mechanism to what is goading such people onward; or that all of these actions are some kind of desperate struggle to resist domination by the rampaging West. (For the latter, such an explanation would be of little help in explaining the efforts by the Uighurs in western China or the Chechens in the Russian Caucasus lands or why privileged Saudi citizens move into this groove.)

Osama bin Laden was, for example, the scion of a rich construction firm-owning family in Saudi Arabia. And the perpetrators of the latest outrages in Paris now appear to have been French and Belgian citizens of North African descent, but who held a deep sense of grievance about the circumstances of their lives in the *ban lieues* (suburbs) of Paris and other French cities - joined together with the implicit temptation of a better outcome through a struggle against the predominant French society. And, of course, the nineteen young men who hijacked those four airplanes for 9/11's deeds were also of Saudi Arabian origin and – mostly - studying in the US before they boarded those planes with their box cutters and their plan to behead the Government and the national economy.

For a more complete grasp of this global movement, we must also add other strains to this newest outbreak, not least the growing sense in the Maghreb and Middle Eastern nations that the odds have been systematically stacked against the working class and young people, thereby provoking the Arab Spring and eventually leading to the chaos of Syria (such societies are ones with a huge youth cohort). There are also the religious-ethnic tensions and political rivalries that have fueled the fighting in the southern Philippines for decades, for example. Pile on top of all this the temptations that Daesh's on-going struggle in Syria and Iraq can offer some kind of larger meaning in life and you achieve a toxic mix – even if some originally tempted to join Daesh later come to realise such fighting was not fundamentally about their imagined new religious order of things.



Again, as with *The Economist*, we puzzle over this. “What prompts the leap from idealistic thought to violent action is largely a matter for conjecture. Every religion and almost every philosophy has drawn adherents ready to shed blood, their own included, and in the face of tyranny, poverty and exploitation, a willingness to resort to force is not hard to understand. Both anarchism and jihadism, though, have incorporated bloodshed into their ideologies, or at least some of their zealots have. And both have been ready to justify the killing not just of soldiers, policemen and other agents of the state, but also of civilians.

“For anarchists, the crucial theory was that developed in Italy, where in 1876 Errico Malatesta put it thus: ‘The insurrectionary deed, destined to affirm socialist principles by acts, is the most efficacious means of propaganda.’ This theory of ‘propaganda by deed’ was cheerfully promoted by another great anarchist thinker, Peter Kropotkin, a Russian prince who became the toast of radical-chic circles in Europe and America. Whether the theory truly tipped non-violent muses into killers, or whether it merely gave a pretext to psychopaths, simpletons and romantics to commit murders, is unclear. The murders, however, are not in doubt. In deadly sequence, anarchists claimed the lives of President Sadi Carnot of France (1894), Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, the prime minister of Spain (1897), Empress Elizabeth of Austria (1898), King Umberto of Italy (1900), President William McKinley of the United States (1901) and José Canalejas y Méndez, another Spanish prime minister (1912).”

And this, of course, does not even count killings in the name of extreme nationalism such as the fatal shooting of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 by a Serbian nationalist.

The Economist went on to argue, “Mr bin Laden [or his successors or imitators, now] would surely delight in some dramatic assassinations today. Presidents and prime ministers, however, do not nowadays sit reading the newspaper on the terraces of hotels where out-of-work Italian printers wander round with revolvers in their pockets, as Cánovas did, or walk the streets of Madrid unprotected while looking into bookshop windows, as Canalejas did. So Mr bin Laden must content himself with the assertion that on September 11th, ‘God Almighty hit the United States at its most vulnerable spot. He destroyed its greatest buildings... It was filled with terror from its north to its south and from its east to its west.’ ” And so, instead of the individual terrorist attacking that solitary senior official or prince while they dawdle over coffee and cake, or a single bomber tossing an explosive projectile under an open touring car, the contemporary style of assaults in public spaces, using semi-automatic assault weapons, aimed at unwitting innocents has become the new “style du jour”.

The problem, now, of course, is that the impact of every attack is quickly magnified, many times over, from round-the-clock coverage on all electronic news channels around the world; by the constant chatter on Internet blogs by both proponents and opponents; by cell phone communications; by a whole array of social media channels; and, of course, by the growing use among such groups of encrypted communications technologies that are largely unbreakable by the authorities in any kind of immediate way. In fact, the authorities in many countries still remain largely baffled by this newest rise of activism and how to deliver a real hammer blow to it. Despite the propaganda of spy thriller action films, the authorities in virtually every nation affected simply do not have sufficient resources to track down every possible malefactor – let alone deal with them in advance to prevent any actions.

The comment attributed to the IRA in the wake of their bombing of the Brighton hotel in 1984 where the Conservative Party was having its meeting bears real importance. As the IRA gloated, “Mrs. Thatcher will now realise that Britain cannot occupy our country and



torture our prisoners and shoot our people in their own streets and get away with it. Today we were unlucky, but remember we only have to be lucky once. You will have to be lucky always. Give Ireland peace and there will be no more war,” is both instructive and ominous as a foreboding of things that may yet come - especially when it is not in the hands of any one nation to deliver satisfactorily upon all the grievances held by a diverse swarm of different groups – and when the actors with the bombs and the guns are prepared to die for whatever cause they may espouse.

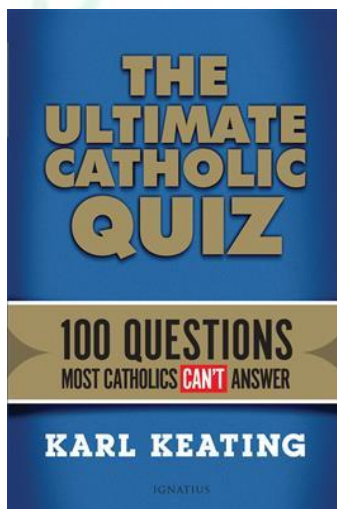
In the meantime, we may well have already entered a period where the real tension is over how many ways individuals’ civil rights and their rights to privacy will come under increasing pressure as authorities in western Europe and elsewhere (and perhaps the US as well) struggle to catch up to those who plan another Paris, another Radisson Blu Bamako, another Yola, Nigeria, or yet another bomb on an airliner, or in a bazaar, in a Third World shopping mall or in front of a mosque almost anywhere around the world.

Will European efforts to carry out more stringent checks of people entering the Schengen visa zone actually tamp down such actions, for example, if the perpetrators come from within that zone in the first place? And if western nations are stymied, can we reasonably expect that Indian authorities in Mumbai, the Nigerians or Lebanese do even better? And if not, what then?

In the meantime, if clever police work is insufficient, the air strikes will continue and, out of frustration, some day, soon enough, there will be growing popular pressure for some of those old-fashioned “boots on the ground” to deal a still stronger blow to those who would export their terror.

BOOK REVIEW

The Ultimate Catholic Quiz



- Format: Paperback
- ISBN978-1-62164-024-0
- Size:5.25 x 8
- Pages:210

This book offers a fun and challenging way to see how well you know Catholic teachings, practices, and history. Karl Keating, best-selling author and founder of Catholic Answers, presents a multiple-choice quiz with 100 questions about a wide variety of subjects connected with Catholicism.

Each of the 100 intriguing questions gives five possible answers. Only one of the answers is completely correct. The book is laid out in an easy-to-read format with the question and five possible answers on one page, and the analysis of each of the five answers, noting the correct one, on the next page. The



questions, and the possible answers, are written with thought, precision, and sometimes a little humor to make for engaging reading.

The quiz does not pretend to be comprehensive, but the questions cover multiple areas – doctrines, morals, and customs, as well as historical events and personalities – and should provide your mind and soul with a good workout. This book will be useful for individual or group study.

