elucidating the meaning of a text in focus rather than going through a list of parallel Scripture texts.

e. Nature of catechesis and religious education

Buckley’s point merits attention in the actual use of the Scripture in catechesis and religious education. CCC’s reference to Scripture texts only in the footnotes has invariably affected the way some catechists and religion teachers use Scripture in their teaching. In their attempt to elucidate a Christian teaching or message they cite and refer to numerous Scripture texts without bothering to read them or without relating the texts to the Christian teaching or message. At times, students are left on their own to read and understand the text. The cited texts are like numbers to be memorized by the students who do not clearly understand what the texts are all about, their significance to the lesson in focus and to their concrete lives.

This approach to Scripture is like playing a numbers game—mere references to be read and memorized by the readers and hearers who do not clearly perceive what the texts are all about, neither their significance to the lesson in focus nor to the concrete lives of the readers and hearers. It is not really in touch with the readers and hearers of the Word. This approach to Scripture has made the Scripture text alien and distant from the lives of the students.

5. DOMINATED BY A NARROW READING OF MATTHEW

a. Criticism against CCC’s use of the Gospel of Matthew

Spohn was one of the scholars who recognized that the Universal Catechism’s biblical presentation seems devoid of contemporary scholarship. He cited the examples of the Universal Catechism’s use of Gal 6:2 and Matt 5:47 as texts taken out of their contexts.44 He suggested that the writers of Universal Catechism should reflect on and use the Gospel of Luke instead of the Gospel of Matthew. He exhorted the writers to read the Gospel of Luke and to find out where

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44Spohn, 192.
the Spirit has been leading the Church since the 1950s. The *Universal Catechism*, he observed, is dominated by a narrow reading of Matthew such as the fulfillment of the Law, Jesus as the new Moses, judgment, setting boundaries, and spelling out obligations. He noted that Luke’s Jesus is the prophet who heals outcasts, welcomes sinners to the table, and gladly receives women as members of his traveling companions, etc., and is concerned about the reality of oppression, inequality, racism, poverty, and sexism which characterize society today. Spohn’s recommendation implicitly stated that texts, from his perspective, which have little or no significance to the signs of the times, ought to be disregarded.\footnote{The exegetical studies in Matthew, especially the Sermon on the Mount, continue to be undiminished to the present day.}

**b. Nature of Scripture**

Scripture is the living Word of God. It is the norm of faith. Scripture cannot be altered by prevailing situations in the Church and in the world. Spohn’s recommendation is clearly manipulative and not viable in the catechism and in catechesis and religious education. No Scripture scholar, catechist or religious educator can make a whimsical recommendation of dropping a Scripture text, or any of the books of the Scriptures, much less one of the four canonical Gospels. Spohn’s approach to Scripture shows a narrow view of looking at Scripture. People associated with new and strange ideologies or vested interests have viewed Scripture in this manner. These people wish to make legitimate their personal or a certain group’s agenda. They insist in using or dropping Scripture text or book or Gospel in order to pursue their ideological agenda. This pursuit is contrary to the nature of authentic catechesis and religious education that calls for fidelity and respect for the integrity of the full Gospel message and the transmission of the Word of God to the present readers and hearers.

A more fundamental point in Spohn’s critique is the sharp difference in viewing Scripture between the Scripture scholars, on one hand, and the catechists and religious educators, on the other hand.
The Gospel of Matthew has traditionally been the gospel of the catechists and religious educators because of its teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). The Gospel of Matthew presents a compendium of Jesus’ teachings, which is a valuable source in catechesis and religious education. Hence, the recommendation of Spohn shows that certain Scripture scholars appear to lack an understanding of the work being done in catechesis and religious education.

