

In-valuable faith in context

The Melbourne Scale:
From Christian Values Education to Recontextualisation.
Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project, 2013.

Prof. Dr. Didier Pollefeyt – Jan Bouwens

KU Leuven, 2013 ©

Introduction

James Ensor – Christ's Entry into Brussels



De Intrede van Christus in Brussel (Christ's Entry into Brussels)

James Ensor (Belgian painter, Oostende, 1860-1949)

Oil on canvas, painted in 1888.

J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California

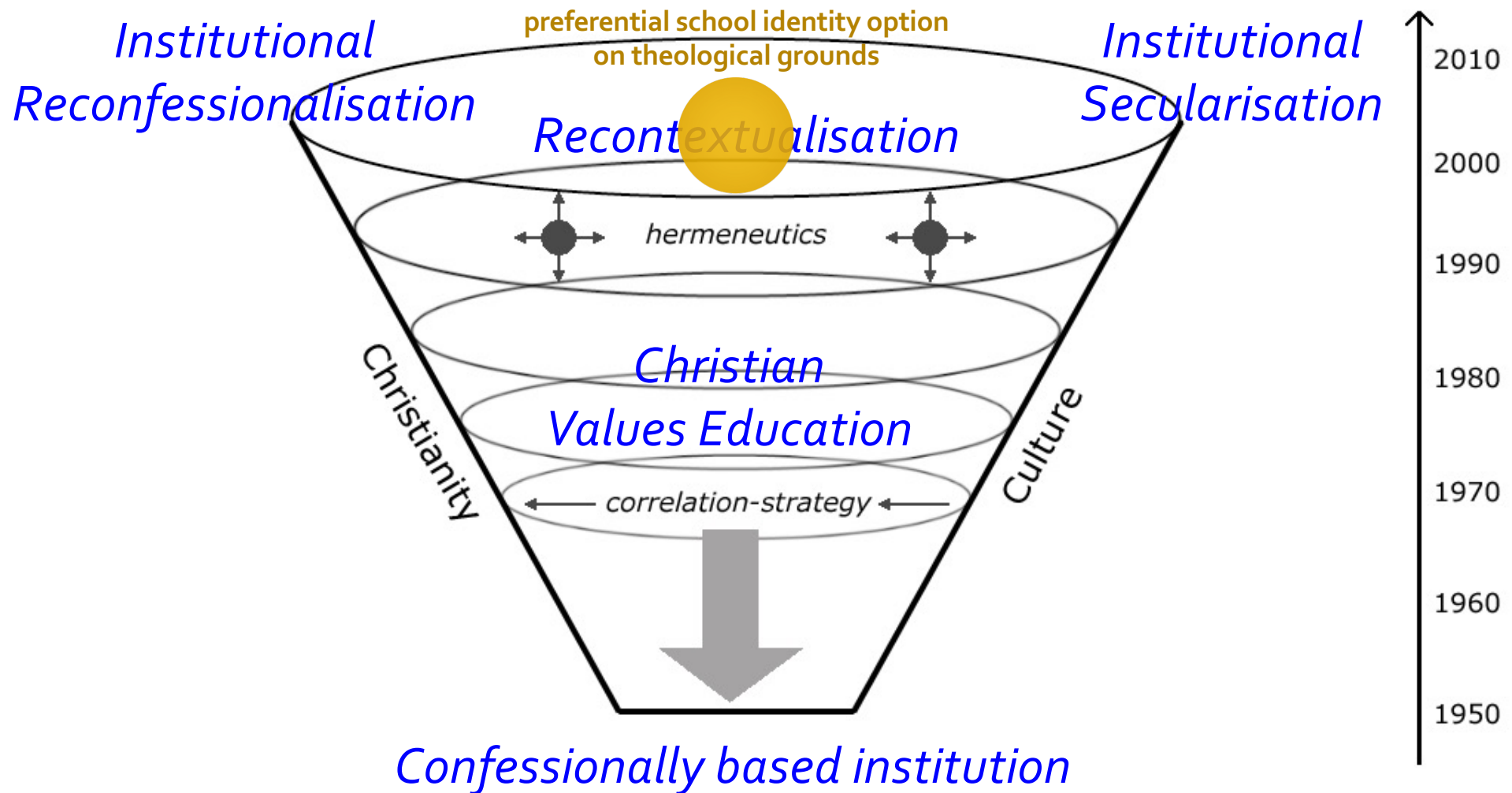


The Melbourne Scale typology

Theological school identity options in a pluralising context

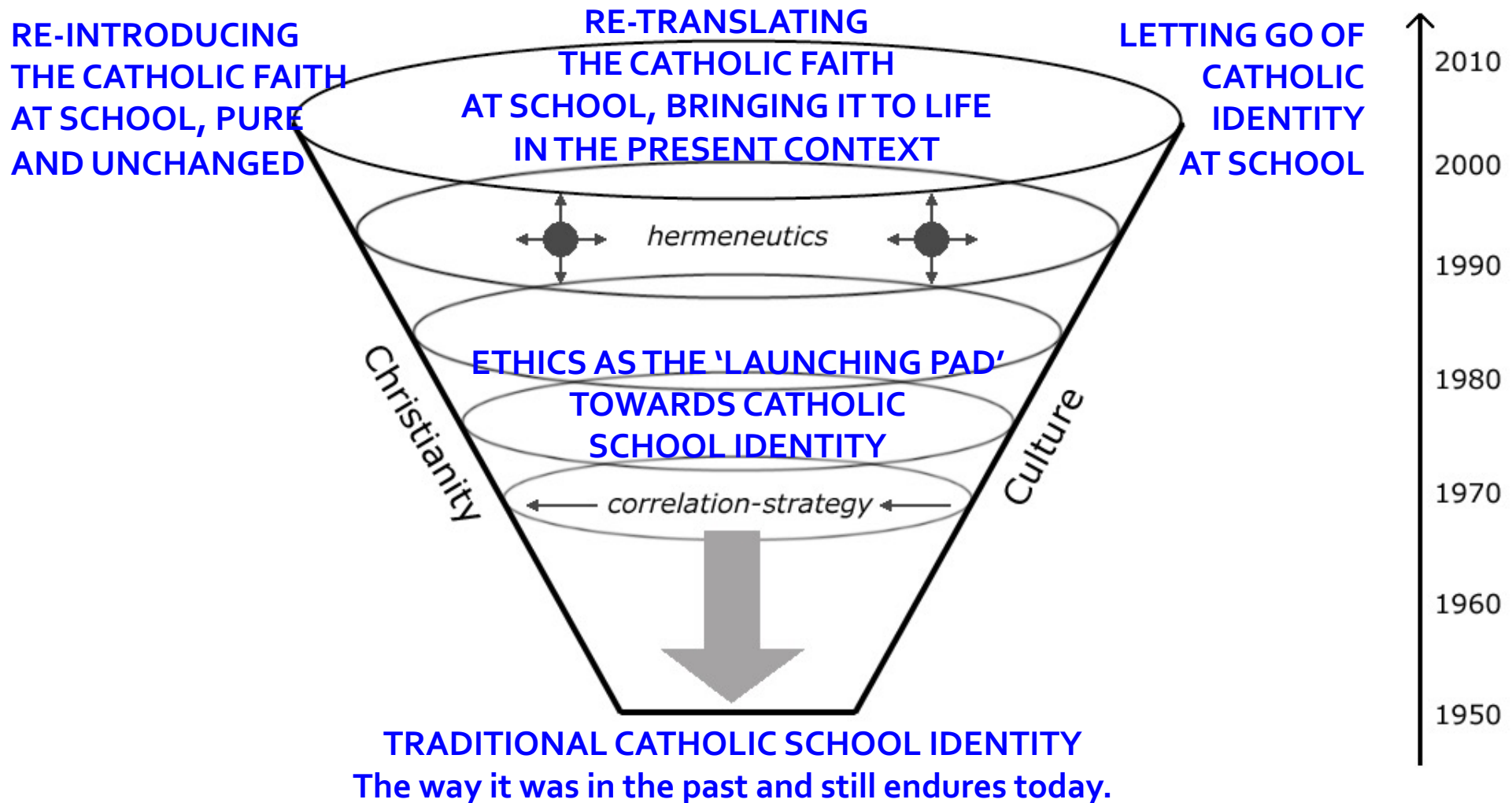
Melbourne Scale

Diagram



Melbourne Scale

Diagram in layman's terms





The Melbourne Scale in pictures

Identity markers in Catholic schools – exercise

School identity markers

Picture 1



Look closer: what do we see in this picture?

