

Truth Betrayed: Eamonn Keane's Calumny Against Thomas Groome

Eamonn Keane has committed calumny against my good name as a Catholic scholar and catechist, spreading false judgments against me. In his book, *A Generation Betrayed* (Heatherleigh Press: NY, 2002), Mr. Keane, who teaches high school religion in Australia, pretends to offer a scholarly critique of my published work. Instead, by misrepresentation and manipulation of my writings, couched in a collage of false accusations, innuendo, and guilt by association, he makes a calumnious attack on my character, falsely accusing me of being "a dissenter" from the dogmas and doctrines of my Catholic faith. His book would be more accurately titled, *Truth Betrayed*.

Having both grown up in Ireland, Mr. Keane and I would have memorized the Maynooth Catechism's version of the Eight Commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." Within this prohibition, all the catechisms go on to distinguish between detraction and calumny, both strictly forbidden. Detraction is to disclose "another's faults and failings . . . without objectively valid reason" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2477). In other words, one cannot arbitrarily take another person's good name, even by claims that are true. Calumny, on the other hand, is to take a person's good name *by falsehoods*. In this most serious offence against the Eight Commandment, someone makes claims "contrary to the truth (to) harm the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgment against them" (*Ibid.*).

In the remainder of this essay I will demonstrate beyond the slightest doubt that Eamonn Keane has committed calumny against me by repeatedly making claims that are "contrary to the truth." Of more concern than the personal and professional cost of this calumny to me, is Mr. Keane's attack on contemporary catechesis. Whether deserved or not, my own published work has become one representative of present-day catechetical education. What I propose as a "shared Christian praxis approach" to religious education and catechesis has been used—with adaptation—as the underlying pedagogy in many faith education curricula throughout the English-speaking world. Though Mr. Keane's *A Generation Betrayed* (hereafter GB) is primarily a diatribe against me personally, it could also set back the renewal of catechesis that was catalyzed by the Second Vatican Council and championed by the *General Catechetical Directory* (1997). My response here will be primarily in self-defense against his character assassination, but implicitly throughout and explicitly at the end I write in defense of contemporary catechesis

Mr. Keane has made it a mission to ripple his lies out across the Catholic community. People who are familiar with me and my work have dismissed his accusations for what they are—the truth betrayed. Yet, he has found a ready audience especially among ultra conservative Catholics intent on blaming catechists and contemporary catechesis for all the ills of the Catholic Church. Now, when further attacks on me personally appear, and oftentimes those on contemporary catechesis, they footnote Mr. Keane's book as their "authority."

Mr. Keane focuses primarily on my book of 1991, *Sharing Faith* (hereafter SF); I respond mostly from that text. He makes too many false claims to offer an exhaustive list

here. I will give numerous examples, however, under four headings: *misrepresentations*, *manipulations*, *false accusations*, and implications of *guilt by association*. My categories overlap and oftentimes his "contrary to the truth" claims could be placed in more than one. Together, however, they establish my charge against him of calumny.

Misrepresentations

A foundational issue for catechists and for their approach to educating in faith is their understanding of *revelation*. We are responsible to educate people in "the faith handed down" by the Church through scripture and tradition; thus, how we understand these "fountains of revelation" is crucial to our ministry. Then, remembering the function of catechesis within evangelization, we are responsible for "the transmission of divine revelation" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #74, hereafter CCC) according to the mode of the receiver (Aquinas), i.e. to re-present Catholic faith in persuasive ways that are likely to be heard and lived by participants in each particular context. This gives religious educators the task of *hermeneutics*, which catechetically amounts to interpreting, explaining, and encouraging people to appropriate the truths of Catholic faith into their lives and world. Then, as Catholic educators, we must faithfully represent "the Faith" as taught by the official *magisterium* of our Church, symbolized in the Petrine office--the teaching authority of the Pope. As Vatican II explained, "sacred tradition, sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church . . . are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others" (*Divine Revelation*, #10, Abbott translation, 118). This demand is absolute around matters that the Church teaches *infallibly* but pertains, as well, to anything considered constitutive of Catholic faith, traditionally designated as *de fide* (literally "of the faith").

Mr. Keane totally misrepresents my position on *revelation* and on *hermeneutics*, and he exaggerates to the point of misrepresenting the Church's position on *infallibility* and what should be considered *de fide*. I will review these three major misrepresentations and then list ten others more briefly. (I take up his false claims against me regarding the Petrine office in the next section--under "manipulation").

Concerning Revelation

Mr. Keane claims that I repudiate "the Catholic understanding of Divine Revelation" (GB 13) because I allegedly reject "Revelation as doctrine" (GB 234). He claims further that my theology of revelation is influenced primarily by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza. In fact, I clearly affirm the assets of a doctrinal notion of revelation but say that this model *alone* could diminish the richness of Christian faith. In broadening beyond a doctrinal understanding, my primary mentor is the great Catholic theologian, Cardinal Avery Dulles; in fact, I follow Dulles's theology of revelation precisely throughout SF, footnoting him repeatedly. How could Mr. Keane have missed this! I mention Dr. Schussler Fiorenza's work only in passing and as a scripture scholar, not a theologian.

I state clearly that the overall theology of revelation most suited to a shared Christian praxis approach to catechesis is articulated by Cardinal Dulles (see SF 218). Readers of Dulles will recall that he lays out five acceptable models of revelation, reviewing the strengths and limitations of each one (see SF 489-490 for a summary). As I explain the five movements of a shared Christian praxis approach (SF Chapters 5 to 10), I constantly note how each movement reflects one or other of Dulles' models of revelation. Following his lead, I try to draw upon what Dulles notes as each one's strengths while avoiding its weaknesses. Even as I appropriate the merits of each model, I state repeatedly that my defining theology of revelation is Dulles' own favored model of "symbolic mediation." (SF 197, 218, etc). How Mr. Keane manages to portray my theology of revelation as heretical is a feat of manipulation and misrepresentation; follow this.

In Chapter 8 of *Sharing Faith* I outline Dulles' description of "revelation as doctrine." Though this model has assets, Dulles also portrays it as inadequate because "it overlooks the historicity of God's self-disclosure, 'forgets God's presence in one's own life and experience,' excludes a 'faith that probes and questions,' and prevents dialogue with people of other faiths" (SF 219 with a footnote to Dulles. *Models of Revelation*, 46 ff). Dulles fears that this model can encourage the assumption that revelation comes immediately from God (like a fax) rather than being "symbolically mediated" (see *Models of Revelation*, 115).

Now, in one of the grossest misrepresentations in his book--quite a claim--Mr. Keane quotes my quotation of Dulles' reservations about "revelation as doctrine" as if they are my own words (though my text has clear quotation marks and footnote), and presents this critique by Dulles as *my whole theology of revelation* (GB 87 and passim). Yes, throughout GB, Keane repeatedly presents Dulles' reservation about this one model as the sum total of *my own position*. He makes no mention that I draw repeatedly from Dulles' other four models, and never mentions that I favor Dulles' overall proposal of revelation as "symbolically mediated." From his caricature of my position, Mr. Keane proceeds to claim that I reject all doctrines of Christian faith and that I encourage others to do the same through a shared praxis approach to religious education (see GB 234 and 298). How irresponsible of him!

Mr. Keane rejects my nuanced theology of revelation because he is personally convinced that all revelation is *immediate* from God, rather than *mediated* through human agents, time, and place, albeit under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His attitude toward scripture is similar to that of a fundamentalist Muslim toward the Koran--as if literally and directly "the word of God." Note that he quotes selectively from Vatican II's *Constitution on Divine Revelation*, that "Sacred Scripture 'is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.'" (# 9, GB 14). However, he fails to balance this quote with the statement in #13 of the same *Constitution*—though he is surely familiar with it—that "the words of God, *expressed in human language*, have been made like human discourse" (Abbott, 121, emphasis added). Ignoring their "human language" and historical mediation, Mr. Keane claims that all scripture is "inerrant" with "the Sacred Books of the Bible" being "totally free from error" (GB 282). Of course

there are fundamentalist Christians who also take this position—and Mr. Keane is free to do likewise. However, since the great encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII (1943) giving the green light to critical biblical scholarship, his is certainly not the mainstream Catholic position nor does it represent “the mind” of the Church.

It is also significant that Mr. Keane holds a static notion of doctrine. He grants that “there can be growth in the Church’s consciousness of the doctrine and improvements in the Magisterium’s presentation of it” (GB 25). But this falls far short of Vatican II’s bold statement that “The tradition which comes from the apostles *develops* in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit” (*Constitution on Revelation* # 8, Abbott 116). It continues, “For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her” (Ibid). We are a pilgrim people of God rather than a static one that has “arrived.”