6. Harmonization of the Gospels

a. Criticism against harmonization of the Gospels

Cunningham detected CCC’s attempt to harmonize the Gospels in its discussion on the life of Christ. He affirmed that this did “some justice” to the mysteries of Christ as unfolded in the liturgical year. Although he did not wish the Catechism to be fashioned according to the most recent findings of scholarship in Scripture, he desired that the Catechism be aware of the assured results of biblical research produced in the last half century.\(^46\)

In the same line, Johnson also maintained that in the interest of its own agenda, the Universal Catechism did violence to the Gospel’s christological variety and presented a false uniformity as historical fact. She judged that the Universal Catechism failed to distinguish between levels of Gospel tradition.\(^47\) While Johnson did not propose a particular christology which would need to be reinterpreted and rewritten, she recommended that the Catechism include the variety of christologies of the Gospels. Shannon further pointed out that “Gospel texts are harmonized and no distinction is made between Jesus’ sayings in the Four Gospels.”\(^48\)

\(^46\)Cunningham, 10.

\(^47\)Johnson, “Jesus Christ in the Catechism,” 207.

\(^48\)Shannon, 7.
b. Nature of a catechism

While these criticisms surely have value and must be taken seriously they share one common weakness. They fail to consider the nature of a catechism. A catechism is a compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding faith and morals. There is an apparent difficulty in presenting a particular christology in the catechism since christology is constantly reinterpreted and rewritten. Presenting one particular christology may well give an unbalanced picture and soon make the catechism outdated. A catechism, in order to be faithful to its nature as handing on the sound doctrine of the Church, must not be conditioned and fashioned according to the most recent findings of scholars. It must be able to withstand the test of time.\textsuperscript{49} In view of its nature, a catechism intends to give the sound doctrine of the Church and not the latest, untried, new approach to Scripture. The positive goal of a universal catechism is surely not the same as that of the Scripture experts who are concerned with the latest academic study.

Presenting the life of Jesus Christ patterned after the liturgical life of the Church accords well with the purpose of a catechism which aims to bring people into a loving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Drawing from the insights of the early Church into the person of Jesus Christ, acquired in contact with his revelation of himself, is foundational for the present-day relationship with him. The Church celebrates and recalls the events of Christ’s earthly life: his birth, baptism, preaching and healing, transfiguration, passion, death, and resurrection. When these events are celebrated in the Church’s liturgy they are “made present.” The words and deeds of Jesus become alive in the life of the Church.

Presenting the life of Christ from his conception to his resurrection in the catechism allows the present readers and hearers to en-

\textsuperscript{49}CCC has been criticized for presenting a high Christology that leaves little room for the humanity of Jesus Christ. CFC does not present a particular Christology. It presents Jesus Christ in terms of the creed, morals and sacrament. Hence, the three major parts of the CFC are Christ, Our Truth; Christ, Our Way, and Christ, Our Life.
counter Jesus Christ and enter into a loving communion with him. This is not necessarily reducing the Gospels to harmonization. The creed of the Catholic faith affirms the truth about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the presentation of the life of Christ drawn from the four Gospels is a legitimate approach in bringing people to encounter Jesus in their lives today.

**c. Nature of catechesis and religious education**

Jesus Christ is the center of catechesis and religious education. Catechesis and religious education aim to bring the readers and hearers into intimacy with Jesus Christ, their Lord and redeemer (CT 5). This aim is not to be confused or identified with being preoccupied with the historical reconstruction of the life of Jesus Christ which students can easily memorize but which has little to do with their own faith-life. For example, it is questionable whether a discussion on the particular differences in the christology of each Gospel tradition will be very effective in bringing elementary and even high school students into a loving knowledge of the Lord and Savior. Again, the students often simply memorize these facts which unfortunately have no direct consequences in their faith-life experiences today. Scripture exists for the faith-life of the readers and hearers. Hence, presenting the life of Jesus drawn from the four gospels invites the readers and hearers to understand the saving truth in Jesus Christ, to lead them to a loving relationship with him and with others and to a recognition of their complete trusting dependence on God expressed in their prayers and worship.

**RELATING SCRIPTURES TO THE PEOPLE OF TODAY**

A catechism is a compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding faith and morals that speaks explicitly from the perspective of the Catholic faith which it intends to propose and explain. Those who support the way CCC employs Scripture emphasize the nature and limited purpose of a catechism.