A primary school assignment: write down how you *helped* someone in the past week and illustrate your story with a drawing.

Pinned against the wall in between the following key words:

treat others with kindness

happiness

grateful

harmony

do what is right

peace

Kingdom of God (2x)



School identity markers

Picture 2



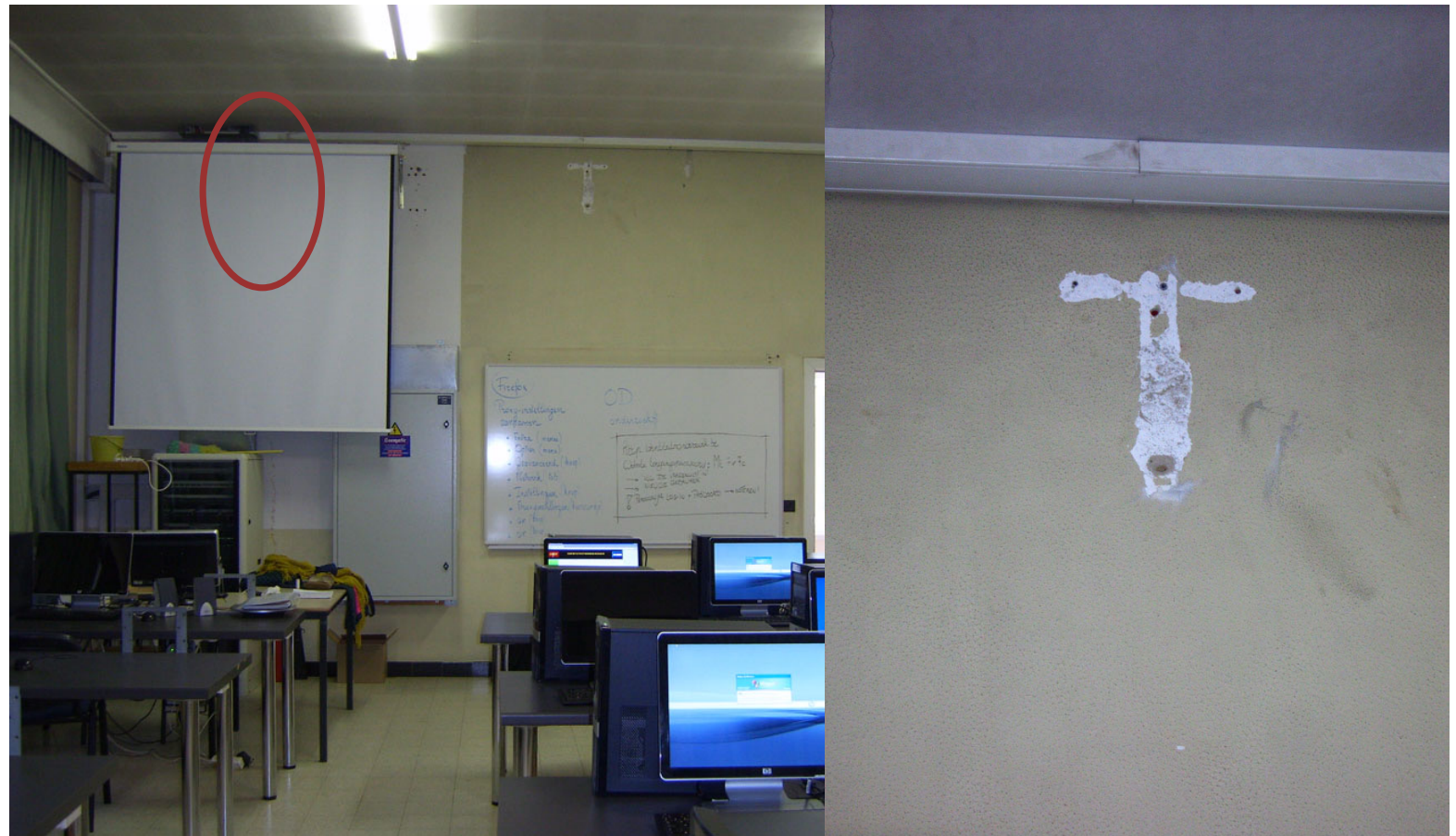
School identity markers

Picture 3



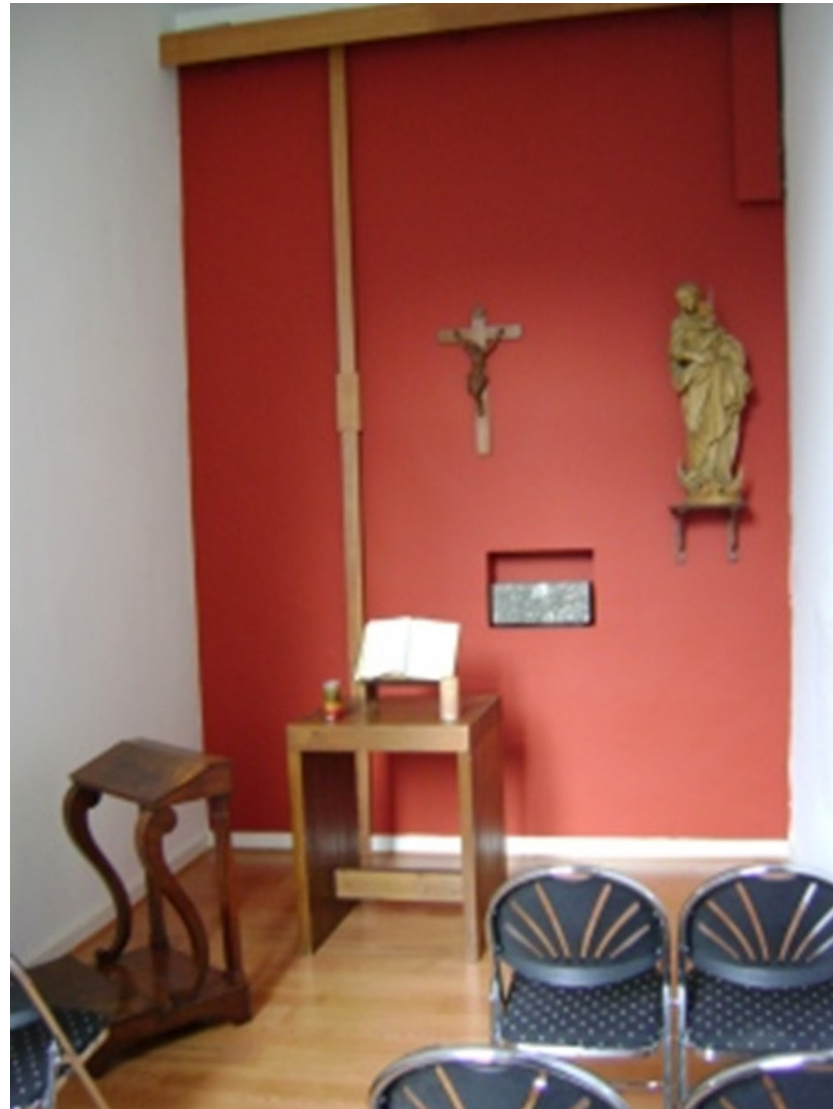
School identity markers

Picture 4



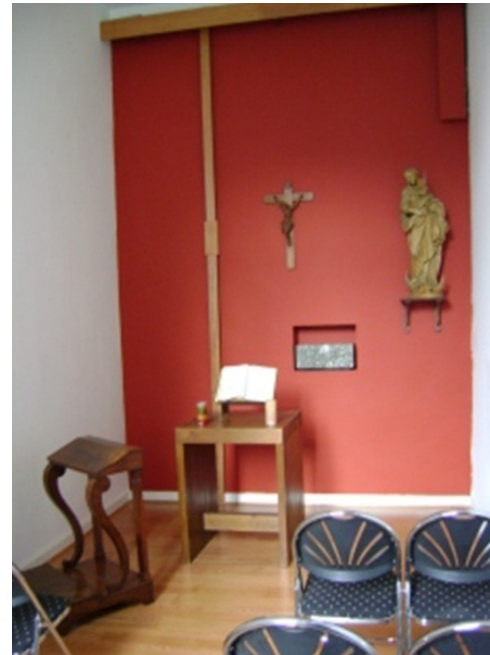
School identity markers

Picture 5



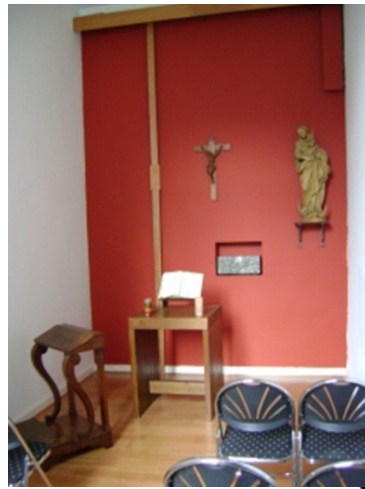
School identity markers

Confessionality – Values Education – Secularisation
– Reconfessionalisation – Recontextualisation ?



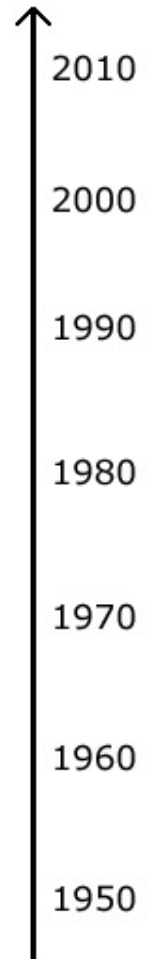