Ironically, Mr. Keane’s literalism regarding scripture may be more “Protestant” than “Catholic.” He fails to recognize the need to interpret scripture in the context of each time and place—shortchanging the genius of Catholic faith to inculturate itself in diverse cultural contexts. Likewise, he does not recognize the nuances and subtlety of Catholic faith over time and that our appropriation of God’s original revelation through sacred scripture has unfolded and will continue to unfold through Christian Tradition.

Concerning Hermeneutics

As I said, hermeneutics of scripture and Christian tradition--*interpreting, explaining, and appropriating* "the Faith"--is ever a task of the catechetical educator. Recently I had to break the sad news to my five year old son that a favorite aunt had "gone home to Holy God." The conversation that followed brought the question, "Daddy, what is heaven like?" I found myself in the throes of deep hermeneutics; how to explain to little Ted about eternal life, the beatific vision of God's presence, living a good life now, and much more, all in ways that a five year old might recognize as “good news,” while consoling his sense of loss and without causing fears of death ("Daddy, will you die soon?" followed on). I needed help!

In *Sharing Faith*, I carefully lay out **three** hermeneutical attitudes that are essential for religious educators; I call them hermeneutics of *retrieval*, of *suspicion*, and of creative *commitment*. Placing *retrieval* first and foremost, I say that the primary hermeneutical task of the catechetical educator is always "to recognize and affirm the truths and values" of Christian faith, helping people to "retrieve and reclaim" them to their lives now. Then, the intended outcome of the whole process is *commitment*—that people make "the Catholic Faith" their own and embrace "creative commitment to more faithful ways of living Christian faith " (SF 230-235).

By contrast, Mr. Keane repeatedly charges me of encouraging only a "hermeneutics of suspicion" toward Catholic faith. He portrays this as "the determining principle" of my work (GB 236) and the prime reason why a shared praxis approach to

catechetical education is "a fatally flawed method" (GB 234). Mr. Keane *never even mentions hermeneutics of retrieval and creative commitment*. Further, he totally *misrepresents what I mean by a "hermeneutics of suspicion."* On the basis of his caricature he alleges that I encourage people to assume a posture of disbelief toward scripture and Catholic tradition; he accuses me of recommending that Catholic faith "be introduced to the students as something to be critically dismantled ('hermeneutics of suspicion') in order to identify its 'distortions' and 'untruth.'" (GB 240).

If I had proposed only a hermeneutics of suspicion toward Christian faith, Mr. Keane would have cause for concern. A hermeneutic of suspicion without hermeneutics of retrieval and creative commitment could be dangerous indeed. But this is far from my position. In SF I even have a bold heading, "Hermeneutics of Retrieval, Suspicion, and Creative Commitment" (SF 230); how could Mr. Keane have missed this?

Now, with the hindsight of 25 years (I began writing SF in 1985), I admit that a term like "hermeneutics of suspicion" plays into the hands of people with an agenda like Mr. Keane's. He loves to highlight it because it could be heard to imply dissent--as he constantly but falsely charges. He never refers to the context in which I use it. *Sharing Faith* was an academic work that drew upon and engaged the scholarship of its time. Within the scholarly conversation on hermeneutics, led by such great thinkers as Hans Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and David Tracy, "hermeneutics of suspicion" was a common phrase that all its authors understood as a positive exercise; it had no implication of dissent or denial of the truths of faith. I would never insert such language into a catechetical text for children or parish catechists, but it was appropriate in a graduate level text book of that era.

Over against Mr. Keane's misrepresentation, I present a hermeneutics of suspicion as a very positive exercise "to uncover from the texts of tradition the subjugated or forgotten memories that can give new life" (SF 232). To explain such hermeneutics as the antithesis of "negative criticism" (SF 232), I draw upon the notion of "dangerous memories" as developed by Johann Baptist Metz and others. These are aspects of tradition that to recall them deeply can cause people to "suspect" their own taken for granted attitudes and practices and invite them to imagine more faithful ways of living as disciples of Jesus. I summarize that scripture and Christian tradition "always have dangerous memories that call ourselves and our world into question, that can empower people in ongoing conversion and social transformation toward God's reign" (SF 233). Lest this be interpreted as a negative exercise, I cite the Exodus as the most "dangerous memory" from the Hebrew scriptures, and the paschal mystery – Christ's death and resurrection – as likewise from the NT. And the list could go on; for example, the inclusivity of Jesus' table fellowship will always "upset" every instance of exclusion in church or society. Instead of encouraging dissent, such memories surely call us to greater faithfulness in Christian living.

I further situate the need for a hermeneutics of suspicion within Paul Ricoeur's proposal that the texts of Christian faith always have an "excess of meaning." There will always be "more" in the texts of our faith than we have yet uncovered. As Jesus

promised the Samaritan woman--and to Christians ever after--his Gospel should always be as "living waters" (see John 4), never stagnant ones. Or the image Jesus uses in Matthew's Gospel is of the storeroom in a house (some translations have "the treasury") from which people can ever draw out "both the new and the old" (Mt 13: 52). So, the human word about God's word will never have the last word. Just when we think we have uncovered it all and are now living it faithfully, we should become "suspicious" that there is yet much more there for our lives and a journey ahead into holiness of life.

Certainly I say that a hermeneutics of suspicion is needed to recognize the "mystifications and distortions" that may be present in "the dominant interpretation of Christian Story/Vision" in any given era (SF 232). An obvious example would be the Church's blessing and practicing of slavery in a particular time; but every era can have its blind spots in belief and practice. They will not be uncovered by insisting that everything in the Church's past and present is rosy—as Keane does—but only by questioning what is being taken for granted as faithful to the Gospel. In calling for such hermeneutics of suspicion, I'm in the good company of Pope John Paul II. In "On the Coming of the Third Millennium" he called Christians to recognize and repent "for all those times in history when they . . . indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counter-witness and scandal" (# 32). Note that he repeated such a call to such repentance—change of mind and heart—some 100 times throughout his pontificate.

I also make clear that teachers cannot canonize their own opinion and positions as if they are all faithful to the Gospel. In fact, a hermeneutic of suspicion requires the teacher to "be alert for subjective errors in one's own interpretation" (SF 232). If Mr. Keane had a modicum of suspicion about his own hardened ideology, he might not have committed calumny against me.

Concerning Infallibility and What is De Fide

Mr. Keane takes a totalizing position on infallibility and the teaching authority of the Church; in effect, he treats all papal statements and even those of Vatican congregations as infallible and *de fide*. He then uses this exaggerated position to repeatedly accuse me of dissent from what he claims to be doctrines and dogmas of Catholic faith.

He makes his case by claiming that all Church teachings must be accepted *in toto*, not only what is taught by the "extraordinary *magisterium*" (i.e. when a general ecumenical council defines a church teaching or when the pope explicitly defines a teaching *ex cathedra* – literally "from the chair" of Peter) but what is taught by the "ordinary *magisterium*" as well. He footnotes Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* #25 (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*) as his authority for this position. He writes, "Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium* 25 stated that the Pope's teaching – in whatever form it takes – is to be adhered to by all the faithful" (GB 92). Going even further, he quotes approvingly from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that its own statements "participate in the ordinary *magisterium*" of the Church, and so enjoy the same absolute

teaching authority (GB 46). That the statements of any Vatican Congregation are preserved “free from error” is an extraordinary claim, and may well be heresy in itself.

It is true indeed that *Lumen Gentium* states "religious submission of will and of mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*" (#25, Abbott 48). However, the document—on the very same page but ignored by Mr. Keane—clarifies that in order to be considered infallible, a teaching must pertain to "the deposit of divine revelation" (Ibid.). I know of no trained Catholic theologian, left, right, or center, who would say that all of the “ordinary” teachings of the pope are essential to “the deposit of divine revelation” and are therefore taught infallibly. And certainly none but an ultra conservative like Mr. Keane would make such a claim for Vatican congregations. Yet, he quotes from papal encyclicals and apostolic letters, from comments by the pope at general audiences and noon-time greetings, and even from instructions by Vatican Congregations as if all have equal weight and are to be accepted as *de fide*. (For further reading see Richard Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church*, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997.)

To accept Mr. Keane's claim would place the present Church in a very embarrassing position, indeed. For if all Church teachings are *de fide* now, then all Church teachings have always been so, over the past two thousand years. This would mean that slavery is still permitted, Jews should be treated as Christ killers, lending for profit is immoral, our planet is the center of the universe, and all evidence to the contrary, the earth is flat.

