

FRAMING A CATHOLIC SOCIOLOGY FOR TODAY'S
COLLEGE STUDENTS: HISTORICAL LESSONS AND
QUESTIONS FROM FURFEY, ROSS, AND MURRAY
PART II

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This is Part II of a continuing exploration of how to more effectively define and teach a Catholic sociology to today's college students. In Part I, which appeared in the November 2004 issue of this journal, I examined how a specifically Catholic sociology was framed between about 1939 and 1970 in a number of widely used, explicitly Catholic, college-level sociology texts by three key authors of that era: Fr. Paul Hanly Furfey, Dr. Eva Ross, and Fr. Raymond Murray. They were part of a larger movement to shape college curricula and teaching advocated by the American Catholic Sociological Society. These authors developed textbooks that functioned as works of legitimation, works of foundation, and/or works of instruction. Part I dealt with the first two types; in this part I explore the last type, suggest some lessons we may learn from the pioneers' efforts, and pose some crucial questions to consider today if we are to more successfully develop Catholic college-level sociology programs.

This is the second installment of a continuing exploration of how to more effectively define and teach a Catholic sociology to today's college students. In Part I, I examined how the idea of Catholic sociology was framed in the early days of this academic effort in the United States through the work of the Association of Catholic Social Scientists, which existed from 1938 to 1970. I analyzed some significant pedagogical and conceptual issues set forth in a number of widely used, explicitly Catholic, college-level sociology texts from the 1930s and forward by three key authors of that era: Fr. Paul Hanly Furfey, Dr. Eva Ross, and Fr. Raymond Murray. I argued that these authors contributed significantly to a strong *Catholic sociology teaching movement* in this country, which did successfully influence two generations of college students, and likewise attempted to challenge—though unsuccessfully—the secular direction of the broader field of sociology.

This teaching movement did articulate a distinctive pedagogy for a Catholic sociological imagination, through three main types of materials. In Part I, I analyzed two of the ideal types of pedagogical books I saw evidence of: works of legitimation and works of foundation. Here in Part II, I examine the *third* type of pedagogical materials, what I call works of instruction: that is, typically formatted introductory textbooks as well as monographs that would be seen as usable in the classroom. Then I develop some implications of the legacy of mid-20th century Catholic sociological pedagogy for our own era, and propose some questions we need to address to improve our ability to offer a sociology faithful to the teachings of the Church in today's college classrooms. I draw some lessons for our teaching and curriculum development from their long-running efforts to set forth what Catholic sociology is and how to teach it, and what they decided to include in their textbooks. I end by posing some questions we need to consider more fully if we are to effectively advocate for a Catholic social science in our undergraduate programs today.

Works of Instruction

The last ideal type of text for our consideration consists of works meant primarily for students in classrooms: this includes both books designed as typical classroom texts for beginners, and also, I think, books of popular sociology that are meant for a wider audience but could easily find their way into classrooms as monographs in the tradition of Mills or Berger or Babbie or Gans or Kozol.

Once again, ACSS writers were extremely prolific textbook and monograph writers, as we have seen at certain points in our analysis so far. They wrote materials for three contexts. The first was social studies and civics courses in Catholic high schools; the goal here was to modernize and deepen the high school curriculum in Catholic social teaching and show how Catholic concepts should be applied to living as a good citizen in American society. These are books designed to enhance Catholic youth's cultural assimilation without losing the roots of Faith, to bridge the divide between Catholic and American culture.

The second context was introductory courses in sociology and social problems at Catholic colleges and universities, where the goal was to increase the scientific and empirical rigor of social analysis and get past the limitations of having dealt with societal issues too exclusively within philosophy and theology in the curriculum. The third context was introductory texts for essentially any college students anywhere, including secular programs, that nevertheless included Catholic material.

High School Materials

Since this literature review is primarily about materials to support college teaching, I will consider this set only briefly—though it was really fun to examine them! Ross in particular wrote for the scholastic audience and over several decades to boot. For example, she published *Rudiments of Sociology* in 1934; her *Sociology and Social Problems* first came out in 1948 but was regularly reprinted, and the revised edition was in 1960—relatively late for this material. Another was a civics text written with Kilzer in 1944 and revised in 1952 called *American Democracy: Its Problems and Its Achievements*. Both were published by Bruce and carried the *Imprimatur* and *Nihil Obstat*. Another real classic was Sr. Mary Consilia O’Brien’s 1939 *Catholic Sociology: For Upper Grades and Study Clubs*, which I add in here because it was so popular, though I do not know if Sr. Mary was part of ACSS.

Several key features of these works really stand out and have echoes in the college-level materials. First, they are completely organized around key concepts in Catholic social thought, first and foremost the idea that social organization is derived from natural law given by God, to which we add our own positive laws in various ways. Next, the whole purpose of social life is to provide the necessary organization for individuals to exercise their free will in concert with others to realize a sound moral way of life in accordance with the commandments. Specific social problems are addressed through the lens of Catholic social teaching, whose major documents—such as the social encyclicals, in particular *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*—are routinely cited as the basis for analyzing current events. Often the texts proceed by presenting essentially catechetical points which completely merge sociological information with Catholic moral teaching. For example, in her *Rudiments* text Ross reviews types of family structures in human history (monogamy, polyandry, polygyny, etc.); then she writes in bold print “29. God originally intended the family to be monogamous” and proceeds to explain this position using theology (p. 40).

The texts also provide explicit lists of postulates or assumptions about the point of view the book contains—essentially the same lists mentioned earlier in discussing Furfey’s *Scope and Methods* text but in high school level vocabulary. They specify man and society as created by God, the centrality of free will, rights and duties men have because of their membership in God’s created order, and the parallel force of both physical and moral laws in shaping human behavior. Both Ross and O’Brien open their textbooks with such frameworks, then add

extensive appendices at the end in which these are developed in detail for further study.

The texts are replete with pictures of popes, saints, and group photos of Catholic social groups at work in their locales; Catholic social service organizations like the emerging welfare conferences and social action offices are offered as examples of key social structures complementary to those of the state and nation. In other words, what students living in typical Catholic parishes saw on a routine basis is reflected back to them as evidence of a specific social dynamic in the larger social order.

A model of good citizenship is explained, where Catholics are identified as part of the obvious and ongoing Christian heritage of the nation. The model is usually presented through stories about making personal choices or participating in group life—what happens to young Tim or Judy down the line if they fail to avoid sin and temptation now; or how Frank and Jim or Mary and Rosa benefit from the merits of scouting and Catholic youth groups. The model delineates responsibilities good Catholics have to be effective citizens, like voicing one's views, staying up on current events, voting, being on the lookout for un-American and unhealthy behavior both spiritual and social, and caring about the less fortunate. The poor must be aided with all possible effort: the capitalist economy is basically a good thing insofar as it advocates private property and acknowledges human freedom as the centerpiece of economic life, but it creates excesses of wealth disparity that Catholics are obliged to challenge. They can only do so out of a thorough knowledge of current events based on a close familiarity with the founding American documents, like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, which routinely appear in appendices in these civics texts, along with other specifically Catholic materials such as a summary of Catholic social teaching principles from the Bishops, or an interesting preliminary draft of the UN Declaration of Human Rights which happened to be written by the National Catholic Welfare Conference in 1947 (to show how the Church was engaged in the urgent issues of the day).

On the dark horizon is totalitarianism of the fascist and/or communist sort, described in satanic terms. These are today's expressions of pure evil, the gravest contemporary enemies of both the Church and democracy whose interests are defined as almost identical, at least in terms of social justice questions. There are large sections devoted to the menace of totalitarian regimes and how American-style community life, linked to parish life, is a guarantee against it happening here. Both America and the Church have a global responsibility, one secular and the other spiritual, but complementary.

The family is explored as the absolute centerpiece institution of society, and while there is debate in various texts about such questions as gender patterns in work (given the wartime Rosie the Riveter experience and rising female workforce participation), the monogamous nuclear family is defined as the building block of healthy social life that provides the optimal socialization process for good citizens and good Catholics. Rising divorce rates and declining fertility rates across the industrialized world are usually documented as indicators of an increasing social disorganization that the Church is trying to rectify through its teaching and social support. Another key theme is that we should honor and respect cultural diversities, as long as we realize that beneath diverse appearances all humans share a common identity as children of God. So the societal model today's Catholic social teaching still employs to deal with cultural relativism is already quite ably set out half a century ago.