School identity markers

Where to place these pictures on the Melbourne Scale diagram ?



Christianity

Culture





Christian Values Education

What exactly is it?

Why is it a problem in a pluralising context?

Christian Values Education

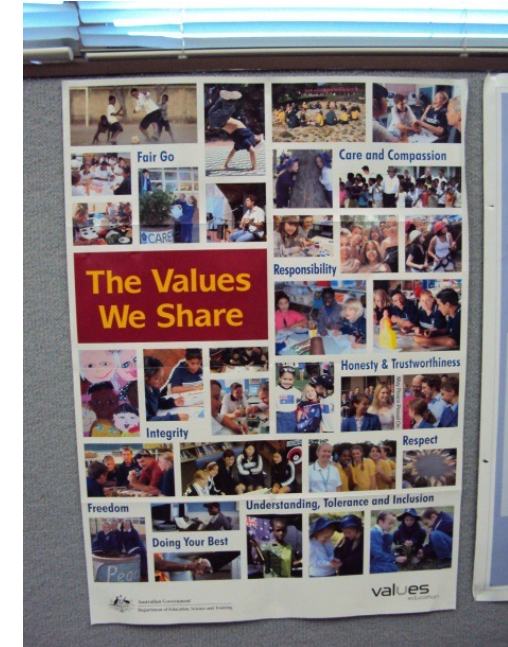
What is it NOT?



What exactly do we mean by:
'Christian Values Education' (Boeve)?

NOT: **secular values**, imposed by the Australian government
(*National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*, 2005: e.g. freedom, fair go, care and compassion, respect, tolerance, etc.)

► *Secularisation*



NOT: **Catholic values**, in the sense of unique Catholic characteristics and concerns, related to:

- Private ethics (e.g. abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research, contraception, etc.)
- Social ethics (e.g. charity, promotion of the family, work for common good, subsidiarity, care for the poor, pursuing of peace, etc.)

► *Reconfessionalisation*

Christian Values Education

What is it? DEFINITION



In the terminology of the Melbourne Scale typology, '**Christian Values Education**' denotes a didactic method / strategy of *mono-correlation*:

- Aimed at a **broad consensus** that encompasses everyone, Catholics and others.
- Attempting to **harmonise** secular and Catholic values.
- Aimed at **weakening the tension** between both.
- Most obvious approach: **linking / correlating** a commonly shared sense of moral values to a Catholic religious frame of mind.