Note, too, that while Mr. Keane exaggerates the teaching authority of the *magisterium*, there is no mention of the clear statement by Vatican I that infallibility is a charism “with which the Divine Redeemer willed to endow his Church.” In other words, the pope exercises a power that belongs to the whole Church, and, as Vatican II made very clear, the *sensus fidelium* participates in the Church's dual process of teaching/learning as well. To be expected, Mr. Keane does not quote the same *Lumen Gentium* when it declares: "The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy Spirit, cannot err in matters of belief" (# 12, Abbott 29).

The proper scope and conditions for the exercise of the charism of infallibility are a much debated topic among theologians and especially when it comes to deciding what is or what is not to be considered an infallible and/or *de fide* teaching of Catholic faith. Even Vatican I's original declaration of papal infallibility left itself open to varied interpretations. Avery Dulles was of the opinion that "The moderates at Vatican I managed to get many restrictions written into the text and into the explanations given to it on the council floor. As a result, the celebrated definition of papal infallibility really commits one to very little" (*Resilient Church* p 127). There are, of course, many dogmas and doctrines that must be considered *de fide*—essential to Catholic Christian faith—most of which have been taught infallibly by an ecumenical council and to deny them would place one outside of the Catholic community.

In its *Decree on Ecumenism*, Vatican II made the important statement that “in Catholic teaching there exists an order or 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relationship to the foundation of the Christian faith” (#11, Abbott 354). The CCC reiterates this notion of Catholic Christian faith reflecting a "hierarchy of truths" a number of times (see #90 and #234). In other words, not every teaching of our faith is equally constitutive of it or central to Catholic identity.

I find that the *sensus fidelium* of the whole Church generally has a clear sense of what is essential--the articles of the Creeds, the Blessed Trinity, the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, his death and Resurrection from the dead, his Real Presence in the Eucharist, and so on. But then, as one descends down or out from the dogmas at the top or center of the faith hierarchy, the debates emerge around what is or what is not *de fide*. For example, Mr. Keane treats the Catholic Church’s negative decision on the ordination of women to be an infallible teaching. This was the position of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) as stated in its well known “*Responsum ad Dubium*” of Oct 28, 1995 and signed by then Cardinal Ratzinger. But contrary to Mr. Keane’s position, the CDF cannot teach infallibly on its own authority and its claim that Pope John Paul II in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* was merely confirming a teaching already taught infallibly by the bishops of the world has been challenged by many respected and faithful theologians.

I now list briefly ten other misrepresentations from Mr. Keane's *A Generation Betrayed*—they all reflect “truth betrayed.”

* Mr. Keane portrays me as opposing the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and presents my lament that is not gender sensitive in its language as if this is my only comment about it. In fact, I published a very appreciative review of the CCC after it appeared (see “Sweeping Statement: the Catechism of the Catholic Church” in *Boston College Magazine*, 53:2, Spring, 1994, pp. 30-35). Given the world-wide circulation of this magazine (some 160 thousand copies) and Mr. Keane’s clear competence in searching out publications, I can only conclude that he deliberately overlooked my positive essay on *The Catechism*.

* Mr. Keane writes that "Groome's ideas . . . have been greatly influence by the Chilean Marxist educationalist Paulo Freire” (GB 29). Freire is recognized as one of the greatest educators of the 20th century, and yes, he was one of my primary mentors. Mr. Keane misrepresents him, however, by portraying him as a “Marxist”—and by implication myself--knowing well the negative connotations this has for his audience. As for all competent scholars of the 20th century, Freire had studied Marx and like many of his colleagues in Latin American liberation theology, he appreciated Marx’s critique of unbridled capitalism (as did Pope John Paul II). Having known him very well personally, I can aver that throughout his life Freire remained a faithful and devout Catholic. (I once heard Paulo asked what was his own deepest experience of liberation, and he responded, “a good confession,” and went on, very sincerely, to explain why.)

* Mr. Keane constantly links my work with that of Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza. Donna Steichen summarizes in the Foreword: "Mr. Keane establishes beyond dispute that Groome is in fact Schussler Fiorenza's disciple" (GB IX). Like his claim that I depend on her for my theology of revelation—refuted above—this grossly misrepresents my work. Scripture scholars vary greatly in their response to the writings of Dr. Schussler Fiorenza but none ever disparage her scholarship. The fact that I draw insights from her work—as I do from a vast and diverse array of authors (see the bibliography of SF)—does not mean that I agree with all of her positions. She is not my primary theological mentor on any topic and my careful footnoting throughout SF makes this very evident.

* Mr. Keane presents my approach to religious education as deeply influenced by the German existentialist Martin Heidegger, and notes the latter's support of the Nazi regime (GB 31-33). This, again, is a misrepresentation and guilt by association. I draw one concept from Heidegger that is central to my own work ("remembrance of being") but I use it in a way that Heidegger never intended. I am not "Heideggerian" nor, needless to say, a Nazi sympathizer.

* Mr. Keane says that I am heavily influenced by the work of German critical theorist Jurgen Habermas, whom he also misrepresents as "neo-Marxist" (GB 33). It is true that Habermas was a significant influence on my notion of critical reflection. For an accurate representation, however, Mr. Keane should have noted my disagreements with Habermas and that I side with the more conservative Gadamer in their famous debate concerning tradition and hermeneutics (see SF 476).

* Mr. Keane says that I'm much influenced by the great Catholic theologian Karl Rahner; this I consider a compliment. However, Mr. Keane charges Rahner with dissent from a "definitive doctrine" of Catholic faith based on the latter's demurring on the birth control encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*. In fact, Rahner never explicitly rejected the Church's teaching on contraception but said that "it is in principle capable of being revised" (quoted in GB 35). In this he said no more than the German and Belgian bishops' conferences said at the time in response to this encyclical. Note, too, that my indebtedness to Rahner is for his anthropology and theology of grace; I never refer to his position on birth control.

* Mr. Keane says that Leonardo Boff was a primary influence and especially on my ecclesiology. For the record, this is not true. Among the liberation theologians, Gustavo Gutierrez was a significant influence and Avery Dulles was my primary author for ecclesiology—as I footnote repeatedly throughout SF. Clearly Mr. Keane realized that noting my indebtedness to Dulles (my former professor) would ill serve his false claims about my work.

* Mr. Keane writes that the term "praxis . . . has a long history—stretching from the philosophers of ancient Greece, through Marxism, and into the philosophy of Karol Wojtyla" (GB 82). First, an aside: Mr. Keane is correct that the notion of praxis passes through Marxism into the philosophy of Pope John II (see Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II, *Toward a Philosophy of Praxis*, New York; Crossroads, 1981); of course, this is

totally acceptable. But then, Mr. Keane goes on to misrepresent my understanding of praxis as if inevitably Marxist and in Ch. 10 gives a lengthy critique of Marx (much of which I agree with) as if refuting my position. In my writings I recognize Marx for keeping alive the notion of a praxis way of knowing while the rest of the philosophical world forgot it, favoring purely theoretical knowledge instead. This being said, many times I make clear that I disagree with Marx's deficient notion of praxis (see SF 72-74, inter alia), finding it totally inadequate to the ways of knowing needed in religious education.

* Mr. Keane writes that "Groome's methodology opens up the possibility for a repudiation of all doctrine" (GB 237). In fact, my constant theme is that religious educators should present the truths of Christian faith with persuasion so that people may embrace them as their own, becoming personally convinced of their spiritual wisdom for life. If a student appears to deliberately dissent from something constitutive of Catholic faith, I give guidelines for how a teacher should respond pastorally, ultimately warning that such dissent places one outside of the Catholic faith community (SF 260-62).

* Mr. Keane writes, "In short, it is impossible to harness Groome's shared praxis to an effective catechesis, for of its nature it tends to create the truth and not discover or transmit it" (GB 239). This is a complete misrepresentation and caricature of a shared praxis approach; in all my writings, I have never presented it as a process of "creating the truth." Further, I have personally employed a shared praxis approach in two religious education curricula, *God With Us* (K to 8, Sadlier 1984) and *Coming to Faith* (K to 6, Sadlier 1989 and 1995). These curricula have been widely used throughout the US Catholic community over the past 25 years, both with Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur. After the publication of the CCC, all my published curricula were reviewed by the appointed committee of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and "deemed in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*."