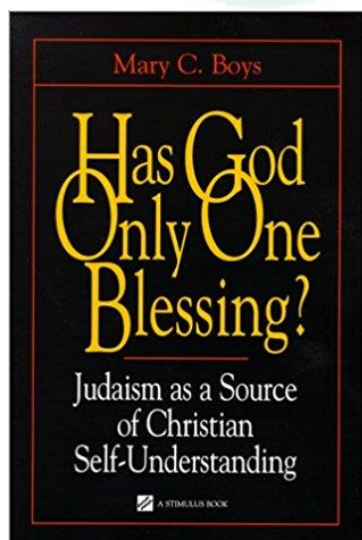
The book is also available electronically at

<https://www.ignatius.com/Products/UCQ-P/the-ultimate-catholic-quiz.aspx>

BOOK REVIEW

Has God Only One Blessing?

Boys, Mary C. 2000. *Has God Only One Blessing? Judaism as a Source of Christian Self-Understanding*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press



This is a book about how encounter with Jews and Judaism affects the way we think, teach, and preach about Christian life. It originates from two convictions: (1) what we have learnt from recent scholarship about the relationship between Jews and Christians summons us to teach and preach differently about Christianity; (2) this scholarship must be made accessible to those with educational responsibility in the church.

Christians involved in educating in faith – whether as teachers, preachers, pastoral ministers, or theologians – are the primary audience for this book. It is also intended for the many Christians who live their faith with great conviction and seriousness and want to deepen that faith. Both groups have typically not given much thought to the negative assessment of Judaism woven into their understanding of Christianity. This

book raises awareness of the problem, traces its development, and proposes alternatives. While this is a book principally directed to Christians, it may also be of interest to Jews, both in situating the bitter legacy of anti-Judaism and in showing Ecclesia's changing view of Synagoga.

This book, secondarily, is a case study in educating for religious particularism and pluralism. By analysing in depth one instance of contemporary Christian engagement with the "other," it implicitly suggests ways we might more adequately educate Christians to participate in a religiously pluralistic society. (Taken from the book, p. 9-10)



ARTICLE 1 (CPTD)

Can Christianity Dialogue with African Traditional Religion? (Part 2)

(Peter K. Sarpong)

IS DIALOGUE POSSIBLE?

Some have questioned the wisdom or even feasibility of the Catholic Church having a dialogue with African traditional religion. Some have even contended that it is impossible for such a dialogue to take place. They argue that there are no structures, no personalities to deal with. In any case, African traditional religion is a passing phase. Social change will soon sweep it into total oblivion. The religion is simply disappearing, dying. People must be converted to Christianity and not be left in delusion. Some who favour dialogue, however nebulously they perceive it, only think in terms of conversion. African traditional religion must not be pushed aside *because* it is a friendly religion. Most converts from Africa are from it: for the rest it has not much to offer. When they talk about philosophical and religious principles, they do not think of African traditional religion.

The fact is that African traditional religion is not dying. Many of the values it enshrines are lasting values. They are not ephemeral, to be dismissed lightly. Christianity has been the worse for not taking this into account when it first made its appearance on the Black African scene in the 15th century.

African traditional religion still influences people's thinking. Many highly educated men and women in all walks of life, Christians and Muslims, are affected by it, though sometimes unconsciously. It can be said that traditional religion is present in many places in Africa, if at times it is to be found only in a different, sometimes subtle form. This being the case the need for the Church to "dialogue with African traditional religion becomes imperative."

DIALOGUE DIFFERS

Dialogue need not be the same for every religion. In one case like, say, Islam or Buddhism, it may take the form of encountering people, especially religious leaders, organising seminars and conferences, writing letters and books, exchanging visits. In the case of African traditional religion, the form it can and must take should challenge Christians to live our Christianity better. Knowledge and the use of African traditional religion, far from distorting the message of Christ, should enrich it.

If, as holy scripture says, everything was created in, through, and for Christ, then in traditional religion, Christ must be found in some form, no matter how embryonic or seminal. One is tempted to submit that Christ is found in African culture and religion in an overt way. It is inconceivable that God would allow millions of Africans of the past and of the present who did not and do not know the Christian *way* to perish for such ignorance. There must be a way in which Christ is present in African traditional religion.

It has been suggested by Dulles, for example, that Christ is there in the symbolic form. This is not the place to go into the in-depth analysis of the notion of symbolism. But such a proposition is, to say the least, interesting. We shall take up this issue of symbolism later



when we consider it in relation to this discussion of dialogue with African traditional religion.

CONCEPTS

An examination of African traditional religion reveals certain concepts of God that stand out clearly as, indeed, Christian. We begin with the very concept of God. In Judaism, we are told that there is no God apart from Yahweh. So unique is Yahweh that no other God is called Yahweh. It is an impossibility to have a lesser Yahweh or a minor Yahweh. Yahweh is Yahweh and that is that.

He is unique, incomparable, superlatively high, almighty, and so on. Deutero-Isaiah would say unhesitatingly that there is no god whatsoever apart from Yahweh. All idols are the work of human beings and those who follow them are foolish. They are as useless as their idols. This is also the thinking of Muslims. In their case, the concept of God is clearly expressed in the first pillar of their religion. "There is no god but God".

In any African language, we find exactly the same situation. God has a name and there is no question of qualifying that name to apply to another being. The writer's own people call God *Oyankopon*. It is totally inconceivable and ridiculous to have a lesser or minor *Oyankopon*. The other spirits whom in English we would refer to as lesser gods, have their generic name: *obosom* (singular), *abosom* (plural), and specific ones. *Mmieh*, *Kyenekye* etc. The Ewe have one name for God, *Mawu*. They have a totally different name for the so-called lesser deities (*Vudu*). It will be unthinkable for a Yoruba to have more than one *Olodumare* or *Olorun* or for an Igbo to have a *Chineke* of any description other than their one and only *Chineke*.

The Supreme Being in Africa enjoys a status immeasurably higher than any other being's. He is the Creator of all other beings. He is designated by his own name or names. All others have their own names.

ATTRIBUTE

The confusion created by so-called modern languages like English, therefore, is a linguistic problem which is totally not of the African's making.

It is the English language that calls some creatures lesser gods or minor gods or divinities. A thing like that is unheard of in African traditional religion. The idea of the uniqueness of God is so central to Christianity that one would have thought that the African's linguistic sensitivity to it should have been adopted long ago and made use of to explain the nature and attributes of the Christian God. Apart from the names given to the Supreme Being of the African which he shares with none other, there are certain attributes which all African peoples assign to this Supreme Being as his sole prerogative. I cannot think of any other being in the world being called *Toturobonsu* (the fullest of completion). *Tetekwaframo* (Eternal), *Daaseens* (The Gracious One), *Birskyirehunnuade* (Omniscience), and so on, by my people, the Asante. What is more, these names and attributes speak more about what God actually does for us rather than what God is. They bring God into our life. God is of practical importance to the African.

This is where religion touches the African. God is the "Leaf that covers the whole world", God is the "Fountain of water that never dries up"; God is the "Source of full satisfaction" and so on. This is concrete and a little different from just saying God is good, God is powerful.



ENRICHMENT

Encounter with traditional religion, therefore, means Christianity permeating the culture and allowing itself, thereby, to be enriched in its attempt to evangelize it. This enrichment can take on many forms. African traditional religion challenges Christianity to re-appraise itself with regard to the many concepts which once were its pillars, but now are disappearing or becoming irrelevant.