'**Christian Values Education**' is the seemingly obvious **combination** of commonly shared values and a Catholic frame of interpretation, with the implicit or explicit intention to promote a Catholic way of living for ALL school members.

The correlation consists of an **external coupling** whereby its components continue to function independently, while it is supposed that they lie within the same 'interpretational grid' and therefore imply each other, refer to each other and automatically evoke each other.

'Christian Values Education' is powered by **passive traditional Confessionality**, assumed to be still present in the school, which is the binding agent of the harmonisation efforts.

Christian Values Education

Example in an Australian Catholic primary school



Christian Values Education

Example in an Australian Catholic primary school



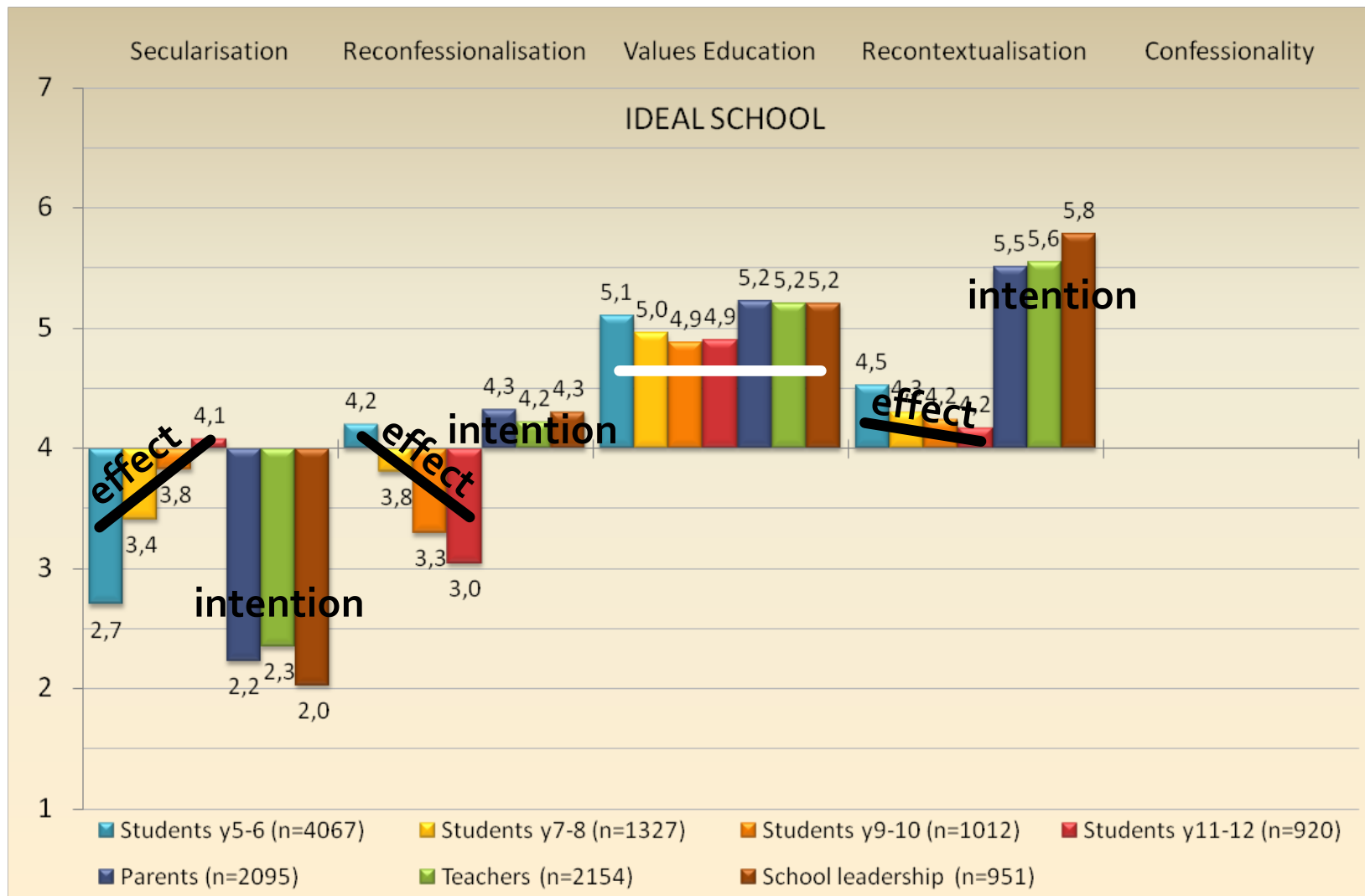
Christian Values Education

Example in an Australian Catholic primary school



Melbourne Scale (2012; n=12526)