Shortly before his death, Cardinal Avery Dulles reviewed the present state of Catholic catechesis, describing its various approaches under five models – a favorite heuristic device of this great theologian. Having read my *Sharing Faith* book – precisely the one Mr. Keane attacks – Cardinal Dulles comes to the very opposite conclusion to Mr. Keane. Dulles clearly favors a shared Christian praxis approach as the most faithful and effective of the five he reviews and the most "inclusive" of all the elements essential to good Catholic catechesis. Would that Mr. Keane had read Cardinal Dulles' assessment of my work – though I doubt it would have made any difference. (See *Origins*, Vol 37, No 22, November 8, 2007, pages 342-352).

Note that the US Catholic community has well survived the worst scandal in the history of the Church; there was some decline at the height of the clergy sex abuse crisis, but now Mass attendance and church-giving has returned to previous levels. In comparison to other countries and contexts that have experienced the same devastating scandal, the faithfulness of American Catholics is amazing. I believe it is due, at least in part, to the quality of catechesis our people have received. A shared praxis approach has

had a hand in this, not only through my own curricula but through the many others that reflect such a pedagogy.

Manipulations

The distinction between Mr. Keane's misrepresentations and his manipulations of my work is fairly subtle; some instances could well be placed in either category. I cite as "manipulation" something that can indeed be found in my writings--a position, quote, or reference--that Mr. Keane takes and twists to mean something I did not mean at all. So, my call for more than male metaphors for God he turns into denial of the dogma of the Blessed Trinity (see GB 309); my call of 1991 for reconsideration of women in holy orders he turns into denial of the "divine origin" of priesthood, which implies denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ (see GB 101, 117, etc), and so on. Besides these perennials that run throughout, I review two major manipulations here and then list a half-dozen others.

Regarding the Petrine office

Let me be clear: I have never denied the validity of the Petrine office as exercised by the Pope in the Catholic Church; I have never said that the pope is not the successor of St. Peter who was the first leader of the apostolic community and appointed by Jesus himself. In *Educating for Life* (hereafter EFL), a book that Mr. Keane had read before writing his own, I state clearly, "The pope has primacy of leadership and teaching authority in succession to St. Peter" (240); I don't know what could be a clearer statement nor how Mr. Keane could have missed this and the elaboration that follows there.

What he manipulates to claim that I deny the Petrine office can be found in *Sharing Faith* Ch. 11. There I draw upon the research of distinguished Catholic scholars to say that in the first years of the Church, the Petrine office and the function of Bishop of Rome were not identical, but became so soon thereafter. I draw especially upon the work of Fr. Raymond Brown to say that Peter was exercising the Petrine office *before* he ever came to Rome, usually dated around 60 AD—so, for some thirty years prior.

Peter clearly took the leadership role at the First Pentecost (see his inaugural sermon of the Church in Acts 2: 14-41), and likewise at the Council of Jerusalem (circa 49 AD). Even Keane himself claims that Peter was the first bishop of Antioch (GB 130; contemporary scholarship refutes this pious claim). When Peter did come to Rome we can presume that there was a bishop already in place there, or more likely groupings of bishops/presbyters--a single bishop presiding over a diocese did not emerge until mid-second century. Also Peter as one of the Apostles, never mind their leader, would have had a far higher status than a local bishop in Rome. (For further reading, see Cardinal Walter Kasper, ed., *The Petrine Ministry*, New York: Paulist Press, 2005).

Keane, however, manipulates this discussion to claim that I deny the Petrine office of the pope. When I say manipulates, I'm not exaggerating. Out of context, he quotes my total position as, "we cannot presume a line of direct succession between pope

and Peter” (GB 94), and then extrapolates that I deny the Petrine office. Let me cite my original statement and the context in which I made it. “In my Catholicism I’m convinced that the continued exercise of the Petrine office in a special way by the bishop of Rome has been a grace for the whole church. However, in light of New Testament scholarship, we cannot presume a line of direct succession between pope and Peter. As Brown points out, ‘The two roles of primate and of bishop of Rome, separate at the beginning, were subsequently joined’” (SF 314). In other words, Keane quoted what he wanted to quote, without the original nuance, and out of context. Such manipulation is irresponsible to say the least.

Regarding the Protestant Reformers

When appropriate to the topic, my writings may recognize the contributions of the Protestant Reformers to the Church and to Western civilization. In this I’m doing no more than what Pope John Paul II did when he visited the Lutheran Church in Rome in 1983 to honor the 500th anniversary of Luther’s birth. There the Pope thanked Luther for helping the whole Church to reclaim three of its vital doctrines—the primacy of faith, the centrality of the Bible, and the priesthood of all believers (see Groome, *What Makes us Catholic*, 11, hereafter WMUC).

Mr. Keane, however, takes my summary statement that the Reformers “de-emphasized the role of the Church as a mediator” and encouraged people “to bypass Church control in their pieties and go directly to God” (GB 102) as if I agree with and encourage their position. In fact, on the very page from which Mr. Keane quotes (EFL 186), I go on to say clearly that this is a great weakness in Protestantism and that Catholicism’s emphasis on community--on Church--is one of its great strengths. I credit the Council of Trent (1545-63) for pushing back against the Reformers: “rejecting the tendency toward individualism it perceived in the Reformers, Trent strongly reaffirmed the centrality of the Church for living in Christian faith” (Ibid).

I go on to cite Trent’s reiteration of “the communion of saints and sinners” as representing the Catholic “radical notion that the community of faith reaches beyond the grave” (EFL 187). There, as elsewhere (e.g., WMUC 4) I write with appreciation of the Catholic tradition of praying to the saints and for the souls. Among other things, these practices reflect the Catholic conviction that the bond of baptism is never broken, not even by death—all highlighting the communal nature of Catholic faith. How could Mr. Keane have missed all of this and manipulated my position so perversely. (For a recent statement, see my essay, “Why We Need the Church,” in *Every Day Catholic*, St. Anthony’s Messenger Press, April 2006).

I now list a half dozen other blatant misquotes or citations out of context that reflect Mr. Keane’s intentional manipulation of my work.

* A central aspect of a shared praxis approach to catechesis is my comprehensive description of “Christian Story” to represent the totality of Christian faith and to encourage a narrative style of presentation. Further, I rarely write of Christian Story

without adding the word "Vision"; I do so to encourage catechists to make explicit what Christian Story demands of and means for people's lives. So, the Story testifies that God loves us, the Vision demands that we love God and neighbor as ourselves; the Story teaches that God forgives us, the Vision demands that "we forgive those who trespass against us," and so on. In quoting--with disparagement--from my description of Christian Story, Mr. Keane first leaves out some crucial aspects that are clearly stated in the text from which he quotes (see GB 85 and compare with SF 113-114). Further, no place does he refer to my term Vision--though I use it repeatedly in my writings and the metaphor of "Story" is incomplete without it. Meanwhile, having ignored this central aspect of my work, he claims that my approach is not committed to encouraging people to live their faith--precisely what I intend by pairing Christian Story with Christian Vision.

* Mr. Keane writes, "For Groome, 'yesterday's truth' becomes something to be contradicted for 'today's truth.'" (GB 237). I have never made such a ridiculous statement; in fact, my reference to Christian Story--always capitalized--reflects my deep respect for scripture and Christian Tradition (see also *Educating for Life*, Ch. 5, and *What Makes Us Catholic* Ch. 5). But notice how Mr. Keane crafts his statement. His quotation marks within that sentence imply that he is quoting from me. Intentional manipulation!

* Mr. Keane writes, "Groome has left himself little option but to adopt the Marxist concept of 'praxis' which demands 'putting praxis above knowledge' with the result that 'praxis' comes to be equated with 'light'" (GB 239). I already noted that his portrayal of my use of praxis as Marxist is a misrepresentation; here we have a blatant manipulation. Again, his use of quotation marks--while directly claiming to portray my position--implies that he is quoting my own words. I've never said any such thing. In fact, Ch 6 of EFL is precisely on the need for Christians to unite *knowing* with *doing* the truth into "spiritual wisdom for life."

* Mr. Keane writes, "Both Groome and Fiorenza have a long history of dissent from the teaching of the Church's magisterium" (GB 3) and he then gives a footnote. According to the canons of scholarly writing, and professional courtesy, a notation after such a claim should carry evidence for it. On the contrary here, Mr. Keane simply uses the footnote to explain what he means by magisterium.

* Mr. Keane manipulates what I write in *Sharing Faith* about Reconciliation to the point of implying that I oppose this valuable sacrament to Catholic life. He pretends to summarize as follows: "Groome asserts that the Catholic doctrine which ordinarily requires private confession of sins to a priest for purposes of absolution is expressive of a lack of awareness of the social dimension of sin" (GB 262); he endnotes CRE 93 as his source. This is manipulation by citing only half of what I say there. In fact, I laud the (then) New Rite of Reconciliation for the fact that it draws Catholics beyond a purely personal sense of sin to recognize its social dimensions and our need to repent of both—sins personal and social.