In summary, these are texts to help students become better "American Christians," as one of Ross's prefaces stated, to appreciate this country for its positives and face its problems informed by the facts sociology can provide and that the Church herself has been involved in addressing. The texts are dated insofar as they sometimes employ erroneous information about the physical origins of mental illness and the like: they all share the rather limiting "social pathology" approach to social problems which will also be a main feature of the college texts discussed below. And there is a shift in tone as one compares the WWII works, where Nazism is the exemplar evil, through the cold war years where it becomes the Soviet Union and Red China. But they hold up in another fascinating sense because they anticipate today's struggles: they come out strong against then-current spectres of eugenics and authoritarian control of "inferior races," abortion and birth control, divorce and adultery. Though we today would be more inclined to argue for further mainstreaming, they call for understanding and compassion and better care for the physically and mentally handicapped (sometimes tagged with period labels such as the "feeble" or "defectives"), and deplore euthanasia. They offer Catholicism as a completely plausible framework for studying civics and encompassing it in a larger integrating cultural system of family and community life aimed at eternal things. More than a source of nostalgia, these texts represent a high achievement of ACSS members in helping to socialize two whole generations of youth in the growing Catholic school system.

Texts for Catholic College Classrooms

Ross and Murray are major authors in this category. Since both are writing for students in Catholic institutions they can be fairly explicit about their use of Catholic framing, yet they also seek to again bridge the cultural gap that existed between the somewhat ghettoized realm of Catholic higher education and its more socially powerful secular counterpart. Rather like the works of legitimation, they endeavor to introduce Catholic college students to the full range of contemporary social science, but framed in light of a broader critique of the behaviorist positivism of the era built on Catholic principles. The learning outcome is thus to enable students to participate in all social scientific discourse but from a particular critical standpoint.

The college texts I examined for this section change over time, especially those of Ross. I mentioned earlier in this paper that she changed her position somewhat over the years about how to relate Catholicism and sociology in actual discourse. In the 1930s through early 1950s she strongly advocated Catholic sociology as a totally integrated domain of analysis and interpretation: one couldn't really address social issues as a researcher without bringing in specific Catholic postulates, and in any case should not insofar as the Catholic intellectual project had an obligatory moral force. Toward the end of her career in the late 1950s she became more doubtful about the merits of advocating integration, and explained Catholicism and sociology as two complementary but distinct aspects of a thinker's armamentarium: one drew on one's Catholic principles when making interpretation. Despite such shifts in mood and position over time, it is still striking to me how texts from across this whole period have such a distinctly Catholic character compared to any secular work. And further, *from the point of view of the student as learner*, their objective was still to instill in students the notion that as educated citizens they should strive to use their Catholic perspective in studying both the field and its object, society, no matter how they detailed the epistemological issues regarding objectivity in empirical research.

In 1932 The Bruce Company published Ross' *A Survey of Sociology*, in 1939 her *Fundamental Sociology* (which went through several printings through the end of WWII), and in 1958 her *Basic Sociology*. While the first two did carry the *Imprimatur* and *Nihil Obstat*, the last did not. The first two describe their goal as teaching a fully Catholic sociology; the last includes information about Catholic sociological ideas but indicates them as just one possible position the reader should examine in surveying the state of the discipline. I take these two facts as evidence of Ross' personal shift in position, but also

perhaps the gradual victory of the more secularized version of ACSS's dominant perspective that was leading toward its eventual abolition as an organization. I also think her last textbook, though published by Bruce, was going for a somewhat wider audience than just Catholic college students.

In any case, the key to Ross's earlier integrated Catholic sociology, the position shared by Murray and Furfey in most of their work, is a firm rejection of a view of the field as strictly empirical data collection and analysis using low-level hypotheses. Like many similar texts, Ross notes the impact of the ex-Catholic Comte's anti-religious evolutionism on separating sociology from religious thought, which together with Darwinism and political liberalism fostered a very lame, one-sided system for analyzing society. Catholic sociology is a necessary corrective. In her *Fundamental Sociology* she expressed this typical view very clearly:

It is unfortunate that many sociologists... have erected their theories upon the idea that man is his own master; that there is no God; that there are no norms of conduct (no rules of justice and charity) and no eternal verities which man must take into account; that therefore there are no duties toward God or to man—many of them hold that society can decide at any epoch what is right and desirable so that we are merely subject to chance laws; that there is no fundamental meaning in life, but the fittest must survive; that man has within himself all the means necessary to perfect himself; that the exaltation of State or race are important, rather than God and the attainment of happiness in the future life: Levy-Bruhl has even pronounced that sociology will supplant religion (p. 134).

The cure for this absurd perspective is a sociology that is more than just a reporting science: it is an interpretive science that, in the "wide view" tradition we have discussed, definitely includes social philosophy:

The Catholic sociologist, therefore, differs from the majority of the sociologists whose work we outlined in the last chapter, chiefly in that his theory is not based on working hypotheses alone; but he integrates his inductive work with a social philosophy based on certain postulates, and thus he can interpret social facts in the light of reason, and produce a well-rounded theory to use in guiding societal organization (p. 135).

Ross then draws out her list of postulates—which are specifically titled “The Postulates of Sociology” and not postulates of social philosophy:

The Catholic sociologist, therefore, does not regard sociology in the narrow positivistic sense, and in his work presupposes the following, which he considers to be satisfactorily proved by philosophy, by historical events, by revelation, and in other ways: That God exists, who is the Creator of all things, man included. That Christ, the Son of God, established the Church to which He gave divine authority to guide men in matters related to their supernatural destiny. That man has a spiritual soul which is immortal; hence he has an eternal destiny. That man is endowed with a free will. That man is not only subject to physical (necessary) laws, but also to the moral law. That man is a social being, and has certain rights and duties which are common to all mankind (pp. 135-6).

The similarity to other lists cited by Furfey in his theory text, and also the high school materials, is quite evident, and is typical of this approach to setting context for Catholic sociology in Catholic college classrooms. Then Ross lists what some of the “rights” are that must be defended in any social order—rights which in effect form a set of ethical criteria for evaluating social organization. Here is what she includes: the right to Life, the right to Liberty, the right to Truth, the right to Live Socially (freedom of association), the right to Authority (a system of governance and order), the right to Property, and the right to Justice (stated in terms of Pius XI’s encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*). The main duties of the individual are toward God, toward himself, and toward his fellow men. There follows a general explanation of the grounds for such rights and duties in Catholic social theory, which is then developed in detail in later chapters dealing with specific topics like family structure, the nature of religion, international relations, or labor and industrial social questions.

To give one example, take the pressing question at the time about how to eliminate poverty. A debate was occurring in the human sciences about whether poverty was caused by a mental or physical “trait”—potentially inheritable and thus potentially extinguishable—called “pauperism.” Ross reviewed much of the physiological and genetic research and argumentation on the question—recall the critical *foundation* strategy of the pedagogy—and stacked it up against the more sociological analysis of poverty as a matter of what we would today call opportunity structure: healthy surroundings, available

resources, social and economic advantages of the surrounding group (pp. 520ff). She came down clearly on the latter explanation rejecting the eugenic claim of the possibility of breeding out pauperism through sterilization, and then affirming the sociological finding with an excursus into the writings of Pius XI on the evils of the eugenic approach. Sociology affirms and validates the Catholic social philosophy in actual social experience: they go hand in hand.

Fr. Raymond Murray also wrote a basic sociology text called *Introductory Sociology*, first published in 1935 by a mainstream press, F. S. Crofts, and reprinted through several editions until at least 1946. This too was meant primarily for Catholic students, and while its content quite naturally reflected the more anthropological interests of Murray whose studies were in that field—more on human origins than Ross, more on pre-industrial societies, and more on intercultural relations issues like accommodation and assimilation—it nevertheless follows the general intellectual pattern illustrated by Ross texts. I might add one fascinating point about how he set context: in his Preface, Murray argues for the legitimacy of his material and perspective with respect to mainstream sociology in an unusually explicit way, that sheds light on the efforts ACSS was making to connect its pedagogical approach to the discipline and simultaneously respond to the needs of Catholic institutions:

Even though there exist many splendid general texts on introductory sociology and several Catholic sociological treatises, many teachers believe there is still a long-felt need for a standard college text which, while clinging to basic Catholic ethical teachings, will follow the scheme of the introductory course as it is usually given in most American colleges. This book attempts to present these fundamental sociological facts and concepts in a Catholic moral setting. Except perhaps for a brief treatment of social problems, the outline of the introductory course recommended by the American Sociological Society in 1933 has been followed rather closely. Variations from this outline have been dictated chiefly in the interests of students in smaller colleges who, while taking courses in history, politics, economics, psychology, ethics, and religion, often do not yet enjoy a wide choice of sociology courses (p.v).