Differentiated scale means, normative measurement level



Melbourne Scale (2012)

Differentiated scale means, normative measurement level



Interpretation of the graph:

Recontextualisation of Catholic school identity enjoys majority support from the adults as well as minority support from the students (normative measurement level).

Among the students, there is significant resistance against *Reconfessionalisation*, especially when they grow up.

The resistance against *Secularisation* diminishes dramatically among the students as they mature (turning into a slight average *approval* in years 11-12).

The enduring mono-correlation by means of *Christian Values Education* — although intended by adults as a strategy to *Recontextualise* the school combined with some *Reconfessionalisation* — actually has a Secularising effect on the student population.

Despite this adverse effect, everyone continues to support *Christian Values Education* on the normative level: it allows the students to 'pass through' the Catholic education system, incorporating the values but leaving Christ behind at school... (cf. pizza hawaii at Pollefeyt's home.)

Melbourne Scale

The risks of Christian Values Education



When a school's Catholic *Confessionality* fades away and becomes less and less recognisable, then an unreflective continuation of *Christian Values Education* (*mono-correlation*) in an ever more pluralising and detraditionalising cultural context, tends to become:

- 1. Ineffective:** the correlation movement is stalling and runs aground half way.
- 2. Predictable:** repetitive, boring and even manipulative (*the shutter phenomenon*).
- 3. Counterproductive,** actually producing further Secularisation (intention \neq effect).
- 4. Reducing the Catholic faith to its moral aspects** and thereby 'hollowing out' its religious core (*horizontalisation* of Christianity).

Open happiness

Coca Cola Christmas Commercial 2013



© 2012 The Coca-Cola Company

Open happiness

Coca Cola Christmas Commercial 2013



Look closer: what do we see
in this commercial?

Commonly shared 'Christmas
values', such as:

- happiness
- gentleness
- kindness of heart
- togetherness
- warm family spirit
- love and care
- entertainment
- having fun
- no more loneliness
- no more boredom
- no more restrictions
- freedom

are being correlated to ..
the consumption of *Coca Cola*.



**Suggestion: Christian Values Education does
something similar with .. sweet Jesus.**



Recontextualisation of Catholic faith and Catholic school identity

What exactly is it?

How to bring it about in a school context?

Recontextualisation

A daily event



'Re-context-ualisation' = description of any formal process whereby something is placed in a new context, thereby receiving renewed meaning and plausibility.

As such, *Recontextualisations* are common and happen all around us, all the time:

- The new layout of the reception area of **municipal administrative services** makes a different type of interaction possible.
- **Coca Cola's** changing mottos over the years: *Always Coca Cola, Enjoy Coca Cola, Real, Make It Real, Open Happiness* create *Recontextualised* views on happiness and consumption. + The shape of the Cola bottle changed over the years, but in such a way that the original product remains recognisable.
- The meaning of **9/11** is *Recontextualised* as relevant contexts change, e.g. immediately after the attacks, after the war in Iraq, after the re-election of George Bush, after the election of Barack Obama, after the death of Osama Bin Laden, et cetera.
- **The birth a child** changes the context and the nature of a marriage, that consequently needs to re-invent itself.
- By renovating my **living room**, my daily life is *Recontextualised*.
- Et cetera!

Recontextualisation of Catholic identity

Fusion of horizons



Fusion of horizons

- The old and the new penetrate each other, forming a unity.
- *Deep encounter* between tradition and contemporary life.
- Intimate and creative *interaction* between text and context.
- Two things are fused with each other in such a way that the original components cannot be separated anymore.