A catechism is an adult contemporary synthesis by the Catholic bishops… of what the Catholic Church has believed, practiced, and
taught in its two-thousand-year history continuing to the present. As such, it is not meant to be, nor can it be, an explicit treatment of the latest approaches, discoveries, theories, and theologies in the study of Scripture or of systematic and moral and historical theology.\footnote{Kurz and Miller, 481.}

CCC looks upon its readers and hearers as recipients of the treasures of the faith. This faith expressed in doctrines which have been preserved from the time of the apostles is expressed and explained to their readers and hearers in a way that they may better know and believe the doctrine of faith of the Catholic church. Scripture is used as a source and a confirmation of the doctrinal truths and ethical teachings held by the Church. For example, CCC 430-35 tries to elucidate the different titles of Jesus but ends up giving formulas which the readers and hearers have to memorize but hardly touch the lives of the present readers and hearers.

This approach to Scripture can at times lead to misunderstanding the true nature of Scripture. This is especially true of a problematic practice in catechesis and religious education that is preoccupied with handing down the traditional formula of the faith which students are expected to memorize. Thus, the communication of faith becomes distant and alien from the concrete social and cultural contexts and experiences of the readers and hearers. Such an approach in communicating the faith directly affects the way Scripture is used. Scripture has simply become a source of what the Church believes.

Ideally, the use of Scripture in catechesis and religious education must do more than present a basis for the traditional formulas of the faith. Scripture is not a list of dogmas. There is a need to relate the essentials of faith drawn from Scripture to the daily life experiences of the readers and hearers. Reading Scripture involves the readers' and hearers' legitimate insights, questions and problems that confront the present readers and hearers. This recognizes the need for an approach to reading Scripture which, while acknowledging that the meaning of the text is grounded in its historical and traditional con-
texts, nevertheless asserts that its meaning has to be linked to the present circumstances of the readers and hearers in order to bring about a fully adequate and fruitful reading of the text.

Hence, one criticism of CCC is that it “is not catechetical enough.” Catechesis should bring faith to maturity. This maturity involves the whole person: intellect, will, emotions, and habits. It includes conviction and action. CCC’s approach has been criticized as “too dry, too rational, and too cold” and hardly nourishes or deepens faith that leads to deeper love of God and others.

In the preface of CCC, John Paul II’s apostolic constitution Fidei Depositum describes the mission Christ confided to the Church with the quote, “guarding the deposit of faith” and explicitly calls the Church “not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us.” In the same vein, Vatican II explains the dynamic meaning of Sacred Tradition as a living reality in the Church from which she draws life and is continually developing under the action and assistance of the Holy Spirit (DV 8).

Both those who criticize and defend CCC’s teachings on and use of Scripture manifest a certain weakness because they ignore and overlook the fundamental principle in adequately evaluating a catechism from the pastoral point of view. These critics have to realize that Scripture exists precisely for the faith-life of the readers and hearers today. “What controls the use of Scripture in catechesis is not simply the nature of Scripture itself, but the philosophic/theological basis chosen for the [catechetical] work of communicating the faith.” The importance of the readers and hearers of the Word of God cannot be relegated to the sidelines. By receiving and living

51Buckley, 307.
out the meaning of the Word of God in their lives, the readers and hearers have to be actively and intimately involved in the reading of the Scripture text.

A catechism has to be governed by the reality principle which consists of three practical “rules of thumb.” The first rule states that all the terms, phrases and formulas used in communicating the faith point to, name and reveal a reality. Second, the words used in communicating the faith resonate in concrete ways in the historical, ongoing, personal, and actual cultural life of the faithful. And hence, third, involve constant renewing and adapting in order to “communicate the faith” accurately and effectively to today’s hearers of the Word. The effort in presenting the essentials of the Catholic faith has to be integrated, inculturated, and presented in a community-forming manner.