WHOLENESS

Wholeness is an idea that is highly theological. Jesus Christ was man and God at the same time. That one person had the nature of God and the nature of man, He was God made visible and he was man, the victim of our sin. Yet he did not draw a rigid dichotomy between his God-head and his humanity, He was at the same time both. He was whole, not truncated. This concept of wholeness is found very clearly in African traditional religion. To the African the rigid dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, the secular and the religious, the material and the immaterial, is artificial. A human person is a composite of spirit and body and must be treated as such. If he were body alone, he would be a brute animal. Were he only spirit, he would be an angel. He is a human being precisely because of the inseparable combination of body and spirit. Hence disease does not affect the body alone; it has to do with the spirit also.

Politics is not divorced from ordinary life. Whatever a person is doing in the ideal traditional set-up, he is involved in religion. Religion is part of life. It permeates a person's life from cradle to grave. A person is born into a religious atmosphere and from his conception to his death there are major religious rituals to mark the major turning points of his existence.

There is little doubt that many of the problems of the world today stem from the artificial barrier we have placed between the religious and the profane. We no longer see human beings and phenomena in holistic terms, as undivided unity.

We speak of and deal piecemeal with, *economic* problems, *political* problems, *moral* problems, instead of thinking in terms of human problems. In the last analysis, every problem is a human issue not easily amenable to dissection. This is a theme that African traditional religion could enrich universal Christianity with.

SYMBOLISM

Following on the idea of unity in phenomena is the very important concept of symbolism. Symbols are indispensable in any religion. Jesus Christ himself can be said to be the Sacrament of God. He symbolised the Father's love for humanity but he also symbolised human being's response to that immense love of the Father.

Some clever scholar has shrewdly described Jesus as the first audiovisual aid! The point is that coming in contact with Deity is not in the normal course of things. Deity has to be reached by means of a kind of bridge between humanity and Deity. The bridge may be words, gesticulations, objects, postures, signs, etc. These are not the reality itself. They are symbols which give us an idea of the reality. They are the connecting links between the seen and the unseen. Every religion has them. Indeed, it would appear that without symbols, religion would be impossible. The sacraments are very concrete examples of symbols and their use. In the sacraments, we use objects and words to stand for a spiritual reality and to cause it. We are proud to use flags, college blazers and crests and insignia of office.



Flags stand for patriotism and in a way cause it: we salute flags, fly them half-mast to show grief and on ships to indicate country of origin. College blazers and crests indicate and sustain loyalty to the *alma-mater*. In all African cultures, symbol play a vital role in the life of the people. Our culture is a symbolic culture. We find symbols in our dances, in our language, in our art and craft, in our institutions such as marriage and chieftaincy - everywhere. There was a time when the Church rightly emphasized the importance of symbols; but the present Western world has inherited a host of symbols that appear to be meaningless to it. Having lost the true meaning of symbols, it is no wonder that the Western world is also gradually losing the sense of religion itself. The Church itself is a sacrament of the risen Lord. The Church symbolizes Christ and his salvific activity among us, and at the same time makes Christ present to us. Here again, traditional religion could be a challenge to orthodox Christianity and could enrich the latter enormously.

SACREDNESS OF LIFE

One other concept vital to African traditional religion is that of respect for *sacredness of life*. Life is held to be sacred. To give birth to a child is on the part of both the man and the woman, the greatest thing that can happen to a human being. Life must be given, life must be lived, life is to be enjoyed, life is to be whole, life is to be honourable, life is to be long and peaceful. Therefore, in the true setting of the African, willful abortion or even contraception was a rarity, if not an impossibility.

The modern world plays around with life. The modern world, placing the cart before the horse, equates good life with productivity and ingenuity. It has lost the sense of the true humanity of the person. It has allowed itself to be dominated by crude technocracy. We are in the civilization of science and technology. While nobody can deny the importance of these in our lives, it must be obvious that science and technology without humanity are simply tyrannical. Wrongly handled, they are capable of destroying the whole of humanity. But, of course, life without the use of science and technology nowadays would be, in some ways, impotent.

A better knowledge of African traditional religion could bring a corrective to the anti-life mentality which is developing in some parts of the world. It could provide a reminder of God's original intention in creating the human being to his own image and likeness. Contrary to the opinion of many non-Africans, it is a fact that even in the past, the life of human beings was not just got rid of without reason. Among the Asante, a person could be killed only by the highest authority and a person was killed when he had committed a crime that demanded the death penalty. The second occasion was when a chief or a king died. It was thought proper for the king to be accompanied by subjects since the belief was that he was going to be a ruler in the next world. These two occasions apart, the taking away of human life met with capital punishment. The earth was believed to abhor bloodshed. Even when one killed an enemy in war, one had to undergo ritual ablutions to purify oneself. These practices were religiously-based, and it is, indeed, a sign of present-day loss of a deep sense of religion that human life can be taken with impunity.

IMMORTALITY

Closely following on the concept of the sacredness of life is the concept of the immortality of the soul. These concepts are all interlinked. The person is a knit unit. He is body and soul at the same time. His dignity and his immortality are symbolized in the great respect that is held for his life. Death is not considered to be the end of man. It is believed to be a change of



state. Death is a journey into a better world where a person lives forever. In that world, the person is not just indifferent to what happens among the living. He is so alive that he is interested, and actually takes part, in the affairs of the living.

Flowing from this idea of the immortality of the soul is the notion of retribution. A person will be judged after his death in accordance with his deeds on earth. God, the judge, is just and will not look at persons but will mete out to each and everyone what he deserves. African traditional religion “told” the African all this long before Christianity reached the various regions of Africa.

The corollary to the concept of the immortality of the soul and the interest of the dead in the affairs of the living is the belief in the Communion of Saints. True, African traditional religion does not use the terminology “Communion of Saints”. However, an analysis of the relationship between the living and the dead shows clearly that there is an affinity with Christian belief in this respect.

The living are still struggling. They have to meet the ups and downs of life. They have to overcome temptations and obstacles in order to be able to enter the world of the dead. The dead, on their part, are doing everything possible to assist the living to observe faithfully the injunctions that they have left them as a lasting legacy. There is, therefore, constant interaction between the dead and the living. It is for this reason that one African scholar has called the ancestors “the living-dead”. The ancestors are approached in a human pragmatic way with problems. The African knows the answer can ultimately only come from the Supreme Being himself. But it is believed that the Supreme Being has left certain things in the hands of his lieutenants to deal with. It is his right to delegate.

Again, a close and objective analysis of the situation shows that there is a parallel between the Christian concept of the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant on the one hand, and the ancestors and the living on the other. It looks as if God, in his ineffable providence, has provided in the African soil a providential preparation for the seed of Christianity.

COMMUNITY

This brings us to the concept of community in Africa. This was made a special topic of discussion to African Bishops by Pope Paul VI of blessed memory.

The African lives in community. It has been said that Descartes wrote: *Cogito ergo sum* (I think; therefore I am). The African would say: *Cognatus sum ergo sum* (I am related; therefore I am). The African lives in community. His father is not just the person biologically responsible for his conception. His mother is not necessarily the woman who physically gave him birth. He may have as many as fifteen “fathers” and ten “mothers”. In the ideal situation, each one of these would treat him as his biological father or mother would. Since he has several “mothers” and “fathers”, obviously he has many more brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces. In fact, in some African languages, the words “cousin”, “aunt”, “uncle” do not exist. One's father's brother is one's father and one's mother's sister is one's mother. Therefore, the African family is very much extended. This is what Christianity is supposed to effect - extended families.

Baptism incorporates us into the family of Christ which has no racial or national or even continental boundaries. St. Paul would say: In Christ there is no slave or free man, no Greek or Roman; we are all members of his Mystical Body. Moreover, the African family comprises also the dead and the unborn. Therefore, it can never decrease; it can only increase all the



time. Through marriage, other relationships are contracted which widen one's circle of intimate contact.