Next, Murray's 1938 *Social Problems*, written with his Notre Dame colleague Frank Flynn, is a great example of a text for the

Catholic college social problems course—then sometimes called “social pathology”—another perennial teaching responsibility just like today. Murray and Flynn’s text also carried the *Imprimatur* and *Nihil Obstat*, and like the introductory sociology texts, began with a context-setting chapter about the need to study social problems from a specifically Catholic point of view.

This text has a rather colorful history, in that its reception by secular sociology was archetypal of the big chill that had encouraged the formation of the ACSS in the first place. Tolson reports that in 1939 the *American Journal of Sociology* published a review of Murray and Flynn’s text: the reviewer, a Dr. Reuter from Iowa State, referred to the book as “an effort to perpetuate archaic beliefs and medieval patterns of thought.”¹ ACSS members were not amused, and this episode set off somewhat of a firestorm—with Fr. Furfey in the middle arguing for a formal protest to the ASS—about whether secularists were truly capable of reviewing Catholic sociological material objectively and whether Catholic sociologists should be willing to place their work before any audience, even if definitely unfriendly. As usual, the ACSS failed to resolve this dispute in any clear or systematic way.

Anyhow, like today a definitional problem existed about what a “social problem” is; they cite a standard sociological definition based on the origins of the focal issue in social organization, the departure of the relevant behavior pattern from the social standards of the particular group, the involvement of many people, and the existence of a perceived need to fix it. Murray and Flynn then take apart the “scientific attitude” which pretends one can divorce the analysis of social problems from questions of values in general and debunk materialist value-neutrality. They then set out their fundamental framework for social problems analysis and evaluation, organized by sections on “Sociology in Catholic Colleges,” “Catholic Socioeconomic Principles,” “Catholic Action,” and “the Christian Sociologists” (pp.9ff.). I liked the forceful way they expressed what makes a Catholic approach distinctive: they argue that while sociology as a discipline may once have had some moral foundation or core in basically Protestant social ethics, even that has either broken up into smaller competing ideologies or been lost as secularism came to dominate the field. Catholic sociology holds out against and counterposes itself to this mainstream trend:

Basically, the contrast between sociology as it is taught in Catholic and in most secular schools is nothing more than the contrast between Catholic and secular education in general. [Would that this were so today! My remark.] Catholic

education is very much concerned with the development of a consciousness of spiritual values and a respect for fixed ethical principles, along with the imparting of traditional secular knowledge. Catholic sociology insists, therefore, that along with various approaches to sociology—psychological, cultural, ecological, methodological, and philosophical—sound spiritual and ethical values must be interwoven also. Secular education tends to overemphasize working hypotheses and experimental procedure, since it recognizes no unchanging spiritual or ethical principles; Catholic education insists on the retention of spiritual values and ethical principles in the use of hypotheses and in the evaluation of the results of experimentation. So closely are spiritual and ethical values interwoven with the fabric of social problems that as a matter of fact no sociologists can avoid them altogether, even though many secular sociologists claim to do so. In practice such values must be faced and either affirmed or denied (p10).”

Flynn and Murray then suggest that Catholic sociologists are at least more frank and up-front about their perspective than some vaguely Christian sociologists like Emory Bogardus, and can be seen as a counterpoint to the outright atheistic views of Harry Elmer Barnes, whose perspectives tend to dominate the profession.

Texts for College Classrooms Anywhere, Catholic and Secular

Let me focus on two examples of such works: Murray’s 1950 *Sociology for a Democratic Society*, and *Social Problems and Social Action* published in 1958 by Mary Elizabeth Walsh and Paul Hanly Furfey. Both were published by mainstream mass market textbook companies, Appleton-Century-Crofts and Prentice-Hall respectively. They each reflect the major interests of their authors: for Murray it is human origins and the relationship between anthropological and sociological areas of study; for Walsh and Murray it is fostering personalist social activism to address social structures of sin.

These texts both seem to reflect an approach somewhere between the explicit advocacy of Catholicism presented in the works just discussed, and the more oblique or indirect style of the works of legitimation examined earlier; yet they venture into the book market at perhaps slightly different points in that middle zone. Murray’s book, for example, does not carry the *Imprimatur* or *Nihil Obstat* and his clerical status is not indicated on the title pages. In Walsh and Furfey’s text we do see the *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur*, but Furfey’s priest title is not indicated.

Murray's goal is to present his particular sort of value-based, "democratic sociology" as a necessary part of the intellectual apparatus Americans need to defend themselves from the insidious materialism of communism. Rather than enter the cold war fray in explicitly Catholic terms, he takes the approach of locating meaningful sociology in the general cultural foundation of our society: its religious heritage. His Preface starkly warns that the Soviet Union has risen over the recent decades to challenge Western society, and their success may be in some part attributed to our failure to stand up strongly for our foundational principles as a democracy. Murray then cites a piece by John Foster Dulles in *Presbyterian Life* that observes how communism has detected a "moral vacuum" in the West. It exploits the weakness of that vacuum, insinuating a carefully designed message into our consciousness that communism is in truth no more than a benevolent defense of great moral principles and social justice, principles we have lost sight of in our mad rush toward personal prosperity. For Dulles and then Murray, this is a great lie to be rooted out, and a sturdier grasp of the basis of our own truer social principles must be developed. Murray frames his "democratic sociology" as part of that necessary effort: it will be based upon an explicitly natural law view of rights and responsibilities drawn clearly from what Murray calls "the Jewish-Christian faith" and the "Judaean-Christian tradition upon which our democracy is founded" (p. vii).

One particularly striking argument Murray developed is that Comtean, positivistic sociology is more than intellectually incorrect: it is in fact part of our internal cultural susceptibility to communist rhetoric. At this crucial time in our cultural history positivists have led many to believe that

no one can be certain of any suprasensible truth, thereby denying the validity of both the philosophical and religious principles upon which our government was founded. Such an approach, we hold, is undemocratic. The writer believes that modern sociology has weakened its own position by attempting to copy blindly the methods of the physical sciences. He grants that value-judgments involving philosophy and religion may be ignored in many of the narrower phases of sociological research. This is not possible, however, in a textbook such as this which deals with the more general aspects of sociology. The sociologist, after all, has obligations as educator and citizen... Sociology, dealing with man and human society, cannot be divorced completely from

philosophy. Even when a positivistic-naturalistic approach is followed and man is considered a mere animal, materialism is thereby adopted as its philosophy.

Sociology for a Democratic Society is an attempt to present sociology within the framework of our basic Judaeo-Christian tradition. Since it is recognized that not even Christians are in agreement on some values which are associated with sociology, room is left for denominational differences. The writer believes that in the present crisis at least a sociology equated to a common denominator made up of the basic or core values underlying America's democratic tradition will have considerable appeal (pp.viii-ix).

Murray thus establishes a *political* basis for employing Catholic and other Christian social principles as his overarching organizers: principles like subsidiarity in his analysis of levels of social organization, the key role of traditional religious beliefs in countering the already declining post-war birth rates and stabilizing the rapidly increasing divorce rate, and much skepticism toward models of social behavior that stress psychological traits or biological mechanisms. He is reminding readers, as they survey specific data and theories from sociology and other disciplines dealing with human behavior such as psychology and anthropology, that they are never far from foundational values and beliefs rooted in a specific religious heritage, and that our society simply cannot be understood or interpreted without that foundation. Indeed its very future as a system, now in deadly conflict with the communist menace, depends on developing our understanding of social life in this way.

Mary Elizabeth Walsh and Fr. Paul Hanly Furfey also developed a text with cross-over market potential: it was Catholic, to be sure, but meant to possibly resonate further. Prentice-Hall was and is, after all, not a religious publisher in any sense and was already a major contributor of college resources across the country in the late 1950s. Like Murray's book, their *Social Problems and Social Action* was also meant to position Catholic thinking as a necessary tool for the future survival of American society. But unlike Murray they did not emphasize sociology as a cold war ideological weapon against an external enemy making internal inroads. Instead Walsh and Furfey focused on using sociology to penetrate the rot of American culture already within, problems we already had as a society because of our lack of charity, our individualism, and our excessive tolerance for emerging social

structures of evil linked to unbridled capitalism. They anticipate the radical sociology of the later 1960s but their approach to solving societal problems lay less in the direction of the Marxism of the New Left and more in the direction of the radical Catholic action of the Jocistes and Catholic Workers. Despite this difference from Murray's book, both texts worked to lay the basis for a common cultural front, a source of social cohesion for students as they confronted both external and internal threats to social stability.