* Mr. Keane claims that I've tried to "expunge from the liturgy certain references to God the Father" (GB 164) and refers to my little book *Language for a 'Catholic' Church*, 62-64. All I do there is point out that the excessive use of "Father" for God throughout the Liturgy is unnecessary according to the original Latin texts. I cite that of the more than 1400 collect prayers in the current Sacramentary, only 21 of them begin with *Pater* in the original Latin, whereas the English translations have 560 of them begin with Father. Mr. Keane chose to ignore the point I was making and to manipulate what I said to make a false claim against me.

False Accusations

A reader of Mr. Keane's book will come away with the impression that I deny all the central dogmas and doctrines of Catholic faith. Let me be clear here as I am in my many books and essays: *I now hold and have always held fully orthodox positions on all the central matters of Catholic faith and morals*. The fact that in 1991 (before the issuing of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* – in 1994) I stated myself in favor of the ordination of women, more expansive language for God, and so on, does not place me in any kind of heresy--as Mr. Keane extrapolates. In addition to what he misrepresents and manipulates, I refute some of his more serious false accusations here.

Regarding the Blessed Trinity

Fair readers of my writings over the years will know well how much I appreciate this extraordinary dogma of our faith, reflecting both the inner nature of our One God as a Triune Loving Relationship of Divine Persons, and then God's united and yet threefold outreach to us of unconditional love, with each Divine Person effecting what is proper to each One in the work of our salvation. More patently, I believe that God is One, and yet is constituted by Three Divine Persons, distinct and equal, whom we traditionally name as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I've written many times that catechists must embrace and present this dogma not—stereotypically--as “a mystery we cannot explain” but rather as the Mystery that explains everything. It summarizes who our God is, how God loves us, and how we must live as a people of God, after the way of Jesus--in right and loving relationship with God, self, others, and creation--sustained by the Holy Spirit (see, *What Makes Us Catholic* 89-90 and 274-79).

Essentially, Mr. Keane bases his claim that I deny the Blessed Trinity on my call for "expansive" language for God (see GB Ch 7). First, note well, Mr. Keane never refers to this term "expansive" though I make clear in *Language for a Catholic Church* that we can never have "inclusive" language for God in that human language cannot possibly "include" the whole reality that is God. But surely we need and are entitled to forge "expansive" language for God—who is ultimately "beyond all names." The Bible would encourage as much with its multiple titles, metaphors and analogies for the divine; just the first two verses of Psalm 18 has no fewer than ten different images for God. In this biblical spirit, I recommend that we "expand" our contemporary referents for God beyond exclusively male ones. I never oppose using "Father" for God—how could I—or

urge people to abandon such usage; I simply advocate that we use more than “Father” and exclusively male metaphors.

I will not rehearse here why I think it is important that we use inclusive language for ourselves (e.g. humanity, people, rather than mankind, man) and develop more expansive language for God. For now remember that to only use "Father" for God as if this term is a direct equivalent for the divine nature, is to break the First Commandment, which clearly forbids "graven images" for God (see Exodus 20: 4). Yet, Mr. Keane writes, "the proper name 'Father' is not **about** God--rather it denominates, names, indicates, points to--'the Father'" (GB 151 – emphasis in original). Sounds like he is making “father” the total equivalent of God. He goes on to quote with approval a Fr. Mankowski who "points out that 'every adjective, every pronoun, every participle that refers to YHWH (in the OT) is unmistakably masculine'" (GB 153). Again, the implication is that God's essential nature is "male" and demands nothing but male pronouns as referents. Then he cites a General Audience statement by Pope John Paul II as if the latter was making “Father” the equivalent of God, whereas the Pope was simply repeating the dogma that Jesus was the Son of God, "consubstantial with the Father."

I readily admit that to reflect the personal and relational nature of God with expansive language is a challenge. To use only terms that refer to the "functions" of the three divine persons--e.g. Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier--could be to fall into the old heresy of Modalism which denied that God is Three Divine Persons and claimed that we simply experience the one God in three different modes. There is a problem here to be solved; some of it pertains to the structure of the English language. For now I repeat, my challenge is not to male language for God but to using only male terms. As the CCC states, "God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood" (#239) and footnotes Isaiah 66:13 and Psalm 131:2--two of the many biblical metaphors of the motherhood of God.

Christ's Divinity and Humanity

Again, I make clear: I have never denied the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus Christ; I accept the Church's dogmatic teaching, declared with finality at the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD), that Jesus Christ was one person with two natures, divine and human. As Mr. Keane quotes accurately from Chalcedon, the one person Jesus Christ was "consubstantial with the Father in his divinity, consubstantial with us in his humanity" (GB 195). Yet, by an amazing stretch of logic, Mr. Keane uses my 1991 position favoring women's ordination to accuse me of denying both the full humanity and full divinity of Jesus.

First, Mr. Keane emphasizes the maleness of Jesus rather than his humanity (though note Chalcedon's use of the latter term). For him, to confess that "Jesus Christ is truly man" must literally refer to his maleness rather than "man" as the generic for humanity (GB 175). He then insists on a direct correlation between the "maleness of Christ and the Ordained Priesthood" (GB 180). In his anxiety to emphasize the maleness of Jesus, he even objects to my translation of Anselm's question "*cur deus homo*" as "why

did God become a human person;" insisting on "man"—in the gender sense--instead. He forgets that Anselm used the generic *homo* rather than *vir*—"man" as masculine (see GB 198). Note that the Creed also uses *homo* rather than *vir*; *et homo factus est*. So, the creedal statements and tradition of our faith rightly emphasize Jesus' humanity rather than his male gender.

Mr. Keane then represents my once favoring the ordination of women as denying the maleness of Jesus. Of course this is a caricature. In keeping with the dogmas of our faith, I simply say that in his dying and rising, Jesus Christ was in solidarity with and raised up all humankind, not because of his maleness but because of his humanity. To say otherwise, would imply that Jesus did not save women but only men.

Then, turning the coin over, Mr. Keane uses women's ordination to claim that I also deny the full divinity of Jesus. His two premises and conclusion run: Jesus established a male only priesthood; Jesus was divine; so, by favoring ordination for women "Groome is thereby implying that the male-only ministerial priesthood is not of divine origin" and Jesus was not fully divine (GB 101). Of course, I believe Mr. Keane's first premise is false (more below) and even if true, to favor the ordination of women surely does not deny the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Sacraments and Priesthood

Mr. Keane, agreeing with a Fr. Keefe, falsely accuses me of rejecting "the objectively and historically efficacious realism of Catholic sacramental worship" (GB 7). This is patently false and Mr. Keane should know it from reading Ch 3 of *Educating for Life*. There I lay out a very traditional and orthodox theology of the Catholic principle of sacramentality in general and of the seven sacraments in particular. I quote the CCC, "By the actions of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit the sacraments make present efficaciously the grace that they signify" (EFL 129): what could be more orthodox.

This time he uses my once favoring ordination of women to claim that I "attack the ministerial priesthood" (GB 108) and thus the whole sacramental system, so central to Catholic faith. He then argues that the priest "has the power to consecrate the Eucharist and forgive sins." The implication is that I don't agree--but I do. I accept, and never state otherwise, the teaching of Vatican II, that "priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are marked with a special character and are so configured to Christ the Priest that they can act in the person of Christ the Head" (*Decree on Priesthood*, # 2, Abbott 535).

Following his false claims regarding ministerial priesthood, Mr. Keane feels the need to argue for the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Eucharist (GB 114-115), again giving the impression that I deny this dogma of Catholic faith. This, I must confess, is one of the most personally hurtful instances of his calumny. When I receive the Eucharist, as I do every Sunday and frequently during the week, I deeply believe I am receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ; I prepare myself and make a thanksgiving that reflects this profession of faith. In a recently published essay I clearly favor "transubstantiation" as the most adequate explanation for "how" Jesus is present in the

Eucharist; while the outer appearances of the bread and wine remain, their "substance" is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ (see, "The Sacraments and More" in *Every Day Catholic*, St. Anthony's Messenger Press, June 2006)

Role of Experience in Catechesis

Throughout Ch 10 of GB, Mr. Keane claims that in catechetics I give priority to people's own "experience" over the truths of Catholic faith; this is false. As if arguing against my position, he quotes Pope John Paul II: "no one can arrive at the whole truth on the basis solely of some simple private experience" (GB 224). I agree; to claim otherwise would be, in my opinion, ridiculous. Note, too, that Cardinal Dulles' review of my work particularly appreciates my nuanced drawing upon "experience" in catechetics.