Besides, the African values friendship greatly. In some cases, friendships are institutionalised to an extent where the bond between one and one's friend becomes even stronger than the bond between one and one's own blood sister or brother.

In the African social structure, therefore, we have all the ingredients that could go into the preparation of the Christian family soup. The pity is that this has not been fully recognised or exploited. I submit that the advantages and values of the nuclear family do not outweigh the benefits to the individual of the extended family - and this is an understatement.

HUMANITY

There is no doubt that African traditional religion promotes humanity. It deals in a pragmatic way with human existence. In that religion, we are each other's keeper. What you do concerns me and what you refuse to do is my affair. I can ask you, as a member of my society, to keep the religious injunctions of that society because I know that your refusal to comply with the religious rules of the society has effects that involve me.

African traditional religion pervades life. It is not a fashion. Neither is it like clothes that you wear today and change or discard tomorrow. Religion is like your skin. You take it wherever you go. Hence religion is not taught or learned as a classroom subject. Religion is picked up imperceptibly through imitation, observation, participation in religious rites and just being an African. African religion promotes human values such as hospitality, kindness, love, unity, gratitude, hard work and, above all, self-help. It promotes fidelity in human relationships. It moulds and shapes the characters of human persons.

FIDELITY

One of the most serious charges that can be leveled against a human being is that he is a traitor. In "advanced" so-called civilized nations, treason carries with it the severest of penalties, including death, even where capital punishment is otherwise abolished. One has to be faithful to one's pledge or obligations. African traditional religion lays the emphasis on fidelity. It stresses the horizontal dimensions of life. Once that is in order, it is believed that the vertical relationship of man to God will then be regularised. One is reminded here of what St. John says: How can you say you love God whom you do not see, if you do not love your neighbour whom you see? African religion insists on love of the neighbour whom we see as a prelude to, a sign and, indeed, a proof of, the love of God whom we do not see.

African traditional religion insists on faithfulness as a concrete indication of love: faithfulness to one's religious duties, authority, relations, civic obligations, etc. One who fails to be faithful and therefore does not love is described as not being a human being. He only wears the skin of a human being. A person who constantly and persistently causes havoc in society, thus betraying his people by exposing them to suffering, ridicule and disdain, is simply a beast. Many an African language has such a highly uncomplimentary expression to describe people whose behaviour is tantamount to treachery of the highest ideals of the society.

As these and others are the principles underlying African traditional religion, it is surprising that people should be speaking of the death or irrelevance of African traditional religion.



If this “death” or “irrelevance” were possible, it would be a tragedy to the whole of humanity. It would spell the final doom of the African already precariously hanging onto life under the stranglehold of oppression, domination, material poverty, hunger and disease.

The interaction or dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion, therefore, should be centred on the areas where the enrichment of Christianity itself can take place. When this encounter takes place then the African culture itself will be further elevated to a plane higher than where it has reached. The exercise amounts to helping one's helper. For African traditional religion cannot attain to certain heights in religion. It was, for example, impossible for African traditional religion to have discovered the Trinity by itself. African traditional religion could not have attained the knowledge of the Incarnation. Suffering, for African traditional religion, is an evil. It is the cause of personal sin or some other people's wickedness. The love of the neighbour is entirely acceptable to African traditional religion. The love of the enemy preached by Christ is an entirely different proposition. These and others are beyond the grasp of African traditional religion, as, I suppose, they are beyond the grasp of many other religions, so-called world or great religions not excepted. The contention, therefore, is that African traditional religion should be allowed to be explored to assist in the process of the propagation of the Message of Christ.

In the process it will shed its ‘objectionable’ aspects, and will be able to help Africans to come to a level of finesse which can only be attained through the influence of Christ. Our submission is that it is when we make judicious use of African traditional religion that we can realize in Africa one of the noble visions of the great Pope Paul VI: “The building of a civilization of love.”

<http://www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/sarpong.html>

ARTICLE 2 (CPTD)

Toward the Professionalisation of Catholic High School Religion Teachers: An Assessment of Religion Teaching as a Profession (Part 1)

(Cook, Timothy J., Hudson, William J., Catholic Education)

This article assesses religion teaching as a profession in terms of selected characteristics that scholars agree are common to all professions. The characteristics that are addressed include essential service, call to serve, special knowledge and skills, specialized and advanced university training, public trust and status, code of ethics and performance standards, and professional organization. The research suggests that religion teaching satisfies two of the seven selected characteristics, namely essential service and call to serve, but does not fully satisfy the other five. The main conclusion drawn is that steps must be taken to professionalize religion teaching. To that end, recommendations include the further development of a professional association for religion teachers, credentialing standards, and a certification/licensing scheme.¹

¹ What are your thoughts as you read this through a South African lens or perspective?



INTRODUCTION

Teacher shortages are impacting American schools. Because the nation focuses on shortages in subjects that affect all public and private schools such as science, math, and Spanish, it is easy to overlook the shortage of religion teachers that is affecting Catholic high schools (Cook & Fraynd, 1999). One might say that the dearth of qualified religion teachers is an invisible shortage.

How severe is the religion teacher shortage? Shortages have emerged as a result of the dramatic decline of vowed religious and clergy serving as Catholic high school religion teachers. Since 1985 their numbers have been roughly halved, dropping from 42% (Yeager, Benson, Guerra, & Manno, 1985) to 24% (Guerra, 1998). This turn of events has increased the demand for lay religion teachers. As a result of a recent national survey of Catholic high school administrators and religion teachers, Cook (2001b) concludes that the current shortage of qualified religion teachers is critical and will not turn around soon. In that survey, an overwhelming 86% of administrators responded that there are too few qualified religion teacher candidates in their geographical area. As for the future, 40% of the religion teachers indicated that they plan to cease teaching religion within 5 years.

Why is the shortage of qualified religion teachers a concern? The religion program is central to the educational mission of Catholic schools: "The special character of the Catholic school and the underlying reason for its existence, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the overall education of the students" (John Paul II, as cited in Congregation for Catholic Education [CCE], 1988, [section]66). A shortage of qualified religion teachers threatens the quality of the religion program and cuts to the heart of the Catholic school's very reason for existing.

The changing composition of religion faculties coupled with the resulting teacher shortage serve as compelling reasons to examine the current situation and make recommendations for the future. Cook (2001b, 2003) recommends that to improve recruitment, preparation, and retention of religion teachers, we must professionalise religion teaching. Educational research strongly suggests that enhancing professional stature and raising professional standards are keys to recruiting and retaining quality teachers and alleviating teacher shortages (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Ingersoll, 2001, 2002; O'Keefe, 2001).

Building on the recommendation to professionalise religion teaching, the purpose of this article is to assess religion teaching as a profession in terms of selected characteristics that scholars agree are common to all professions. The article concludes with a discussion of the status of religion teaching as a profession that includes recommendations for the further professionalisation of religion teachers. At the outset, it is important to note that although religion teaching is a ministry, in addition to being a profession, the focus of this article is on the professional aspects of this ministry.

TEACHING RELIGION AS PROFESSION AND MINISTRY

Teaching religion is arguably both a ministry and a profession. Exploring both claims is central to this research. Thus, two sections follow. First, religion teaching as a ministry within the Church; second, the professional aspects of this ministry in relation to the



teaching profession in general with a focus on the teaching profession's drive toward professionalisation. This section ends with a treatment of selected characteristics of a profession that will be used in the assessment of religion teaching as a profession.