It makes sense that they would broach these arguments to a larger college public via a social problems text, where the inevitable debate about the role of values in determining both what constitutes a social problem and how one ought to solve it is paramount. They reject the rather piecemeal approach of earlier texts—the one problem after another model—and instead present problems as all connected together via the culture and political economy. Their standards for defining social problems reject the statistical model of public opinion and instead rely on the “deviation from the social ideal,” analyses of which depend on social ethics. But since there are many schools of social ethics even saying this is not enough: Walsh and Furfey go down to the level of “the natural law as the criterion of the social ideal.” But of course views of the natural law vary over time also. It has come and gone and returned again in popularity, mores change, and perceptions of what is fundamental to social life have changed. But, Walsh and Furfey reply, it is only a surface that changes, a surface of perception that depends on social conditions. For example, disease is in fact a problem but in earlier times was perceived as an individual trouble, whereas today the rise of scientific medicine has shown that it is personal and social. Technological change creates new problems, like traffic deaths, that did not exist before. Slavery was not defined as a problem earlier, but that does not mean it was not a problem. The natural law runs beneath the phenomenology of social life.

They add that “Of course the natural law is not the supreme criterion for judging right and wrong in society. We have the data of divine revelation, systematized in moral theology, a much surer and deeper source of insight into the nature of social problems.” However, they acknowledge,

in a country like ours, whose citizens adhere to many different religious bodies, the natural law can serve as a common ground, a common logical basis for social analysis and planning. Men of good will, who differ widely in their religious beliefs, may yet find themselves in agreement on the

natural law, and on this basis can organize their attack on social problems. The doctrine of natural law is, after all, good, traditional, American doctrine. In the Declaration of Independence the founding fathers found a basis for their action in the “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.” It is still a good basis for action in our own day (p.7).

Walsh and Furfey then chronicle the loss of the natural law doctrine over time in this society, citing for example Pius XII’s foreboding 1939 warning about the dangers of denying and rejecting a universal norm of morality in *Summi Pontificatus* and recall some important historical thinkers in the field of social ethics it would be good to know about—including Aristotle, Locke, Jefferson, and St. Thomas Aquinas. They then review the strengths and weaknesses of the major social problem theories of the time—social disorganization, cultural lag, and value conflict theory—and argue each can have something to contribute empirically as long as the broader focus on the interconnectedness of social problems in the social system through the profound operations of the natural law is retained.

Walsh and Furfey set out the Jociste model of social involvement as the pedagogical goal for their text: students are to observe (deeply), judge (using the natural law approach), and act (in justice and charity). The Catholic Church’s social doctrine is held up as an example of this system of living one’s sociological imagination, and exemplar figures such as Pius XII, Canon Cardijn, and Monsignor John Ryan are illustrated with both photographs and vignettes. The rest of the book deals with specific social problems like medical care, a breakdown of family life, juvenile delinquency, economic inequality (especially Furfey’s focus, the “subproletariat”), and war.

In summary, both Murray and Walsh and Furfey, writing at each end of the decade of the 1950s, set forth versions of a Catholic sociology as a basis for the critical examination of American society, in order to help defend this society against its exterior enemies and more honestly face and repair its internal weaknesses. While their efforts are clearly adapted to their times, we today are still confronting a society in which forms of Marxism have deeply penetrated popular culture and the social structures of evil have not been eliminated. So their work still can speak to us today.

The Monograph Approach: Fr. Paul Hanly Furfey's Blend of Faith, Science, and Advocacy

Paul Hanly Furfey was a sort of “crossover” author seeking to reach both the disciplinary audience of sociology students, those likely to use sociological information in the area of social services practice, and a broader Catholic and more generally religious public that would benefit from some sociological dimension to their religious thinking. Fr. Furfey was ordained in 1922 and assigned immediately to the Catholic University of America, where he remained for his entire career. He worked in the Department of Sociology there for over 40 years, serving as Director of Social Research from 1959-71. Following up on his earliest area of interest, young men and juvenile delinquency, he also conducted major research on it in New York City and wrote over a dozen books in sociology, plus many articles. He was on the Executive Council of ACSS several times during the 1940s, and was President in 1944.

In a 1978 classic called *Love and the Urban Ghetto*, Furfey himself reflected on the larger pattern of his sociological career and divided it into three stages.

The first stage involved the scientific approach. I majored in sociology [at Boston College] and later taught that field. In those days we used to talk about ‘scientific charity.’ If we really love our needy neighbors, we shall not be satisfied by trying to help them in just any casual way. We must help them as efficiently as possible... It seemed to me that the behavioral sciences were the key to the solution of social problems. We should diagnose and treat behavioral problems as we diagnose and treat physical disease (p. ix).

Furfey’s optimism about the possibility of this medical model did not endure, however. He actually considered becoming a doctor and traveled to Germany to study as a medical student and came to realize that there was little parallel between the medical and behavioral sciences. While there he also enjoyed a sort of personal spiritual reorientation by attending many operas and concerts: “I realized ever more clearly that there are other roads to a deep understanding of human behavior, roads that do not lead through the psychological or statistics laboratory” (p. x). He also came to reject the aura of precision and degree of scientific verity that social science research methods claimed, especially in this heyday of positivism.

Furfey's next stage involved a powerful personal encounter with Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement. He visited Day's first Catholic Worker house in 1934, and discovered that their answer to solving social problems was not behavioral science but "taking the New Testament literally. Love your neighbors as yourself and treat them on that basis." Other faculty and graduate students at CUA also became very interested in this new Catholic activist movement. One of these faculty was his later social problems text co-author Mary Elizabeth Walsh. In fact this group eventually founded two social work and social justice houses in the heart of the black ghetto in Washington, DC: Fides House and Il Poverello House. Furfey and his colleagues did settlement work there but also conducted more sociological studies of the nature and conditions of poverty and racism, and sought to use sociological data to enlighten others about the true conditions of their less fortunate neighbors.

Furfey came to realize that this "beautiful experiment in practical Christian charity," as he put it, was a wonderful experience and sociologically useful to boot: but in his later years it became more and more clear that structural conditions of capitalism itself were the real drivers of persistent social inequality and cultural hardheartedness. His third stage thus involved an exploration of liberation theology in Latin America. He did not agree with the revolutionary violence of many adherents, but he certainly agreed with their notion that "Christians must be concerned with building a just society just as earnestly as they are concerned with making individual persons holy." He was referring to both the poor and those who sought to help them. He went to Latin America himself in 1974 to observe conditions, returning with a sense of the importance of this movement whose application to the situation of the U.S. needed much study.

Consistent with his comments on his "first stage," his first published works in fact are most concerned with teaching social workers, especially those dealing with youth in the parish context, the latest scientific knowledge about the causes and amelioration of deviant behavior. He adamantly rejected a purely secular model of social work, advocating a spiritually based approach as the only viable possibility, but one that had to incorporate behavioral scientific information and frameworks to deepen one's analysis of causes of problems. In 1928 he published *The Parish and Play: Some Notes on the Boy Problem*, which addresses the "modern recreation movement" and how to organize especially boys to keep them out of trouble. You might conjure the image of the Pat O'Brien priest in the classic film *Angels with Dirty Faces* who gets gangster Jimmy Cagney to help the Dead End Kids who

are going bad to stay on the straight and narrow through healthy play-in this case, basketball. My father was a kid like this in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and often recounted that if it wasn't for the sports leagues in his parish, he and his street tough pals would have ended up in prison.

Furfey's 1931 book *New Light on Pastoral Problems* was a sort of introductory handbook on psychodynamic psychology, addressed to priests and religious in parishes who encountered the mentally ill or disabled and who needed to understand both the physiology of such illness and also the psychology. Of particular interest to Furfey were the processes of self-deception and delusion formation individuals employed to shield themselves unconsciously from the reality of their situations: repression, rationalization, displacement, and projection, for example. He returns to this framework often in his later work to help explain why people who should know better, like devout Catholics, so often failed to actively oppose great social evils like slavery or Nazism.

Interestingly enough, around the same time Furfey was also starting to write spiritual manuals for lay Catholics about how to live a truly devout Catholic lay vocation, as well as books sharing this goal but adding a kind of sociological base to the analysis of the culture and social conditions good Catholics would struggle against. These works are full of enormous passion about the personal Catholic spiritual life, as well as about the need to overcome complacency and make a commitment to social improvement. Here I would include Furfey's 1936 *Fire on the Earth*, his 1939 *This Way to Heaven*, and his 1944 *The Mystery of Iniquity*. Related to these works is his more in-depth critique of contemporary culture using more sophisticated sociological and social philosophical vocabulary published in 1937, *Three Theories of Society*, which was discussed earlier in Part I of this paper. This had the same goal as the other three works, of calling for greater social activism rooted in Faith, but as I noted was meant for those with some greater scholarly or intellectual background.