First, note that I don't use the word "experience" in my writings, favoring the more active term "praxis" instead. This being said, however, I refer to people's praxis--essentially, learning from life--as their own stories and visions but I designate "the Faith" as Christian Story and Vision, always with capitals. I use the lower and upper case precisely to make explicit what has priority and normativity.

Throughout his Ch 10 as well, Mr. Keane argues that "praxis" must be united with "truth" - as lived truth. But this is a central emphasis in all of my writings (see SF 18-21, CRE 63-66); Christian faith must be both believed and lived in daily life, discipleship means to follow Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14: 6). Note, too, that I never argue for "Story" as "a replacement term for 'scripture and tradition'" as Mr. Keane claims (GB 308). I favor "Story" because it encourages a narrative and thus engaging approach to teaching Christian faith. Further, in laying the theoretical foundations of a shared Christian praxis approach to religious education I found it helpful to use Story/Vision and story/vision precisely to signal that there is what Aquinas called conation--a real resonance--between "the faith handed down" and people's own lives in the world. Helping people to make the connection enables them to integrate the truths of Christian faith into their daily lives.

Guilt by Association and Implication

I have pointed out many instances of guilt by association or implication already. Here I will cite one more major instance and list four more briefly.

Regarding Abortion

As personally painful, Mr. Keane's implying that I favor abortion ranks alongside his false accusation that I deny the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Abortion is a moral issue on which I have remained most conservative all my life. I favor the repeal of Roe V Wade, the US Supreme Court decision of 1971 that gave America the most liberal abortion law in the world. I abhor the very notion of partial-birth abortion; a society that could even consider it has lost its moral compass.

Guilt by implication and association around abortion begins in the *Foreword* by Msgr. Michael Wrenn. Msgr. Wrenn begins by telling an indicting personal story against me from 32 years ago and of which I have no recollection; how he could have such a precise memory—down to claiming to quote me verbatim—is puzzling at least. Then, he points to an example in a Teachers Guide that accompanied an 8th Grade student text within the *God With Us* religion series (W. H. Sadlier, 1984). First of all, though I am the primary author of the student text, I had no part in writing the teachers guide; the latter was created by a team of authors. Apparently the guide refers to Fr. Robert Drinan SJ, former member of the US Congress, as an example of Christian citizenship. Msgr. Wrenn then dwells at length on how Fr. Drinan “consistently voted in favor of abortion legislation,” even supporting partial birth abortion (GB XXI). Whether this fairly represents Fr. Drinan’s position, I doubt. The false implication which Msgr. Wrenn draws is that I support abortion. This is like me claiming that someone is a close family relative because their cat passes through my yard.

Then, by constantly associating me with Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, while lamenting her “trenchant support for abortion on demand” (GB 4), Mr. Keane infers that I support abortion as well. He even claims that Dr. Schussler Fiorenza opposes adoption as an alternative to abortion (GB 212). I find this hard to believe, and having experienced Mr. Keane’s ability to manipulate and misrepresent my own work, he has likely done the same to hers. Be this as it may, I take the opposite position; I actively advocate adoption as an alternative to abortion, and my spouse and I are proud adoptive parents.

A similar though even more bizarre stretch to “guilt by association” is Mr. Keane’s pointing to a reference I make in passing to the work of Carol Gilligan (GB 271). It is true that I appreciate her critique of Lawrence Kohlberg’s work on moral development as too individualistic and her posing of a more relational/communal ethic. However, Mr. Keane cites that she supports abortion, with the implication that so do I. If this be true—as with all of his instances of guilt by association—then Mr. Keane’s own citing of Aristotle means that he supports slavery.

* Mr. Keane often implies that I’m opposed to something that I’m not opposed to at all. For example, he quotes from Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio* lamenting “a resurgence of fideism” (blind faith) that “fails to recognize the importance of rational knowledge and philosophical discourse for the understanding of faith, indeed for the very possibility of belief in God” (GB 23). Anyone with even the slightest familiarity with my writings would never say that I oppose rational discourse for the understanding of faith, unless, of course, she/he was intent on calumny.

* In Ch 6, Mr. Keane mounts a great argument to defend the images of Jesus as “priest, prophet, and king” as if I deny them. Note well that he says precious little about Jesus’ prophetic role and his preaching of God’s reign of justice and peace. Keane focuses on the first and last, using them to prove “the divine origin of the hierarchical nature of the Church” (GB 107)--as if I deny this. In my own writing I note that this threefold schema of the ministries of Jesus is nowhere explicitly stated in the NT; it was crafted first by the

Protestant Reformer, John Calvin (SF 300). This being said, I fully accept these images and have used them in many of my writings and presentations.

* In Ch 9, Mr. Keane launches into a critique of a number of ancient heresies like Gnosticism, Arianism, Manichaeism, etc. posturing that he is now defending the one true faith against similar heresies by myself. No fair minded and trained Catholic theologian has ever or would ever accuse me of such heresies; they would have no grounds.

* It appears that Mr. Keane will stoop to the lowest levels to discredit me and my work. For example, he cites a passing reference I make to the theory of Lawrence Kohlberg. Now, every scholar of religious education of the past 40 years has had to take seriously Kohlberg's work on the stages of moral development. I have always maintained caution toward the developmental paradigm (see *Christian Religious Education*, 73); yet, it can be a useful tool that helps us to "see" a little more clearly regarding the human journey. Nonetheless, Mr. Keane presents a brief reference by me to one aspect of Kohlberg's work as if I am totally Kohlbergian. Then he adds that Kohlberg's work is now "generally rejected" (footnotes a scholar and journal with which I am not familiar), and that "Kohlberg committed suicide by drowning himself in Boston Harbor in 1987" (GB 270). How scurrilous can one get!

For the record, while on a service mission to Belize in 1971, Lawrence Kohlberg contracted a rare tropical disease. Thereafter, he suffered from great physical pain and often from depression. Shortly before his untimely and tragic death, he had hospitalized himself for treatment. Later, his body was found in a marsh off Boston Harbor; however, there was no coroner's verdict whether it was an accident or suicide. The latter remains no more than a rumor, much disputed still among Larry's friends. Be it true or false—we will likely never know—Mr. Keane's reference in this context is unconscionable.

Mr. Keane's Own Positions and Concerns for *His* Orthodoxy

I have already noted many of Mr. Keane's ultra-conservative theological positions. So, all official Church documents are part of its "ordinary" *magisterium* and demand full and unquestioning assent; all dogmas are static and all of scripture is inerrant: to favor the ordination of women amounts to denying both the humanity and divinity of Jesus, and thus the Blessed Trinity; and so on. These positions are Mr. Keane's to take; indeed, he should hold them if they are his honest convictions in faith. The problem emerges when he uses them as *the* measure of orthodox Catholic faith and proclaims in "dissent" anyone who does not agree with his own extreme opinions.

Mr. Keane frequently takes positions with which no competent Catholic scholar—left, right, or center—would agree; the present state of scholarship would not warrant. For example, Mr. Keane says that the bishops today are the direct "successors of the Apostles" (GB 124). Contemporary Catholic scholarship would agree that in the present day Church, the bishops carry on the original mission of the Apostles. As Vatican II taught, "this sacred synod teaches that by divine institution bishops have succeeded to the place of the apostles as shepherds of the Church" (*Constitution on the Church*, #20,

Abbott 40; note the careful language). Scholars point out that the *episcopoi* of the first Christian communities had not yet developed into the role of bishop as it presently functions in the Church. Further, the *episcopoi* were clearly distinguished from the *apostoloi*, and the former were not always directly appointed by one of “the Twelve.” (For further reading see Francis A Sullivan, S.J., *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church*, New York: The Newman Press, 2001.)

Or again, Mr. Keane refers to the "seventy two" disciples of Lk 10:1-12 as if identical to priests today (GB 125). I don't know of any scholarship to support this. Then, beyond such personal opinions that are without scholarly warrant, Mr. Keane takes positions that actually may cross the line from orthodoxy into heresy.

For example, I fear that Mr. Keane may fall into *Monophysitism*, the ancient heresy which claimed that the human nature of Jesus was completely absorbed by his divinity; this was roundly condemned by the Council of Chalcedon (451). Having declared that “our Lord Jesus Christ” was “consubstantial (*homoousios*, literally “of the same substance”) with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity,” the Definition of Chalcedon went on to explain that while there were two natures united in this one person, the natures did not suspend or compromise each other. “The difference of the natures is not destroyed because of the union, but on the contrary, the character of each nature is preserved and comes together in one person . . . not divided or torn into two persons but one and the same Son and . . . Lord Jesus Christ.” So, Jesus was not just pretending to be a baby as he lay there in Bethlehem, nor was he pretending to hang and suffer on the cross; he was fully “there” in both as a real person. His divinity did not suspend his humanity.