Before exploring the contours of religion teaching as a profession, it is first necessary to situate the discussion within the context of ministry. This approach becomes especially important when one juxtaposes the dramatic growth in the percentage of lay religion teachers with the relative newness and evolving nature of the Church's modern understanding of lay ministry. According to Scripture, each Christian has a vocation or mission in life to follow Jesus (Eph. 4: 7-16). Yet, for centuries, terms such as "ministry," "vocation," and "apostolate" were synonymous with priesthood and religious life (Osborne, 1993). Vatican II (1962-1965) broadened the discussion once again to include the laity. This discussion has continued since then (John Paul II, 1988). The vocabulary used in Vatican II documents bespeaks this turning point in the theology of lay ministry. In its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), for example, the Council's use of the phrase People of God as a definition of the Church signifies a non-hierarchical and inclusive representation of the Church (Vatican Council II, 1996c). *Christifidelis* (Christian faithful) is another term the Vatican II documents use to convey the call to discipleship for all of the baptized, not just the ordained.

Osborne (1993) contends that although Vatican II promulgated equal discipleship of all baptised, this belief has not yet become reality. Osborne observes:

Nonetheless, such a view regarding Christian equality has neither totally nor overwhelmingly been accepted by the Roman Catholic world today, not because certain people deliberately disagree either with the New Testament or with Vatican II or with the code of canon law [sic], but because such a view of common and equal discipleship does not, in their approach, clearly do justice to the theology of ordained priesthood and hierarchy which they have previously heard and which they have previously accepted. (p. 543)

While Osborne's quote centres on the ordained versus the non-ordained, this is just one example of inequality that he mentions. For instance, Osborne suggests the dichotomy of men versus women as another example of church ministry inequality. If some vocations and ministries are better than others as Osborne suggests, then we must wonder how high school religion teaching rates as a ministry in the eyes of the Church. How religion teaching is viewed as a vocation and ministry will most likely impact teacher recruitment and retention.

In commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the Vatican II (1996b) document devoted to the mission of the laity--Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*)--the U.S. bishops affirmed each lay person's call to ministry: "Baptism and confirmation empower all believers to share in some form of ministry" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops [NCCB], 1980a, p. 3). In this document, the bishops also distinguish between "ministry in the world" and "ministry in the Church." Ministry in the world refers to Christian witness and Christian service involved in spreading the Gospel and advancing the cause of social justice. With regard to ministry in the Church, the bishops acknowledge that Vatican II opened up new opportunities for lay persons. What begins to take shape in the evolution of lay ministry after Vatican II is the concept of "professional ministry" within the



Church (NCCB, 1980a, p. 4). Professional ministries are ecclesial ministries open to lay persons which require professional preparation and formation. In another document issued in 1980, the U.S. bishops specifically identify teaching in a Catholic school as a professional ministry (NCCB, 1980b).

If teaching a secular subject in a Catholic school is a professional ministry, then teaching religion in a Catholic high school is certainly one. What does the term "ministry" in the phrase "professional ministry" mean for religion teachers? Where the vocation and ministry of the catechist is concerned, Church documents and religious education scholars focus on personal qualities (Au, 1999; CCE, 1982, 1988; Congregation for the Clergy, 1997; Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples [CEP], 2000; Department of Religious Education, 1983; Ferder, 1999; Groome, 1991; NCCB, 1979; Regan, 2000). According to Ferder (1999), some examples of desirable catechist qualities include prayerfulness, respect, compassion, genuineness, and a commitment to justice.

The General Directory for Catechesis maintains that a catechist's person is inextricably linked to the catechist's content and method: "The charism given to him [sic] by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method" (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, [section]156). With direct reference to religion teachers, the CCE (1988) stresses, "the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher; this witness is what brings the content of the lesson to life" ([section] 96). In sum, religion teaching is a ministry and not merely a job because the personal qualities and professional activity of the religion teacher are intertwined and "rooted in God and relationship with Jesus" (Ferder, 1999, p. 163).

The ministerial and vocational dimensions of the professional ministry of religion teachers are important. After all, "ministry" is the noun in the phrase "professional ministry." Yet, a comprehensive examination of religion teaching cannot end here because the adjective "professional" begs examination. A review of Church documents and scholarly writing reveals a large gap in the literature in this regard. The literature that refers to catechists in general is not helpful because high school religion teachers are a distinctive subset of catechists. Unlike other catechists, Catholic high school religion teachers live out their ministry in a setting that has broader academic goals than religious ones. In a sense, high school religion teachers have one foot in ecclesial ministry and one foot in the world of academia. It is inevitable that religion teachers will be compared to their teaching colleagues in terms of teacher professionalism. It is important, therefore, to examine the professional ministry of religion teaching in its own context. The question becomes, then, what does "professional" in "professional ministry" mean when applied to religion teachers in a Catholic high school? It seems that the professional characteristics of the religion teaching profession should be equivalent to those of the broader teaching profession. Church documents support this viewpoint insofar as they allude to equivalence with regard to teacher credentials and instructional rigor (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997; CEP, 2000; NCCB, 1979).

Questions about the professional characteristics of religion teaching and the status of religion teaching as a profession are similar to those which the entire teaching profession has been grappling with for a long time (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1992). Professions are defined as "occupations requiring a high degree of knowledge and skill to perform social functions that are most central to the well-being of society" (Hoyle, 1995, p. 12). Sociologists



cite medicine, law, engineering, dentistry, architecture, ministry, and accounting as examples of professions (Hoyle, 1995; Lortie, 1975; Rowan, 1994). Historically, some theorists have classified teaching, social work, and nursing as semi-professions based on various sets of professional criteria (Etzioni, 1969). Some scholars prefer to call teaching an emerging profession because teaching has taken steps to meet professional criteria more fully through a process commonly referred to as professionalisation (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1992; Howsam, Corrigan, Denmark, & Nash, 1976; Hoyle, 1995).

The professionalisation of teaching gained momentum in the 1980s as a result of increased and broad-based dissatisfaction with schooling outcomes among educators, policymakers, and citizens in light of new societal and workforce needs. In 1986, two widely publicised reports were published that specifically called for the professionalisation of teaching. A group of prominent education deans issued *Tomorrow's Teachers* (Holmes Group, 1986), and the Carnegie Forum (1986) published *A Nation Prepared*.

In their efforts to professionalise teaching, scholars and policymakers compare teaching with other professions using criteria or characteristics that sociologists and other researchers believe all professions share. Various sets of criteria and characteristics have been generated including those offered by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Howsam et al., 1976), Hoyle (1995), National Centre for Education Statistics (1997), National Labor Relations Act (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2003), Newman (1998), Segall and Wilson (1998), and Travers and Rebores (2000). Ironically, although these and other sets of criteria share common elements, no two lists are identical, a fact which critics readily point out (Hoyle, 1995).

Seven characteristics of a profession have been identified as the framework for this assessment of religion teaching: essential service to society, motivated by a call to serve, special knowledge and skills, specialised and advanced university training, public trust and status, code of ethics and performance standards, and professional organisation. The rationale for this selection is twofold. First, these characteristics appear on several lists generated by educational scholars, which indicates broad-based support for using them as criteria for teacher professionalisation. Second, these are characteristics for which ample pertinent evidence existed to assess religion teaching in terms of them. What follows is a brief critique of how teaching measures up in terms of each of these seven professional characteristics, which will lay the groundwork for an assessment of religion teaching according to the same characteristics.

ESSENTIAL SERVICE TO SOCIETY

The status of a profession is determined by how central the profession's unique service is to the well-being of society. Some argue that the most mature professions are those that deal with matters of life and death and that teaching is a semi-profession because it does not meet this ultimate standard. Educational scholars question this interpretation of life and death, contending that teachers play a large role in determining the quality of human existence:

Proper professional decisions enhance learning and life; improper decisions send the learner toward incremental death in openness to experience and in ability to learn and contribute. Doctors and lawyers probably have neither more nor less to do with life, death, and freedom than do teachers. (Howsam et al., 1976, p. 15)



Aside from the life and death debate, educators argue that education plays a major role in all societies by socialising young citizens. Education is the bedrock of all free societies in which citizens think for and govern themselves. Hoyle (1995) believes that the teaching profession does not need to prove itself in terms of societal value. "The importance of education, and hence teaching, to the well-being of society as a whole is sufficiently self-evident" (p. 13).