In all these works, meant for a range of popular audiences, Furfey merges the vocabulary of spiritual formation with that of a basic sociological appreciation of the importance of social structure, as we would understand that term today. For example, in *This Way to Heaven* Furfey encourages his readers to think about the social class system as part of their exploration about how to apply their Faith. He discusses the meaning of wealth and being rich, a theme he returns to often in his work: there is being rich in the sense of being avaricious, and being rich in the sense of happening to have a lot of money. The former is really

the problem—as for example, Furfey imagines, when a rich man spends \$25,000 on the debutante ball for his daughter at a glitzy Washington hotel without really giving a thought to the people in his own city and their needs. Furfey reports the tuberculosis rate of Washington’s poor black neighborhoods, and sardonically comments that this \$25,000 would drastically improve the life chances of about 50 poor people who will die for lack of health care resources. “It would be very effective, wouldn’t it,” Furfey opines, “if we could arrange with the hotel management on the night of the party to have fifty coffins lined up in the lobby, representing the fifty lives which were sacrificed to make the party a success?” (p.66). Furfey doesn’t kid around! His books are loaded with such intentionally inflammatory prose meant to provoke readers to wake up to a complacency they may have unwittingly fallen into about the realities of social injustice around them.

Thus personal spiritual growth depends on knowing the details of the Faith, including a strong living practice of sacraments and a vivid prayer life; but this must be coupled with an analysis of the culture and social organization the Catholic is up against in trying to live the Faith well through a commitment to live like Christ in a world-changing way. He uses the term *supernatural sociology* (the same term Don Luigi Sturzo would use) to mean the social fact of the existence of the supernatural in human life as a shaper of human collective behavior, and more pointedly, the literal reality of the Mystical Body of Christ as the basis of social solidarity. He explicitly identifies the saints as models of the integration of Faith and reason he believes essential to living a Catholic life and sees the operation of the seven supernatural virtues in human interaction as evidence of how the supernatural concretely affects the social order. He repeatedly cites the French Jociste movement as the sort of faith-filled social activism he believes is more efficacious, especially compared to the technical social work so dominant in this country. He rails against the injustice of social inequality, especially as a result of race prejudice and discrimination and economic classes, always with the concluding point that only a fire on earth, a lived Catholicism, can even hope to deal with such problems. He outlines the norms and values of a distinctly Catholic counterculture (not a term he uses, but that is what he means), grounded in a vocational view of social life, a vocation of voluntary relative poverty, a certain heroism in living radical charity, and courageously challenging any complicity in social evil.

In these works Furfey sets forth a major theme that will run through all of his later essay works: namely, the contrast between a “moderate” and an “extremist” way of thought and life. Later he will

use other terms for the same duality—relabeling “moderates” as “conformists” in several texts—but the main idea persists. Namely, “The fundamental mark of a Catholic moderate is his mediocrity.”² Moderation means to do the minimum necessary to avoid hell, to be a nice respectable person, not particularly malevolent, who mostly does pleasant things and, as Furfey would often chide, makes decent donations to the Community Chest when asked. In both early works like *This Way to Heaven* and much later works like *The Respectable Murderers*, Furfey also proposes a link between such mediocrity among Catholics and the Church’s tendency to frame moral theology in terms of specific check lists of sins to avoid, rather than a portrait of what a Catholic should strive to become and do. While this minimalist, follow-the-rules way of life may indeed enable the individual to achieve some personal salvation, for Furfey it is a death knell for achieving any greater glory of God on earth. Furfey contrasts this way of life with that which asks not what must I avoid, but rather what ought I to do, and how can I challenge myself to a higher standard of charity with my neighbors.

Furfey repeatedly introduces stories from the saints to model this “extremist” Catholic heroism, and encourages his audience to follow them in their courage to examine and admit their own faults and their efforts to go beyond the “normal” to realize the implications of the Mystical Body on earth. He cites with approval the hagio-socio-graphic research of his CU sociology colleague Mary Elizabeth Walsh, who had completed an extensive study of the personal characteristics and behavioral tendencies of all saints canonized over the last century, because her findings overwhelmingly pointed to powerful direct engagement with the social ills of the day. He repeatedly mentions the Catholic Workers and other like-minded colleagues from his own Catholic University of America as inspirations for this more radical Catholic social vision. Failure to spread this message has had drastic consequences: our complacency toward an ever-more powerful materialist outlook has led the world toward an emerging totalitarianism on the international level and toward violence against the family unit and the individual through the practice of eugenics, divorce, abortion, and other evils. Only a supernatural sociology can save the world from such evils. “God grant us holy violence,” Furfey exclaims: “God grant that we, too, may have some spark of that self-contempt which led God’s saints to be so violent toward themselves, so gentle and generous toward others” (p.193).

Then in 1944 Furfey published *The Mystery of Iniquity*, a title obviously referring to the current horror of the Second World War,

where he continues to draw out the differences between a purely secular or materialist explanation of human affairs and one which embraces the reality of the supernatural. He also continues his direct attack on watered down versions of social analysis and Christianity that accommodate too much the prevailing culture: what he now calls “conformist” social work and sociology and “conformist” Catholicism. Furfey explains how materialist sociologists tend to look at the world in purely natural and human terms. They argue problems exist because of disagreements between groups over ideas or resources and believe society operates on the basis of human action and group dynamics alone. If only we could just work out good agreements, be fairer in how we distribute the necessities of life, or defeat bad people once and for all, then all will be well. But, says Furfey, this never happens for long. Accounts of society that advance the claim that it could miss the whole operation of mystery, of transcendent good and evil playing themselves out in human affairs, as well as the working of God’s grace as what he called an “aid to right social living” (p.17). In effect, Furfey said, because we are humans made in the image of God with free will and given the gift of grace, our social behavior and social organization can never simply be understood with laws like those governing inanimate objects such as planets and atoms. He gives the example of how to understand the events surrounding the death of Jesus to make his point, comparing a purely historical account of a pretty interesting rabble rouser executed by the local power structure, with an account which sees it as the spiritual crux of cosmic history.

Over the years, then, Furfey builds a picture of a Catholic sociological imagination that centers around the following: 1. examining the kind of people prevalent today in our culture that make it possible to continue; 2. creating an empirically ample portrait of existing deplorable social conditions cast in a moral light; and 3. a call to explicitly connect one’s personal salvation to helping build some movement toward the Kingdom of God on earth through Catholic social action. Furfey is a writer expressing a careful outrage, exhorting us to take a real look around and see the connection between the sorts of people we are, the current social conditions, and use the message of Christ as the foundation for social change.

Later books elaborate this core message in ever greater sociological detail and continue to center around the social class analysis he had always advocated and which, by the 1960s, was becoming so dominant in social criticism. For example, his 1966 *The Respectable Murderers: Social Evil and Christian Conscience* elaborates how it is in the very nature of our social order for crimes

against humanity to be committed and for elites to make them seem normal. He focuses on two aspects of social systems in particular that perpetuate evil: ruling class hegemony and what we would call processes of social control and legitimation:

It is apparent that the great injustices of history, the exploitations of the defenseless, the massacres of the innocent, the savage persecutions, are perpetrated not by disreputable men who disobey good laws, but by respectable men who obey evil laws. If the modern world is far from the Christian ideal of a society dominated by holy charity, it falls much short of even the natural ideal of a society in which justice is respected, and the chief explanation is not to be found in the crimes of lawless men. They constitute only a minor factor. The chief explanation is to be found in the structural injustices built into paramoral societies, the injustices consecrated by the mores, approved by the leading citizens, and sanctioned by an ethic of respectability (p.140).

Furfey's sociology clearly parallels C.W. Mills's contemporaneous though quite explicitly secular (and even anti-religious) framework of the contrast between personal troubles and public issues. It is also reminiscent of the insights of the Frankfurt school regarding the repression of conscience and social awareness. The Church was also starting to use such language as "social sin" and the structures of evil, and Furfey's message was consonant with this emphasis. So his work represents an interesting convergence of secular and sacred ideas. He insists that very widespread evil cannot be merely the product of individual acts of malevolence or failings, but must somehow be rooted in social organization itself—an organization which makes horror lose its objective capacity to repulse us, and in effect generates false consciousness. The upper classes preserve the status quo, exerting their ideological influence and power over the media and popular culture, to legitimize horrifying deeds on a systematic basis, such as American Negro slavery as both a political economic and psycho-cultural reality; Jewish genocide and the intentional carpet bombing of non-combatants in World War II and later in Vietnam; and the structural reproduction of an economic underclass or "subproletariat," as he calls it, today.