By contrast, Mr. Keane writes that "Jesus is a **Divine Person** (bold in original) and explains: "Since Jesus' humanity was *totally assumed* by his divinity, the teaching of the Church is that from the first moment of existence he knew in his human mind that he was true God" (GB 249; emphasis added). He also writes: "everything Jesus did was done with the sovereign freedom and knowledge befitting the pre-existent Son of God" (GB 117). This would mean that Jesus--even as a baby in Bethlehem or playing with friends as a five year old in Nazareth--consciously knew of his divinity and possessed the fullness of divine wisdom about all eternal truths. This smacks of Monophysitism to me.

For A Shared Christian Praxis Approach

Since Mr. Keane has so mis-portrayed me, let me offer a brief summary of my efforts to forge an effective approach to Christian religious education and catechesis that I call “shared Christian praxis.” In so far as this approach has been widely employed in Catholic faith education, my defense here pertains to the contemporary renewal movement in catechesis as well. Though I have written lengthy books to describe this approach, I can state its rationale and summarize it quite briefly.

The Second Vatican Council lamented intensely the separation that Catholics make between their faith and their life. "This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age" (*Constitution on Church in Modern World*, #43, Abbott 243). I vividly remember reading this as a college student and taking it very much to heart; in many ways, my core commitment as a Catholic catechist over the years has been to bridge this gap and to help myself and others to integrate the two – life and Faith—into lived, living, and life-giving Christian faith.

I condense the whole approach of *shared Christian praxis* into the simple phrases of “bringing life to Faith, and Faith to life.” Here I use “life” and reflection on it as synonymous with the term praxis. By “Faith” (often with a capital) I mean the Christian Story and Vision, all that has been handed down to us through Scripture and Tradition and what this demands of and promises to our lives. Then more than “correlating” Faith and life, the “shared” word in the title calls for real integration, so that the Faith people profess and the lives they lead become, by God’s grace, integrated in their heads, hearts, and hands. The “learning outcome” of this approach is that Catholic Christian Faith might become the core commitment of their lives, the identity by which they live.

This foundational conviction—that catechetical education must enable people to integrate life and Faith into lived Faith—is echoed throughout the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997, hereafter GDC), the most recent expression of the official “mind” of the Catholic Church on the dynamics of educating in faith. I note parenthetically that the *Directory* uses the term “experience” whereas I prefer the stronger term “praxis.” Experience often implies something one “undergoes—as if quite passive. Praxis, on the other hand, captures all of life and reflection on it, both what we undergo and what we initiate, our reception and our agency, what comes our way and what we help to create. Likewise, the *GDC* uses the word “correlate” as what is needed between “experience” and “faith”; again, I don’t find this term strong enough—given its typical English connotation. We must encourage people to “integrate” the two, so that Christian faith defines who they are as disciples of Jesus within a community of disciples, permeating every nook and cranny of their lives in the world.

This being said, the *GDC* repeatedly calls for catechesis that encourages “a correlation and interaction between profound human experiences and the revealed message” (#153). For it is by “correlating faith and life” (#207) that “catechesis . . . bridges the gap between belief and life, between the Christian message and the cultural context” (#205). Religious educators must not only teach the Faith tradition but also engage people’s lives in the world because “experience is a necessary medium for exploring and assimilating the truths which constitute the objective content of Revelation” (#152). Thus, effective catechesis presents every aspect of Christian faith “to refer clearly to the fundamental experiences of people’s lives” (#133). To encourage “lived” faith, catechists must engage participants’ own lives as integral to the curriculum; “one must start with praxis to be able to arrive at praxis” (#245; one of my favorites).

This commitment of mine and of contemporary catechesis to engage people's praxis—reflection on life—in the pedagogy of Christian faith education reflects the Catholic principle of sacramentality. This is the deep Catholic conviction that God takes the initiative with divine presence and grace through the ordinary and everyday of our lives. The Spirit is ever moving in our hearts, communities, and world; we can truly “come to see God in all things” (Ignatius of Loyola) and we must respond through the ordinary and everyday as well. If such a methodology is “built into” the pedagogy of catechesis—constantly encouraging people to bring “their lives to Faith and their Faith to life”—then, by God's grace, “lived faith” would seem a little more likely. My hope for a shared Christian praxis approach is that participants will learn the *habitus* (Aquinas) of integrating their lives and their Faith, and do so by their own willed commitment rather than depending on an authority figure to “tell” them what to do. In this way, they may become agents of their Faith, taking responsibility for a “new evangelization” (JP II) of joyful and lived faith in every arena and on every level of their lives.

Then, by way of the formal content of catechesis, I emphasize that we must give people ready access to the “whole Story” of Catholic faith and, within the catechetical process, explicitly point to its Vision—the demand and promise that this Faith reveals to our lives. Further, we must do so with real persuasion and “according to the mode of the receivers.” In other words, we must ever “tell the Christian Story” and “propose its Vision” in such a way that people are likely to personally recognize the great truths and wisdom of this Faith and take it to heart with personal conviction.

Further, I describe the Catholic faith for which we educate as “total”—as engaging people's heads, hearts, and hands. Or, as the old Catechisms put it, God made us “to know, love, and serve” God in this life and to be happy forever in the next. Because this Faith has cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, its catechesis demands information, formation, and transformation—life-long Christian conversion. Indeed we must bring people to know well and with conviction the beliefs of their faith, but also help to form them in Christian identity, and beyond this, dispose them to live the values and virtues that constitute Catholic morality and ethics. Our catechesis must convince them that Jesus is indeed “the way, the truth, and the life,” in other words that discipleship to him within a community of disciples, the Church—functioning effectively as sacrament of God's reign in the world—is the surest path to true happiness in this life and eternal happiness in the next. This is the best hope I have for a shared Christian praxis approach.

By way of integrating these two—life and Faith—I reiterate that I've long proposed a pedagogy that encourages people, within a Christian community of conversation, to come to see for themselves the wisdom and truth of Christian faith, to embrace it with personal conviction, so that they might “make the Faith their own” and choose to live it in their lives. This appropriation and integration is precisely the intent of the fourth and fifth movements of the shared praxis approach (See my *Sharing Faith* Chapters 9 and 10, hereafter SF).

The dynamic of people appropriating Catholic faith to their lives and making it their own is essential if they are to take on Christian discipleship as their identity and with conviction. Among other things, it requires that they think for themselves with and within the Church about their faith and about their lives, that they notice, reflect, remember, imagine, make judgments, and decisions that integrate the two. The great Catholic theologian Bernard Lonergan, building upon the work of Thomas Aquinas, described “authentic human cognition” as demanding the cumulative activities of paying *attention*, coming to *understand*, making *judgments* about what is true or false, good or bad, and then reaching *decisions* as an agent of one’s own life and faith.

This reflects the cognitive dynamic of a shared Christian praxis approach to catechesis and religious education. It is eminently Catholic in both its origins and intentions. It can enable people to move beyond simply “knowing about” their Catholic faith to embracing its spiritual wisdom as their own; to move beyond knowing the “formulas” of orthodoxy to living as disciples of Jesus Christ (note: to “move beyond” does not mean to “leave behind”). Yet, the fundamentalist attitude of Mr. Keane toward both scripture and tradition would discourage such a cognitive dynamic and personal integration of life and Faith. Ironically, he thinks that a pedagogy which refuses people the opportunity to think about their lives and their Faith will make better Catholics out of them; in this day and age, he is greatly mistaken.

On this note, I challenge a false myth which Mr. Keane shares with ultra-conservatives in the Church that there was once a golden age when Catholics “knew” their faith well, whereas now they do not. It is true that pre-Vatican II Catholics were typically quite capable of repeating the questions and answers memorized from their national catechism. But that they “knew” the “core content” of their Faith better than today’s generation can be challenged for at least two reasons.