MOTIVATED BY CALL TO SERVE

Individual professionals possess a strong commitment to service (Howsam et al., 1976). Lortie (1975) calls teaching essentially altruistic. Few enter teaching with hopes of making a significant amount of money. Rather, "career satisfaction for teachers hinges on the ability to pursue the personal values and beliefs that lead them into teaching--to be of service and to make valued contributions to young students" (McLaughlin & Mei-ling Yee, 1988, p. 39). In recent years, there has been increased interest in exploring teaching as avocation or calling. Hansen (1995) describes vocation as "work that has social value and that provides enduring personal meaning" (p. 9). Palmer (1998) maintains that teaching is a vocation when a teacher teaches from the heart. For our purposes, it is worth noting that Hansen and Palmer convey a secular interpretation of vocation. Their primary focus is a person's inner calling as opposed to a calling from God. Nevertheless, the popularity of their writing demonstrates a hunger among educators to think about their occupation in a deeply personal, meaningful, and altruistic way. It seems that there is a natural tension between the intrinsic motivation we speak of here and extrinsic motivation like higher standards, higher salaries, and improved status that are also characteristic of professionalisation.

SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Esoteric knowledge and skills are primary among criteria that distinguish a profession from other occupations (Howsam et al., 1976; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). "An occupation becomes a profession when it assumes responsibility for developing a shared knowledge base for all of its members and for transmitting that knowledge through professional education, licensing, and on-going peer review" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.298). In an effort to determine a knowledge and skill base for the teaching profession, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC; 1993) enumerated 10 performance-based standards or principles that represent what experts believe professional teachers should know, be able to do, and be like.

There is little dispute that teachers need a knowledge base to be effective teachers. The sustained debate among scholars and policymakers revolves around questions about how much subject knowledge is needed, how much educational theory is necessary for teachers to be effective, and how should the two be balanced. Educators and non-educators alike have been especially sceptical of educational theory as a knowledge base. Some criticize it for having little practical value (Hoyle, 1995). Certain researchers argue that the knowledge base in education should be interpreted to include craft or practitioner knowledge (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). No doubt the mandate in No Child Left Behind (2001) for highly qualified teachers in every classroom will continue to fuel the debate, for there is still considerable disagreement among scholars and policymakers about how to define "highly qualified" in terms of knowledge and preparation. In the final analysis, it seems that the knowledge base and skill set for the teaching profession will be settled best through continued research that studies the impact of teacher qualifications on student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002).



SPECIALIZED, ADVANCED UNIVERSITY TRAINING

Sociologists and other theorists observe that the esoteric knowledge base and skill set that are characteristic of professions require specialised, protracted education and training. Theorists place heavy emphasis on the role of higher education in transforming an occupation into a profession (Collins, 1979).

The key to successful professionalisation of any practice is to convince the client and the public that members of a profession, as a result of education and practical experience, possess unique knowledge and skills that can be employed to solve the particular problems of practice and thus serve client needs. (Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 2000, pp. 94-95)

Once again, No Child Left Behind has brought to a head the debate about what educational background and training is necessary to be a highly qualified teacher candidate. Where academic preparation is concerned, some believe the equivalent of a college major makes a high school teacher qualified to teach a certain subject; others claim that only a college minor is necessary (Ingersoll, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Where pedagogical training is concerned, one camp endorses university-based preparation whereas another camp supports streamlined and/or alternative routes for earning teacher credentials (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Monk, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In short, it is fair to say that this debate is far from over, yet the debate will ultimately strengthen teaching as a profession.

CODE OF ETHICS AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Codes of ethics and performance standards have become a familiar part of the rhetoric of professional self-regulation and professional control. Yinger and Hendricks-Lee (2000), drawing on Abbott's (1988) sociological analysis of the professionalisation process, have argued that educational standards are one of the most powerful tools available for professionalising teaching. Regarding codes of ethics, Sockett (1993) comments: "From the Hippocratic oath to the code of ethics of the National Automobile Dealers Association, a declaration of commitment to ideal behaviour has provided a source of unity for members of an occupation" (p. 119). By its very nature, teaching is a moral enterprise. Sockett declares, "Teaching in an educational context is strongly connected to the betterment of individuals. It is therefore impossible to talk extensively about teaching/teachers without the language of morality" (p. 13). Codes of ethics like the one produced by the National Education Association (NEA) exist. However, several scholars believe that the profession does not yet have an ethical code to which its members subscribe (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Hoyle, 1995; Travers & Rebore, 2000). Darling-Hammond (1997) observes, "Teachers as a group do not share a common set of ethical commitments and knowledge for teaching because preparation is uneven and frequently waived altogether....Socialisation is weak" (p. 300).

Not everyone agrees with Darling-Hammond's assessment where performance standards are concerned. It can be argued that the standards promulgated by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) now serve as a widely accepted set of performance standards for beginning teachers. Some would say that the standards developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) are designed to serve the same purpose for experienced teachers (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996; Webb et al., 2003).



PUBLIC TRUST AND STATUS

Howsam et al. (1976) list "lower in occupational status" (p. 8) first in their listing of characteristics of a semi-profession, which is a classification sometimes used to describe teaching. Without question, teaching has an image problem. As Darling-Hammond(1997) notes, "teaching is evolving from an occupation that the public has historically considered routine 'women's work' requiring little skill to a profession that enables its members to become as capable as the real demands of the work require" (p. 294). Rowan (1994) submits that the perceived lack of complexity involved in teaching contributes to the profession's lower status. Hoyle (2001) argues that in order to recruit and retain teachers, as well as improve sagging teacher morale, increased attention must be paid to enhancing the professional status of teaching. There seems to be an inherent paradox in achieving professional status, however. Is status a reward for being a profession or a prerequisite? In concrete terms, do indicators of status such as better working conditions, higher salaries, public trust, autonomy, and prestige precede professional status or are they by-products? This paradox proves problematic as the teaching profession strives to professionalise itself because teaching needs professional status, or elements thereof, to improve its professional status.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION

Professional organisations have several objectives that include shaping licensing procedures, influencing credentialing and educational requirements, and enhancing the public image of the occupation (Weeden, 2002). They also have a unique way of affecting the social status of the profession. Professional organisations contribute to the creation of a "cultural currency" (Collins, 1979).

Several professional organisations connected to the teaching profession have been created over time. Founded in 1870 as a result of a merger, the National Education Association(NEA) is the oldest education-related professional organisation that exists in the United States today. The organisation's Preamble to the Constitution states that among other things, the NEA is to "serve as the national voice for education" (Howsam et al., 1976, p.68). Within the teaching profession, associations for teachers of various subjects have sprung up. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) serve as two examples. These associations provide a forum for subject teachers to discuss common issues, monitor agreed upon standards, and serve as a collective voice to advance the cause of their profession.

Professional organisations in education have made great strides in giving teachers a collective voice in shaping education policy at the district, state, and national levels. They do not yet exercise the type of self-governance of the teaching profession that occurs in other professions. For example, over time medicine became a self-regulating profession with the American Medical Association (AMA) serving as the major gatekeeper (Newman, 1998). Greater self-regulation is unlikely to occur in the teaching profession until teaching is considered a complex activity and until there is greater public trust in the profession's ability to regulate itself (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1992).