But worse, institutions that could challenge such hegemony, like the Church, too often opt to not rock the boat and legitimize the

status quo through peer pressure and also more complex rationalizing systems like moral theology. Furfey often cites the bellwether case of the failure of Catholic bishops, by and large, to overtly condemn Hitler or Nazism, except for the occasional individual protest or in the mid-19th century U.S., to actively support the Pope's very explicit condemnation of slavery. (He bases the Nazi example on a controversial paper written by Gordon Zahn in the 1960s about the failure of the Catholic hierarchy to substantially challenge Hitler, that proved quite controversial within the ACSS). Following up on his earlier condemnation of "conformist" thought, he zooms in on the processes of legitimation of social evil brought about by "experts," and the panache of rationality and appeal to social stability preached by the mouthpieces of the ruling elite. All these positions are strongly supported with a wealth of sociological data from the census and other sources.³

He picks up these themes in his 1968 book *The Morality Gap*, and later, his 1978 *Love and the Urban Ghetto*. These books draw explicitly on Catholic social teaching and sociological data to develop another of Furfey's main themes: the need to couple radical personalist action with organized solidarity, where possible grounded in a sociological awareness of current social conditions and needs. His personalism derives from the Catholic Worker movement, the European Jocistes, and other similar movements such as that founded in Canada by Catherine De Houck. His sense of forging social groups to accomplish socio-political tasks comes straight from the Church's teaching on "socialization," i.e., the right of individuals to form intermediary organizations to defend human rights and dignity and pursue the common social good.

If one thing Furfey's "public education" materials did was rouse the broader Catholic public to personally engage social problems and to know better the roots of their religious tradition so as to live it more fully, another they did was to tilt the basis of that appeal toward a decidedly liberal theology and view of the Catholic hierarchy. For example, in his appeal for a new understanding of examination of conscience and understanding of spiritual responsibility, and his concern for the social structures of sin, Furfey argued against the "catalogue of sins" model and for the "who am I as a person and what must I become model." While his critique of the mechanical nature of much popular piety was no doubt well taken, he contributed to the overemphasis on one's ultimate personal "intentions" as qualifying one's sinfulness, and the radical de-emphasis of personal responsibility for the sinfulness of concrete thoughts and actions. In this he drew explicitly on the so-called "actor-oriented" moral theology of Bernard

Haring (see *The Respectable Murderers*, pp.146ff) and helped set the stage for the decay of the sacrament of confession (which in earlier works he himself had valued), the loss of the sense of original sin as a personal condition, and such folly as the theory of the “fundamental option for God” which undercut the concept of mortal sin.

Also, Furfey’s later attraction to liberation theology and related movements was an expression of the broader post-Vatican II assault on the hierarchy of the Church and growing legitimacy of dissent. One piece of evidence indicating his endorsement of this trend was his great support of the faculty movement to strike in support of Fr. Charles Curran at CUA in April 1967: he voted with the majority 400-18. He explicitly offers this episode as a very positive example of the type of passive resistance he advocates against injustice in *The Morality Gap* (see Chapter X). Furfey was also eventually honored by the organization that replaced the ACSS, the Association of the Sociology of Religion: they named an annual address after him, the Furfey Lecture. Insofar as ASR’s “victory” was a defeat for Catholic sociology, this is a dubious honor at best in my view.

Thus for all his value as an inspired educator, Furfey was part of the trend which resulted in the eventual capture of the theory and pedagogy of Catholic social teaching by the left in the Church in our own time, as I have documented in my recent paper “Unwrapping Our ‘Best Kept Secret:’ A Critical Review of Some Best-Selling Textbooks in Catholic Social Teaching,” mentioned earlier. So the later Furfey leaves an ambiguous legacy for Catholic education. Nevertheless, his fiery prose and explicit appeal for a fresh Catholic social thought and action roused both sociologists and others to consider the ethical foundations of social criticism and their personal definition of self in their role.

Lessons and Questions

In this concluding section I will offer some lessons I have learned conducting this historical study and literature review that can inform our practice as Catholic educators today. Then I will pose some questions about our teaching of sociology that might help us shift our pedagogical practice more effectively in a Catholic direction.

Lesson one: While there may be disagreements about how closely one can integrate Catholic thinking with sociological reasoning at a theoretical level, this debate was significantly driven and shaped by the occupational and professional needs Catholic sociologists had as a group, struggling for a place within the mainstream discipline. It may

be less salient for teaching students how to develop a Catholic sociological imagination. This more basically requires that they learn to generate, examine, and interpret sociological facts in light of the Faith in a systematic way, and apply what they discover toward constructing a personal social vision and a society that in some way reflect Christian values. We should explore the theoretical and epistemological questions about the role of values in research procedures, to be sure. But I think it more valuable to get on with the pedagogical effort much more actively than we do, and follow ACSS's lead to seek a direct impact on generations of Catholic students through teaching and curriculum development.

One may very well ask whether being overtly Catholic within the professional ambiance of sociology today is really that much different than it was 70 years ago. How to compare their times with ours?

As Tolson, Morris, and others report, early ACSS founders were struggling with the stereotyped perception among sociologists trained at secular universities that bachelors' and graduate education in Catholic institutions, where many early Catholic sociologists came from, was hopelessly backward technically, tended to constrain free inquiry, and was only one step removed from ideological indoctrination. Today, by contrast, it is fair to say that the graduate training in sociology differs very little, if at all, between Catholic and non-Catholic public and private universities. This may be part of the problem for us now: it is not identifiably different, and should be! But at least we are not dealing with the stereotypes about Catholic graduate programs as meager or professionally inferior. And further, from a structural point of view, the distribution of sociologists with a Catholic sense of identity is no longer concentrated in Catholic programs anyhow: Catholics graduate from all sort of universities. So the stratification barrier between Catholic and non-Catholic sociology programs is much less pronounced today.

Also, the relationship between sociology as a discipline and the Church herself has changed. Since the critique of modernism is now thoroughly relegated to those bad old "pre-Vatican" days by the liberal wing of the present-day Church, the work of some sociologists—Dean Hoge, William D'Antonio, Gregory Baum, James Davidson, Fr. Andrew Greeley, and Nancy Ammerman come to mind, for example—is often readily embraced to support and legitimize the theological and ecclesiological positions of that group.

Yet I believe we here in SCSS are more or less in the same *spiritual* boat as our ACSS colleagues were back then. Our ideas about

the role of natural law, free will, and other hot button social policy and life issues like abortion and homosexuality do sharply differentiate us today from our professional colleagues in a way that some difference in our group ability to use statistical software packages or conduct surveys no longer does. Authentic Catholics are still outsiders, still countercultural because of their beliefs, such as their vision of the role of the supernatural in social life and of the Church in the fabric of the world. This has not changed much at all, though there are signs that particularly non-Catholic Christians are making more of a stink about how a Christian point of view is deprecated in academia.⁴

The SCSS as a Contemporary Heir to the ACSS

Part of the fascination I have for studying the case of the ACSS is that its transformation into what is known today as the Association for the Sociology of Religion may be understood to reflect or symbolize many of the problems faithful Catholics have with the field of sociology in general today. The missteps and tangles researchers narrate about how ACSS failed both to frame a Catholic sociology and to institutionalize that perspective organizationally haunt us now, and we are in the process of picking up the two challenges of perspective formation and institutionalization again, through the vehicle of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists. From the start, ACSS members were of widely divergent opinions about whether a Catholic sociology was possible or desirable; they differed on whether and how to pursue links with sociological organizations; and they suffered from some weak organizational practices of their own that hampered their ability to thrive as a formal group.

Today, I believe the sociological subgroup within SCSS is quite strong on providing mutual support, encouragement, and collegiality; I believe it is also accurate to say that other disciplinary subgroups have a similar experience. So, like ACSS, a strength of SCSS is our provision of a faith-grounded collegiality and reinforcement for carrying on in a secular world. How many of us, like our academic grandparents in ACSS, talk about coming to SCSS conferences with phrases like “coming home,” getting recharged,” or “making the pilgrimage”—this latter especially when the conference is held at Steubenville. We are also very careful to avoid some of the organizational pitfalls that plagued ACSS, such as a certain procedural laxness and evolution of an oligarchy: we have regular elections, by laws we adhere to, and make efforts to be inclusive in our administration.