This study aims to present an effective way of communicating the Word of God in catechesis and religious education. Based on an analysis of the way CCC taught and employed Scripture, it is clear that CCC is not an adequate point of reference and source for presenting an effective way of reading Scripture in catechesis and religious education. It often loses touch with its readers and hearers, or simply disregards any consideration of the people it intends to serve and address. This may be the unavoidable weakness of a universal catechism for the whole Church—the first in four hundred years. The result is a catechism that does not show awareness of the human experiences plaguing people today, such as poverty, oppression, materialism, individualism, pluralism, etc. CCC falls short in addressing the concrete needs and problems of the people today.

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55 Ibid., 7.
III. Basic Framework of Reading Scripture in Catechesis and Religious Education

The basic aim of catechesis and religious education is maturing in faith, which means to "put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity" (CT 5). The communication of the essentials of faith and use of Scripture have to take into account the faith-life experiences of the people. The two intrinsically connected realities in the use of Scripture in catechesis and religious education are the Scripture text and the contemporary life of the readers or hearers.

Hence, the reading of Scripture is not simply for the purpose of making the readers and hearers understand the traditional formulas of faith drawn from Scripture outside of any critical appreciation of how these formulas are appropriated and lived out in their lives today. There is a need to bridge the gap between what the text meant (at the time it was written) and what it means to the life of the readers and hearers today. An approach to reading and understanding the living Word of God has to foster a dialogue between the text and the context of its contemporary readers and hearers. The method of correlation as a way of reading Scripture in catechesis and religious education can be pastorally effective and valid. This approach requires a careful and faithful reading of the Scripture text. What the text meant and what it now means cannot be wholly diverse. This

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57 The interpretation of the contemporary meaning of Scripture begins with a sound determination of the literal sense of the text which is uncovered not solely through the scientific method. See Brian E. Daley, "Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms," *Communio* 29 (Spring 2002) 185-216. The nature of Scripture itself is the living Word of God, written from Faith, about Faith, toward faith. The literal sense can no longer be bound exclusively to the intention of the original
involves recognition of the sacramental presence of God in words and events, and the transforming power of the words when they are received in faith. Hence, the reading of the Sacred Scripture is a human and divine encounter.

The Scripture text has practical relevance to the lives of people today. The reading of Scripture necessitates the personal involvement of readers and hearers since it is they who are involved in seeking the truth in Scripture and performing this truth in their lives. This dialogue between the Scripture text and the present circumstances of the readers and hearers makes the text more meaningful in their lives and the Church today. Such an approach to Scripture underscores the ultimate concern of catechesis and religious education—the performance and actualization of Scripture in the lives of the readers and hearers. These bring new insights and new depths of meaning into their day-to-day experiences, intimacy with the divine and compassion for others.

This approach to Scripture—which calls for an openness to the “Spirit” of God who continues to be active and present in the Scripture text—demands creative fidelity. Implied in this approach is faithfulness to the divine utterance in view of revelation, and creativity in allowing the text to come alive in the present circumstances of the readers and hearers. The readers and hearers appreciate and exploit the creative possibilities of the truth contained in the text

human authors and their context, but carries an excess of meaning. The Pontifical Biblical Commission defines the spiritual sense as the “meaning expressed by the biblical texts when read, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the context of the paschal mystery of Christ and of the new life which flows from it.” Pontifical Biblical Commission, 124-29. The spiritual sense is the deeper meaning intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, that is seen to exist in the words of Scripture when they are studied in the light of further revelation or of development in the understanding of revelation.

and how they live out this loving truth in their individual lives and in the life of the Church. By “performing” the text in their concrete human experiences, readers and hearers experience the Word of God not as empty talk, but something that builds up, nourishes and gives sense and meaning to their lives.

This approach rejects a singular method of reading and interpretation that can exhaust the meaning of the Scripture text. “This continuing biblical engagement of reader/hearers with God... uncovers meaning beyond that envisioned by the human author in his local and limited circumstances.”59 This approach provides an opportunity for people to truly hear the Good News as a living and active word (Heb 4:12) and to continue to find, seek, and understand the truth of God’s word and ways in their lives today.

59Brown, 71:30.