To conclude this theoretical reflection, although teaching may not yet be a profession in the fullest sense, it can easily be classified as an emerging profession. The evidence clearly indicates that teaching has done much to professionalise itself in recent decades. As the



research shows, it is customary for educationists to assess teaching in terms of common professional benchmarks in the drive toward professionalisation. Seeing that religion teaching is a professional ministry in the Church that is uniquely situated in the world of academia, the criteria used to assess the status of religion teaching as a profession should be equivalent to those used to assess the broad field of teaching.

(to be continued)

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NEWS

The Parliament of the World's Religions Condemns President Trump's Plans to Withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement

David Hales, Chair of the Climate Action Task Force and Trustee
Dr. Larry Greenfield, Executive Director
Dr. Robert P. Sellers, Chair of the Board

CHICAGO (June 1, 2017) — The 21st century presents no greater moral challenge than addressing the threat of human-caused climate change.

President Donald Trump has utterly failed that test.

The Parliament of the World's Religions condemns in the strongest possible terms the President's decision to renege on the commitment of the United States to the Paris Climate Agreement, a pact signed by 195 nations and formally ratified by 147 nations.

The decision is wrong from every relevant perspective:

- Scientifically, it is unsound and indefensible.
- Economically, it undermines the ability of the United States to build a competitive economy for the future, sacrificing US jobs at almost every level of production and service, sacrificing American competitiveness in every market.
- Medically, it condemns hundreds of thousands to unnecessary sickness and premature death.
- Politically, it undermines the United States' credibility and trustworthiness with its strongest allies as well as its fiercest competitors, and thus strikes a self-inflicted blow against national security.

Our condemnation of this decision is based on our conviction that the decision is wrong, but not just in the sense that it is incorrect. This decision is wrong in the sense that it is evil—it will result in devastation to life on Earth for generations to come. Its global consequences and impact on every living being on the planet makes it fundamentally immoral.

Every individual and every nation, every institution and every corporate entity, every religious and spiritual community faces this momentous ethical challenge of our age. Those with the greatest opportunity and power to affect the course of the 21st century have the greatest responsibility to act with unflinching moral integrity.

No individual faces more responsibility than the President of the United States.

His failure, however, only increases the responsibility of others. If this President fails, it falls then to the people and their elected representatives to reject, reverse, and overcome it.

The Parliament is committed to that reversal and to overcoming its consequences as well as the ignorance on which it is based. We call on others who cherish all that is sacred in our world to join in that commitment, and to endorse that commitment with their own words and their own actions.



Presentation of 'Revolutionary' Vatican's Women's Consultation Group

[<https://zenit.org/articles/feature-presentation-of-revolutionary-vaticans-womens-consultation-group/>]

Posted by Deborah Castellano Lubov on 7 March, 2017



The "Women's Consultation Group," a permanent body within the Pontifical Council for Culture, has been created and is ready to offer in an unprecedented way the unique contributions of women.

The group of 37, with the exception of a few who couldn't escape work, was presented during a "meeting point" held in the Holy See Press Office on Tuesday, March 7, 2017 at 11 a.m.

Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, was speaking along with Consuelo Corradi, coordinator of the Women's Consultation Group and vice rector for research and international relations at the LUMSA University of Rome, and the Iranian theologian Shahrazad Houshmand, member of the Consultation Group.

A further twenty women, also members of the Consultation Group, were also present. On the same occasion, the monographic issue of the dicastery's journal, "Culture

and Faith", edited by the Women's Consultation Group, was presented.

ZENIT had the chance to speak with Cardinal Ravasi and those present, including many women who, despite being very diverse from one another, agree that having this entity as a resource will help to ensure that women's voices and points of view don't fall on deaf ears, but rather are appreciated and acknowledged.

Iranian theologian Shahrazad Houshmand told ZENIT how this is revolutionary, because never before did the Vatican have a group of this nature, which is consulted for their unique insights, especially for upcoming events.

She also clarified that "we are not feminists," and how they look forward to having a dialogue with male colleagues and priests, in order to learn from one another. She stressed that if they were removed from the reality of the men and others, it wouldn't be right nor effective.

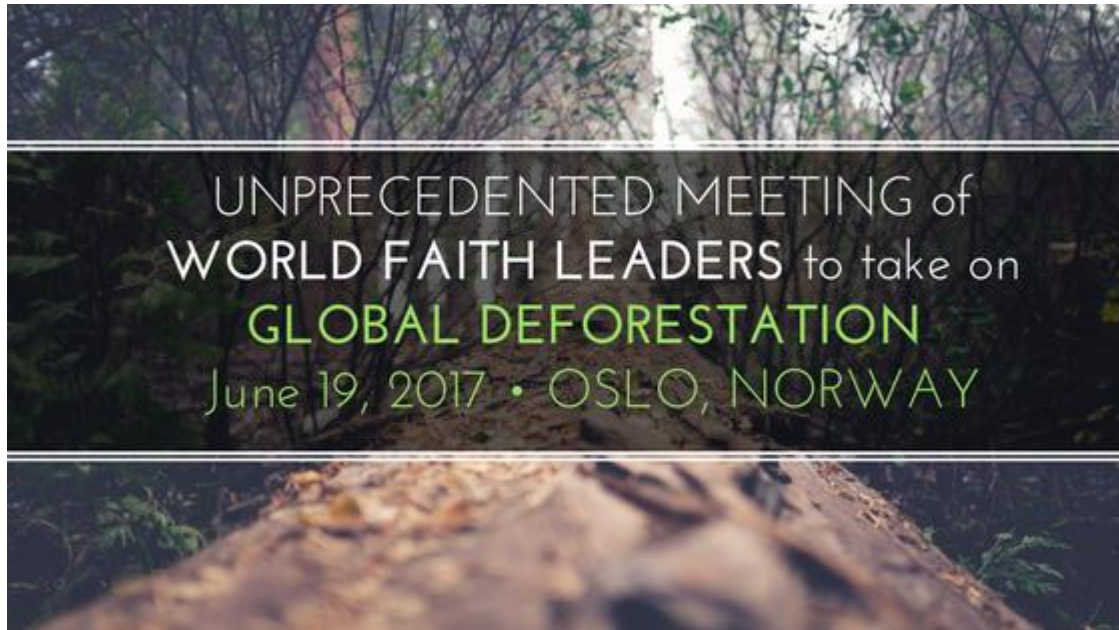
Consuelo Corradi, the group's coordinator, stressed how this initiative is not at all about bringing "something ideological," but women "in their concrete realities."

This diversity, she suggested, particularly in terms of vocation, career, background, etc., will offer possibilities to better touch the world's Catholics, through the unique insight of women.

The monographic issue of the dicastery's journal, "Culture and Faith," edited by the group, was also presented.



Unprecedented Meeting of World Faith Leaders to take on Global Deforestation



- Norway to host leaders from world's spiritual and religious traditions, engaging faith communities to protect rainforests
- Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Daoist, Jewish leaders to join with indigenous forest guardians to express moral commitment, explore faith-based mobilization to end deforestation

For the first time, leaders from many of the world's religions will meet to discuss the spiritual and ethical responsibility they share to protect rainforests, one of the planet's most vital life-support systems. Besieged by growing global demand for commodities, tropical rainforests are being cleared at a perilous rate, with an area the size of Austria chopped down each year.

The meeting, which will take place in the presence of His Majesty King Harald V of Norway, will discuss how to activate the collective moral influence of religious communities across the planet. Based on sheer numbers, they could prove decisive in protecting the world's last standing rainforests.

There is growing consensus among the world's religions that environmental concerns are closely linked to social justice, a position reinforced by Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* and high-level declarations from many other faiths about the spiritual imperative of protecting the planet and its most vulnerable people.