But on the other hand, and also like ACSS, we sociologists *still*

are not very clear on what we mean by a Catholic sociology, or, as Varacalli would prefer, by Catholic sociologies. We have taken one good solid step: we have come down especially on the side of Furfey, that we should be using the same statistical and other research methodologies as any sociologist would when a particular question requires it, but always in the service of advancing a Catholic understanding of society and a Catholic social action. There is also some *resourcement* of sociological thinking intrinsically friendly to Catholic sociology, such as the theoretical and empirical work of Sorokin. So we have gotten past the old dispute about whether it is acceptable or not for Catholic social scientists to proceed with inductive methods of inquiry: we agree that inductive research and deductive reasoning from the Catholic tradition are complementary.

But beyond this, our position is pretty fuzzy. What, for example, is the difference between the sociology of religion or Catholicism practiced in the context of the A.S.R. meetings, and a Catholic “sociology of X” presented here, at SCSS? Perhaps we can answer this more carefully and fully, not for the sake of the formal logic of it, but for the sake of better setting forth our collective agenda for inquiry and debate *and pedagogy*.

Next, ACSS was very effective at pursuing a concrete agenda to improve teaching. Major figures in the organization all devoted considerable energy to publishing high-school and college textbooks in sociology and related fields. Though ACSS’s goal statement did not refer explicitly to this teaching mission, the organization’s goal to foster Catholic understanding of social questions was collectively, regularly interpreted as requiring a major commitment to pedagogy and curriculum development. Now, this statement does need context: ACSS was trying especially to serve the needs of an emerging sociological discipline within Catholic secondary schools and colleges, where it was starting to be taught more and more but the teachers’ professional background and degrees were spotty. ACSS was trying to advance a certain recognition of social science as a key tool for social analysis and action in the wake of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, and the emergence of Catholic socio-political engagement in the U.S. during the New Deal era. It was also basically trying to feed syntheses of social-scientific knowledge and teaching strategies to faculties in Catholic education, many of whom had not received specifically sociological training. And it was trying to legitimize all this in the eyes of secular sociologists and the broader educated public.

We here in SCSS are not faced with *this* particular problem, as empirical social studies has thoroughly penetrated Catholic secondary

education, and empirical sociology is routinely taught by sociologically-degreed people at the college level. *Our problem now is that we have allowed sociology to be defined and taught entirely by the mainstream of the discipline.* Curricular planners like department heads take their pedagogical cue from what is considered “normal” in the field: for example, I often take the chance to ask sociology faculty from ostensibly-Catholic colleges what they use in their department’s introductory course: they use the same materials as anywhere else, they say, the point being, as I have heard so often, “to teach students sociology, not social philosophy or specific values.” Anecdotally, I recently was exchanging emails with a faculty member at a solidly-Catholic college in the south where faculty are now working to authentically implement *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* across the curriculum. The fellow was in despair because they need to offer basic sociology for various reasons, but can’t find anyone to teach it who would not be problematic from a Catholic point of view. They had decided to take a close look at what was actually in the intro texts that recent adjuncts had been assigning and were appalled. But, until he discovered some SCSS sociologists, no one he had spoken with could even grasp the problem he was trying to describe.

SCSS sociologists have developed various accommodations to this teaching climate and situation, but we need to go farther, I think, to try to refine what we mean by teaching sociology from a Catholic point of view. I might ask, also, what other disciplinary subgroups are doing on the question of teaching. Perhaps many of us come from institutions where this cannot be explicitly raised, or where we should not hope to influence any broader faculty constituency, but rather simply try to survive within our own courses using what materials we can. Some of us do come from very Catholic institutions: when they offer sociology, what are they doing? Is it any different from what goes on at State U on the other side of town?

Lesson Two: There are models for undergraduate textbook development in a number of key course areas, including introductory sociology, social problems, and social theory, that, while dated in some particular areas of data or approach, nevertheless can help today’s sociology instructors organize their material in a plausibly Catholic way for both Catholic and secular departmental contexts. Texts were written between the early 1930’s through the late 1950’s that intended to address both “captive” Catholic student audiences but also edge outward to reach students elsewhere, and more or less on secular terms. ACSS authors worked the full range of contexts with great intentionality, and we can study their materials for clues to deal with our

audiences today.

The brief review of materials I provide here in no way does justice to the depth of scholarship they contain; and I could not in this brief space delve into all the ways in which Catholic ideas and approaches work their way into the materials. Even so, I hope the examples I provide give some hint of how an instructor today could start to rethink course content and course organization. Here are some basic directions.

Content Themes and a Catholic Order of Presentation

First and foremost the texts show how content from Catholic social teaching but also sociological research supporting Catholic social analysis can be included, in the same way we would include theories and data from any perspective. An order of presentation of material is suggested that runs somewhat counter to the standard introductory text of today. The college texts I reviewed here would perhaps often be considered too difficult for today's college student: they usually begin with fairly detailed surveys of social thought in order to situate their Catholic stance in the Western tradition, and especially before the 1950's are low on photographs; they assume a certain familiarity with intellectual discourse and intense reading. Nevertheless, once past the establishing of the Catholic framework they generally start with an exploration of the individual as a person, a member of the mystical body; the family is next examined as the primary institution of social life; then there is discussion of community and groups, then larger social institutions and systems. It is a concentric-circle model of levels of social life that expresses the deeper model of subsidiarity and hierarchy embedded in the Catholic social imagination, that comes out more definitely in specific discussions of examples of Catholic social teaching that are used as illustrations of concepts. Then many texts include some version of a social problems section in which the ideas are applied. In part this was to make texts more flexibly marketable for courses of various length and purpose. But they also almost always—in the tradition of the wide view of the field—included material on biology and human origins in order to locate the analysis of social patterns in a more firm and less relativistic realm of natural law and natural society.

These texts generally do not include a chapter on research methodology very early, like most contemporary texts do today, as part of the “Sociology really is a science, really” ideological subtext they express. This was all to the better: the texts do a much better job of communicating ideas than today's texts and do not lose students in a maze of technical details right at the start. When methods are discussed,

they are after sociological and ethical ideas, not before.

We can think too, about what each of the specific types of texts can teach us. From the *Foundations* books, we learn the importance of grounding our understanding of the human person and the social order in the *anthropology of natural law* as much as possible. It's no accident that John Paul II's growing success in catechesis is based on his philosophical-anthropological vision of the person, love, and human meaning. As social scientists, we can take this anthropology empirically further; we can use the data of this field to base our claims about the natural law's operation in social life, overcome the lingering stereotype of Catholics as anti-evolution, and embrace the diversity of human societies without succumbing to relativism. We can establish the difference between an empirical cultural relativism—yes there are indeed many particular moral codes and sets of norms guiding behavior among societies—and moral relativism, which mistakenly draws the conclusion that there are thus no systems that are more right or wrong than others. Our intro texts should thus include more physical and cultural anthropology, adopting the broader view of sociology that our ACSS forebearers did.

From the books of *legitimation*, we can learn that while the “add in” model of presentation of Catholic material has its limits, it can be a good first step in presenting Catholic social thought to a completely novice audience especially in a secular setting. Furfey and later Ross wrote in a tone that communicated the assumption that Catholic social thought was a part of the canon; they were never defensive or apologetic about it. And by presenting material related to all sorts of major Catholic figures in the Western heritage and demonstrating how their ideas have been central to crucial ideal norms and values of the present day, like freedom, human dignity, the concept of free will, the rejection of slavery, the position of women in society, and the value of the monogamous family, we can appeal directly to the concerns of today's students. This is Peter Kreeft's strategy in teaching philosophy at Boston College to skeptical and non-Catholic students; we should learn from his contemporary success.

From the books on instruction, we can conclude, for example, that the current decline of the notion of deviance in the discipline—except as it relates to obvious criminality—must be reversed, so that students may once again learn there is more to deviance than the power of the elite to declare certain behaviors of the oppressed illegal through their control of social institutions. While the ACSS-generation books were hemmed in by the overly-medicalized social-pathology paradigm of deviance of the period, we can still look to them as modeling ways

to make moral judgments about social trends by using natural law theory and citing empirical studies to show the long-term negative consequences of certain ways of life. As Anne Hendershott notes in her recent book *The Politics of Deviance*,⁵ students are aware that the current psychologization of suicide and school violence, the slippery slope of sexual mores regarding pedophilia, concerns about euthanasia, and the pathetic date-communication codes in place on campuses that are supposed to remove the threat of date rape, all reveal cracks in the dominant culture's approach to creating authentic social order. If the texts of our forebearers made factual errors about the sources of deviance and thus came off heavy-handed on the physiological basis of mental illness, if they worried about young people needing to follow rules in a way that seems quaint, if their vision of gender roles was too limited, they were nevertheless right to insist that the consideration of normative boundaries and social order is at the center of any effective analysis of social problems, and of a truly deep understanding of personal freedom. So our texts must return to the tradition of detailed information about the empirical consequences of certain norms and values—as for example, the critics of today's family texts like Norvall Glenn are starting to do—and the theoretical development of deviance as a concept that locates it not just in the statistical patterns of thought and conduct, but in natural law.