First, it presumes a very limited understanding of what it means “to know.” Essentially, the old catechism approach was intent that people “know about” their Faith in that they could repeat what was presented as its essential truths. But such knowing could be simply memorized—and typically was. Now, I’m convinced that there is a place for memorization in catechesis (see my essay “Learning by Heart,” *Church*, Vol. 7, No. 3, Fall, 1991, 38-40). However, if people are to take on Catholic faith as their personal identity and *modus operandi* in this post-modern world, they need much more than knowing about it and accepting it “on authority.” They need to “know” their Faith in the biblical sense of knowing—a total engagement of the whole person. As Lonergan would insist, this requires that they pay great attention to it, come to understand it well, move to personal conviction about it, and choose to live as Christians in their daily lives. This is the “knowing” of Catholic faith to which I am deeply committed; it calls for something akin to a shared Christian praxis approach to religious education and catechesis.

Second, the “penny catechism” version of the Faith that a previous generation of Catholics could readily recite was also a very limited one. It made every question/answer seem equally constitutive of Catholic faith, and its choice of topics for attention, at times

encouraged distortion. For example, the original Baltimore Catechism had eleven questions and answers on limbo and purgatory; meanwhile, it had no direct question/answer and only one oblique one on Easter. Note, too, that a 1960's survey of how well American Catholics knew their faith found that over 80% of them could not name the first book of the Bible and more than 70% could not say who preached the Sermon on the Mount. In other words, Catholics catechized through the question/answer catechisms could have a memorized knowledge of their faith as if everything was equally important, as if subsidiary teachings were central, and be almost biblically illiterate.

It certainly seems true that this current generation of young Catholics cannot repeat the central formulas of the Faith the way my generation could, like the definitions of the Blessed Trinity as one God and yet three divine persons, distinct and equal, or of the two natures--fully divine and fully human—in the one person of Jesus, or that the outer appearance of the bread and wine remain but their substance is changed into the body and blood of Christ. I wish they could recite such summaries, and likewise the central lists—like the ten commandments, the seven sacraments, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. A shared praxis approach is entirely consonant with such memorization; in fact, all of the K to 8 religion curricula I have authored and that are used widely throughout the US Catholic community have a “learn by heart” exercise at the end of each lesson—after students have been through the dynamics of attention, understanding, appropriating, and deciding. I'm confident that the rising generation of Catholics will be better able to “recite by heart” the key symbols of their faith than was the generation raised on the catechetical texts from 1965 to 1985.

On the other hand, this generation of Catholic youth and young adults seem to have a “performative” knowledge of faith that my generation did not have. Of last year's graduating seniors from Boston College, over 80% participated in some work of compassion or justice throughout their four years of university, and did so out of faith conviction. My generation could readily explain the difference between calumny and detraction but we had little awareness that the works of social justice are a mandate of Catholic faith.

This being said, in my writing of children's curricula—which has occupied at least an equal amount of my writing time over the past 25 years—I have been most careful to present “the whole Story/Vision” of Catholic faith in accessible language, with faithfulness and persuasion. I have crafted curricula through a scope and sequence that gives children direct access to the rich treasury of Catholic faith in ways that are age appropriate and yet complete. This has required a “spiraling curriculum” that repeats the core tenets of our faith in heightening levels according to students' developmental readiness.

In 25 years of writing children's curriculum, my publishers have never returned a manuscript for rewrite, nor any part of one, because their theological advisors had found heresy in it. I know that W. H. Sadlier, my primary curriculum publisher, will verify this upon request. Oh, I've spent almost as much time re-writing curricula as originating them, but the rewrite was needed because an exercise “didn't work” or an explanation

was “beyond grade level” or an example “wasn’t clear.” Never, in all the thousands of pages of curriculum I have written, has anyone ever had occasion to accuse me of heresy and of “dissent from defined dogma” (GB 96), a constant charge by Mr. Keane.

I also reiterate that the US Bishop's "Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism" has deemed my published children's texts "to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*." Mr. Keane clearly presumes himself to be a higher authority.

Regarding Women's Ordination

Sharing Faith was published in 1991. Since the publication of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* in 1994, I have not published my position as favoring the ordination of women. This being said, Mr. Keane claims that the denial of ordination to women is an infallible aspect of Catholic faith; in company with many respected Catholic theologians, of left, right, and center, I claim that this has not been taught as infallible, though *OS* states that the Church's “judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.” On the other hand, *OS* was not issued by the Pope as an *ex cathedra* statement, and as such cannot be considered infallible. However, should the Catholic Church ever explicitly state its position on women's ordination as infallible, and the conditions for infallibility are fulfilled, then of course, I will embrace its teaching, precisely because I accept and respect the teaching *magisterium* of my Church.

First off, I reject Mr. Keane' position that every instance of teaching by the Church's “ordinary” *magisterium* must be considered infallible; here again I'm in the company of the great majority of trained Catholic theologians and scholars. Note, too, that the “Profession of Faith” which the Church now requires of bishops and of theologians with an ecclesiastical mandate clearly lays out three levels of “faith profession” that is expected of such teaching officers. At the top stands the Creed - all must hold “with firm faith and profess everything” therein; next are truths that they must “firmly accept and hold”; the third are teachings to which the Church's teaching officers must “adhere with religious submission of will and intellect” (see the Apostolic Letter, *Ad Tuendam Fidem* issued by Pope John Paul II, May 18, 1998). The subtly here can be lost on the untrained eye, but reflecting the “hierarchy of truths” referred to by Vatican II and *The Catechism*, the Church recognizes that its different levels of official teaching expect different levels of assent.

Then, the position that the Church's negative decision on the ordination of women has been taught infallibly depends on a very problematic chain of teaching acts. Here I'm taking seriously the *Responsum ad Dubium* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of October 1995 which reiterated that “the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women” and that this is “to be held definitively” and “as belonging to the deposit of faith.”

But to claim that this verifies the infallibility of the Church's position as Mr. Keane does, is a mighty theological stretch – as follows: a) one must hold that a Roman

congregation which is not assisted by the charism of infallibility and therefore not protected from error, b) has correctly determined that the pope in the exercise of his ordinary papal magisterium which is also not protected from error, c) has determined that the whole college of bishops dispersed throughout the world are in agreement with this teaching and d) therefore must be accepted as *de fide*. All links in this chain of teaching acts deserve to be submitted to respectful inquiry and could be found wanting. In this light, Canon 749 §3 becomes enormously significant; it states, “no doctrine is understood to be infallibly defined unless it is clearly established as such.” I submit that the Church’s position on women’s ordination does not meet this essential criterion.

As reviewed earlier, Mr. Keane doesn’t simply reject my position that the Church needs further discussion on the ordination of women; he stretches this alleged heresy to mean that I deny my whole Catholic faith. "To call into question the divine origin of . . . male-only ministerial priesthood is equivalent to calling into question the integrity of the Catholic Church's claim to have been founded by Christ himself" (GB 107). Now there’s a stretch!

In Closing

I have claimed throughout—and proved beyond doubt—that Mr. Keane commits *calumny* against me. By the same token, have I committed *detraction* against him—that other sin against the Eight Commandment—by diminishing his good name, albeit by true claims. I believe I’m saved from this sin because I have what the CCC calls “objectively valid reasons” for this rebuttal to his character assassination; I must defend my good name against Mr. Keane’s false accusations.

At the same time, I hope and pray that Mr. Keane will try to undo the damage he has done, not just to me but to the whole movement of contemporary catechesis. I express this sentiment out of Christian charity. I remind him that, "They who have lied about their neighbor and seriously injured his character must repair the injury done as far as they are able, otherwise they will not be forgiven" (*Baltimore Catechism*, 1885 edition, 66). I certainly don’t want him to hazard his eternal welfare.

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* *The Award for Distinguished Service* from the National Conference of Catechetical Leaders, USA, 1997

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* *The Christian Culture Gold Medal Award*, Assumption University, Windsor, 2006

* *Sharing Faith* received the Catholic Press Association First Place Award, 1992

* In the past 30 years, he has made over 500 public presentations, including keynote addresses at all the major conferences of religious educators and pastoral ministers in North America

* Guest lecturer at many universities, including: Notre Dame, Villanova, Georgetown, Fordham, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Emory, Chicago, Claremont.

* Has lectured widely beyond the US, including Canada, Ireland, England, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Trinidad, Jamaica, Lithuania, Sweden, Peru, and Ecuador

His book publications include:

Horizons and Hopes: The Future of Religious Education, Editor with Harold Daly Horell, New York: Paulist Press, 2003

What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life, Harper: San Francisco, 2002

Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent. New York: Crossroads, 2000

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Primary author of *God With Us* religion curriculum (K to 8), Sadlier, 1984.

Primary author of *Coming to Faith* religion curriculum (K to 8), Sadlier, 1989.

Primary author of *New and Revised Edition of Coming to Faith* religion curriculum (K to 6), Sadler, 1995.

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