The multi-faith summit marks the first significant engagement by the world's religions with an issue that climate scientists and development experts argue is a lynchpin for global efforts to address climate change, poverty, food insecurity and violations of human rights. It also heralds the first time that religious leaders from a broad spectrum of faiths will work



hand-in-hand with indigenous peoples, the historical guardians of rainforests, on an action agenda to end deforestation.

Host: His Excellency Vidar Helgesen, Minister of Climate and Environment (Norway)

Partners: The meeting is being convened by Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in cooperation with the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, GreenFaith, Parliament of the World's Religions, Religions for Peace, REIL Network, and the World Council of Churches.

Indigenous Peoples Leaders

- Sônia Guajajara, National Coordinator, Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil – APIB (Brazil)
- Joseph Itongwa, executive Committee Member, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee – IPACC (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- Abdon Nababan, Vice Chairperson, National Council, Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago, AMAN (Indonesia)
- Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Religious Leaders

- H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel, Exarch, Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (Christian)
- Dr. Nanditha Krishna, Founder, The C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation (Hinduism)
- Abbot Phra Paisal Vongvoravisit, Co-Founder, Sekiya Dhamma (Buddhism)
- Sir Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee and Director, Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding (Judaism)
- H.E. Monsignor Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Chancellor, Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (Catholic)
- Bishop Emeritus Gunnar Stålsett, Honorary President, Religions for Peace (Lutheran)
- Dr. Din Syamsuddin, Chairman, Center for Dialogue and Cooperation Among Civilizations (Islam)
- The Right Reverend Bishop Pierre W. Whalon, Bishop-In-Charge, Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe (Episcopal)

Interfaith Leaders

- Reverend Henrik Grape, Coordinator, Working Group on Climate Change, World Council of Churches
- Reverend Fletcher Harper: Executive Director, GreenFaith
- Dr. Kusumita Pedersen, Vice Chair, Parliament of the World's Religions
- Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker: Director, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University
- Dr. William F. Vendley: Secretary General, Religions for Peace

Academics and Experts

- Lars Løvold, Director, Rainforest Foundation Norway
- Dr. Antonio Donato Nobre, Visiting Scientist at the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) and Senior Researcher at the National Institute of Amazonian Research (INPA)
- Frances Seymour, Distinguished Senior Fellow, World Resources Institute

Among the questions to be addressed at the event:



- How do religious and spiritual teachings support the care and protection of rainforests, and how do they relate to environmental, socio-cultural and economic justifications for ending deforestation?
- How can religious and spiritual communities contribute to the battle to protect rainforests and stop deforestation? What are the specific actions on the ground undertaken by spiritual groups and mainstream religions to protect forests?
- Where are forests most under threat and what do spiritual and religious leaders, and their communities and constituencies, propose to do to protect them?
- What can indigenous forest communities teach that can help influence a world that judges the value of forests through the lens of price, utility, or efficiency?
- How does this initiative complement and add to other interfaith efforts?
- Why are the Norwegian government and civil society convening this event? Why now?
- What are the planned next steps for this initiative?

Jesuits: New discovery of planets gives hope

(Carol Glatz)

The Southern Cross, March 8 to March 14, 2017

THE quest to find life on other planets got a boost when astronomers confirmed the existence of at least seven Earth-sized planets orbiting a red dwarf star just 40 light years away.



Three of the planets are located in the so-called “habitable” zone, a kind of “Goldilocks” sweet spot in that their distance from the sun makes them not too hot, not too cold, but just right for having liquid water—an essential ingredient for life. “The discovery is important because, to date, it has revealed the highest number of Earth-sized planets revolving around a single parent star,” said Jesuit Father David Brown, an astrophysicist who studies stellar evolution at the Vatican Observatory.

“Depending on different factors, all of the planets could potentially harbour conditions for the possible existence of life on them,” he said.

He said scientists and astronomers will now want to use newer and more powerful telescopes to learn more about the TRAPPIST-1 solar system, such as the planets’ atmospheres.



The name TRAPPIST is an acronym for the “Transiting Planets and Planetesimals Small Telescope”, which is located in Chile, but the name also reflects the exploration project’s Belgian roots by honouring Belgium’s famous Trappist beers, made by Trappist monks.

“The use of religious names in space discoveries is not rare,” the astrophysicist priest said, because religious men have been among the many scientists contributing to human knowledge of the world and universe throughout history.

For example, he said, several craters on the moon are named after Jesuit priests and brothers and the SECCHI (Sun Earth Connection Coronal and Heliospheric Investigation) Instruments being used for solar research are named after Jesuit Father Angelo Secchi, one of the founding fathers of modern astrophysics.

Fr Brown said the human fascination with the possibility of life on other planets “speaks to one of the most basic questions that confront humanity as it contemplates its place in this cosmos: ‘Are we alone, or are there others in the universe?’”

Jesuit Brother Guy Consolmagno, director of the Vatican Observatory, said the question of life beyond Earth is “a question of faith”. “God speaks to us through what he has created,” he said, and creation has been created “by a God of love, joy and surprises.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Conference on Catholic Religious Education 2018



University of Malta and La Salle Academy for Faith Formation and Religious Education Australian Catholic University announce the ‘1st International Conference on Catholic Religious Education in Schools’

MALTA: 07-10 February 2018; Venue: Catholic Archbishop’s Seminary, Rabat, Malta

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The periodical of the Professional Society of Religious Educators

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 3 (June 2017)

To qualify for CPTD points, answer the following questions. Use the separately attached Word document and email to paulf@cie.org.za. Please do not forget to supply the personal details requested at the end of the document.

CPTD ARTICLE 1: Can Christianity Dialogue with African Traditional Religion (Part 2)?

TRUE/FALSE (Tick the correct box)
According to the author of this article

	STATEMENT	TRUE	FALSE
1	African traditional religion is dying.		
2	Knowledge and the use of African traditional religion should enrich the message of Christ.		
3	The Supreme Being in Africa enjoys a status immeasurably higher than any other being's.		
4	Christianity will be enriched by an encounter with traditional religion.		
5	To the African the rigid dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, the secular and the religious, the material and the immaterial, is real.		
6	The modern world has lost the sense of the true humanity of the person.		
7	Death is a journey into a better world where a person is indifferent to what happens among the living.		
8	One African scholar has called the ancestors "the living-dead."		
9	The advantages and values of the nuclear family outweigh the benefits to the individual of the extended family.		
10	One who fails to be faithful and therefore does not love is described as not being a human being.		



CPTD ARTICLE 2: Towards the Professionalisation of Catholic High School Religion Teachers

TRUE/FALSE (Tick the correct box)

According to the authors of this article, or those he quotes

	STATEMENT	TRUE	FALSE
1	The research suggests that religion teaching satisfies two of the seven selected characteristics but does not fully satisfy the other five.		
2	Religion teaching is a ministry and a profession,		
3	In Vatican II documents, terms such as "ministry," "vocation," and "apostolate" are synonymous with priesthood and religious life.		
4	Some theorists have classified teaching as a semi-profession based on various sets of professional criteria.		
5	The knowledge base and skill set for the teaching profession will be settled best through continued research.		
6	The knowledge base and skill set that are characteristic of professions require specialised, protracted education and training.		
7	By its very nature, teaching is not a moral enterprise.		
8	Educational standards are one of the least powerful tools available for professionalising teaching.		
9	The perceived lack of complexity involved in teaching contributes to the profession's lower status.		
10	The criteria used to assess the status of religion teaching as a profession should be equivalent to those used to assess the broad field of teaching.		



Professional Society of Religious Educators

**Catholic
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66 Nelson Road, Booysens, Johannesburg 2091
P O Box 2083 Southdale 2135
Tel: 011 433 1888
Web: www.cie.org.za



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