These texts also remind us to place religion at the center of social life: to put the study of “cult” back into the study of “culture” as *Gaudium et Spes* describes it. Yes, we need to review the key concepts needed to describe culture sociologically: norms, values, symbols and language, material and non-material culture, culture shock, and all the rest. But religion is currently treated in the structure of texts as one of several institutions that make up society, a surprisingly retained Parsonianism in today's academic culture of conflict theory. It is an illustration of an arena of culture. Instead, religion should be moved up front, to the unit on the basics of culture and society in chapter 2 or 3, so that students can see how a society's vision of the transcendent and eternal is at the very heart of how social life is organized.

Finally, there is the question of what today is called “civic engagement.” Furfey and Ross especially, in somewhat different ways, could not conceive of fostering a deep learning about society without being “out there” in the midst of it, dealing in a hands-on way with the social issues and problems of the day. Ross' textbooks are filled with suggestions for experiential learning, team projects in the community, and further exploration of Church documents and agencies, *to complete the active learning cycle*. The texts may be rather wordy by today's

visual standards, but they always point the student *toward reflected-upon experience and application* as the best pathway to real learning. To pedagogical concerns, Furfey adds spiritual ones, assuming that one cannot be a good Catholic without personalist commitment and action, especially around social justice, in the manner of Dorothy Day or others. Even if we can't or shouldn't suggest the Catholic Worker movement as the desired epitome, our Catholic textbooks should be models of experiential learning theory; our students should be having the most interesting time on campus engaged in active learning, especially at the beginning level so their eyes can be better opened to the current social conditions and what Catholics are now and always have been doing about them. The texts are also filled with references to Catholic encyclicals and reports that set forth sound teaching; they also describe specific organizations and specific individuals—including saints—who fought the good fight for the City of God on earth. The current debate about the role of, and funding for, faith-based organizations dealing with social problems is a contemporary pathway into this territory we should pursue.

Question: What do we know empirically about how sociology and related disciplines are presented and taught within Catholic institutions today? I start with an empirical question because the ACSS authors knew what the general situation was for Catholic sociologists of their time; they had a fair idea of differences between Catholic and secular institutions, differences that were empirically quite stark. We, on the other hand, have “benefited” from three decades of secularization within the Catholic institutional sphere; this has muddied the differences between Catholic and secular social-scientific education, with benefits and costs unclear. It may very well be that sociology and related fields in secular institutions probably do not differ that much from how the fields are organized and taught in Catholic institutions. This is my experience. Anecdotally, most Catholic faculty I know from departments at ostensibly-Catholic colleges use the same texts everyone else does, even if they think it might pose some problems. I also hear often that they would not want to teach the discipline in a Catholic way because they would not want to be “biased” that way even if they agreed with Catholic teachings, especially on socio-cultural questions like homosexuality or abortion, which they often do not.

But these are simply my impressions. I think it would be very helpful to explore this question more scientifically. What is the state of sociology in Catholic institutions, and what inroads, if any, has a Catholic perspective made in secular sociology contexts?

Question: How do my courses stack up if I take the criteria for what makes sociology Catholic as a framework for evaluation?

For me, perhaps the most important question, after all is said and done, is the following: If I took one of the lists of Catholic presuppositions that ACSS authors explicitly included in their texts and tried to evaluate my courses using them as criteria, how would they come out? Whether I am teaching on a very faithful Catholic campus or State U or a lapsed institution “in the Catholic tradition” as they say, how do my sociology courses either implicitly or explicitly reflect and address these powerful elements of the Catholic sociological imagination? Several of these lists have appeared in this paper to illustrate how authors declared their perspective: does my work in the classroom reflect such ideas in a deep way?

I like to think of the Catholic sociological imagination as a set of learning outcomes I expect a student to develop as a result of experiencing a particular course or program. In considering what such a set of learning outcomes might be, I was drawn to the writings of Eva Ross more than once. Thus, I close with a quote from the so-called “later” Eva Ross, from her 1958 text *Basic Sociology*. By this time she was emphasizing more the complementarity of sociology and Catholic social philosophy than a complete merging. Sociology itself was the empirical research and analysis that could inform planning or be shaped by (Catholic) philosophy, but was not itself, nor should it be, a part of the planning or the philosophy. This position was of course much debated. But even at this point in her thinking, she could set forth the following encompassing image of the one who works as a Christian sociologist trying to concretely influence social structure and culture:

A sociologist who is also a Christian can, of course, bring something to his scientific studies through his Christian philosophy and belief. His Christian beliefs about man and religion, and their philosophical background, not only make him see clearly that sociology is not a self-sufficient study of society, but these beliefs also lead him to view sociological undertakings and findings in a different light from that in which those who do not think as he does see them. He can judge more clearly what particular social relations and institutions need first to be studied by sociologists to provide material for social planners, statesmen, and others who are influential in social action. He can also judge more clearly what important features, in addition to the sociological

findings, might be incorporated by social planners into their final plans. Moreover he will have, perhaps, a closer insight into the meanings of the social relationships of a Christian group that may be studied. Besides, he will realize that other sociologists may have a background of philosophy and theology which, though different from that of the Christian, may nevertheless influence them in their sociological work and theories. He can only judge the values which underlie the sociological studies and theories of others if he is well acquainted with his own value judgments about man's social relations, and is willing also to appraise the work of others objectively. For this reason, sociologists who are also Christians need a background of facts which make Christian social thought specifically different from that of Comteans, Behaviorists, Freudians, Hegelians, Marxists, and others, whose theories will be discussed later in this book. Although Christian social thought, therefore, is not a matter of sociological study, it is as important for the Christian sociologist to be acquainted with it as it is for him to have a brief knowledge of biological inheritance, psychology, archaeology, and paleontology, in so far as these provide a background necessary for later sociological studies or for a critical understanding and appraisal of sociological theories, approaches and methods. (pp. 25-6)

Ross may be trying to finesse the disciplinary issues here, but is not her portrait of the features of a Catholic sociological imagination one we could strive for in our students?

Appendix

Works Reviewed for This Paper

By Fr. Paul Hanly Furfey

The Parish and Play. Philadelphia: Dolphin Press, 1928
New Lights on Pastoral Problems. Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Co., 1931

Fire on the Earth. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935

Three Theories of Society. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937

This Way to Heaven. Silver Spring, MD: The Preservation Press, 1939

The Mystery of Iniquity. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1944

The Scope and Method of Sociology. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953

Social Problems and Social Action. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958. With Mary Elizabeth Walsh.

The Respectable Murderers. New York: Herder and Herder, 1966

The Morality Gap. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969

Love and the Urban Ghetto. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978

By Fr. Raymond W. Murray

Social Problems. New York: F.S. Crofts, 1938. With Frank Flynn.

Introductory Sociology, 2nd Edition (first edition 1935). New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1946

Sociology for a Democratic Society. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950

By Eva J. Ross

A Survey of Sociology. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1932
[author listed as E.J.Ross]

Rudiments of Sociology. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1934
[author listed as E.J.Ross]

Social Origins. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1936

Fundamental Sociology. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1945
[first issued 1939]

Sociology and Social Problems. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1948

Western Social Thought. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1954
[author listed as E.J.Ross. E. Kilzer is Dom Ernest Kilzer, O.S.B.]. With

E.Kilzer.

Basic Sociology, Revised and Enlarged Edition. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1958, 1954 [author listed as E.J.Ross]

By Sr. Mary Consilia O'Brien

Catholic Sociology, Presented to Catholic Students and Based on the Encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI. New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1939

Notes

1. See Tolson, p.291.

2. *This Way to Heaven*, op.cit., p.186.

3. For example, in *The Respectable Murderers*, Furfey includes a whole appendix, written for the non-specialist, called "On the Distribution of Income and the Extent of Poverty," which is a detailed review of sources of scientific data one can use to examine the nature and extent of social inequality, such as the U.S. Census, Current Population Reports, and various reports from government agencies. He also includes an explanation of the Social Security Administration's method of defining poverty.

4. See, for example, George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; or David Gill (Ed.), *Should God Get Tenure? Essays on Religion & Higher Education*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.

5. Anne Hendershott, *The Politics of Deviance*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002.