Cf. making a soufflé:

- Creating something new by putting together ingredients.
- Cooking *can* be an act of *Recontextualisation*!
- The taste of the final dish exceeds the sum of the ingredients.
- While cooking, the chef must use *good* ingredients (Catholic tradition).
- No dish tastes the same twice.
- Cooking is an ongoing risk: uncertainty and possibility of failure.

Recontextualisation

Timothy Schmalz – Homeless Jesus



Timothy Schmalz – Homeless Jesus

Recontextualisation ?

Decorated first communion



Recontextualisation of Catholic identity

Multi-correlation



Multi-correlation

- **Human experience** can be interpreted in manifold ways.
- **Catholic tradition** can be interpreted in manifold ways.
- **Countless other attempts at correlation** (plural context).

Threefold hermeneutics:

1. Hermeneutics of the **text** (years 1960).
2. Hermeneutics of the **context** (years 1990).
3. Hermeneutics of the interpreting **subject** (present).

Today and towards the future, it will be increasingly difficult to 'fixate' young people in one, dominant, imposed correlation. Young people exist in a **powerful hermeneutical field**: they receive a tremendous amount of input and are seduced to comply with meanings offered everywhere.

Everything is subject to **deconstruction**, also in the church (cf. sexual abuse). People perceive clearly how power claims are involved everywhere.

Positive aspect: people *enjoy* the wealth of meanings, which can be enriching as well.

Life is multi-correlational !

Recontextualisation

Boardroom St Xaverius' College, Borgerhout



Painting: St Xaverius' evangelising in India

Architectural Recontextualisation of Catholic identity: pictures taken in the new board room of the Xaveriuscollege in Borgerhout (near Antwerp, Belgium). A classical painting of St Xaverius is thoughtfully integrated in a modern interior design: large and notable, freestanding against the back wall, lit from behind, central in the space — and in the manifold conversations that take place there. This way, the school leadership hopes to keep the traditional story alive and central in all policy decisions at school.

Recontextualisation of Catholic identity

Particularity of the Catholic faith



Particularity of the Catholic faith

While *Christian Values Education* looks for the lowest common denominator / a compromise between Catholics and other-believers, *Recontextualisation* stresses the ***particularity* of the Catholic faith**:

- *Not only Christmas, but also Easter.*
- *Not only life after death, but also the resurrection of the body.*
- *Not only love, but also love for the enemy.*

From experience to Catholic faith, but from Catholic faith to experience as well.

At a certain moment, we need to allow for an *input* in the hermeneutical space. It must be possible to present new content in a deductive way. After all, Jesus Christ should remain a crucial component in all communication, education and learning.

This is contrary to *Christian Values Education*, where faith is to be derived from experience – or from the remaining Catholic *Confessionality*.

Recontextualisation of Catholic identity

Interaction with the context



Interaction with the context

Recontextualisation searches actively for a meaningful dynamic interaction with the context.

Reconfessionalisation, on the other hand, only uses references that are internally Catholic without taking the external world into account.

Recontextualisation

Joseph, Mary & baby Jesus @ a Leuven busstop

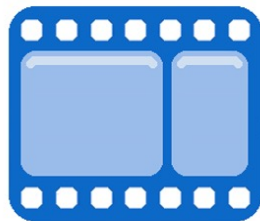


Recontextualisation

Lieven Boeve on the difference between *Values Education* and *Recontextualisation*



Prof. Dr. Lieven Boeve, current dean of the *Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies*, talks about the distinctive nature and the fundamental differences between *Christian Values Education* and *Recontextualisation of Catholic identity*.



Interview filmed at the dean's office

Date: 2 January 2013

Duration: 3.20 minutes

With English subtitles



Recontextualisation

Mosaic of St Brendan's adventurous life



Mosaic that shows events in the life of St Brendan. A school community project in a small Catholic primary school with children from mainly immigrant and socially marginalised families. The school has hired the services of an experienced craftswoman/artist. Children, teachers and parents work together to create a magnificent glass mosaic with scenes from the adventurous life of St Brendan, intertwined with other references to the Christian story, creatively portrayed in an imaginative and contemporary way. When finished, the mosaic will find its place on the floor between the new multifunctional sports hall and the school library.



For many years to come, the mosaic will be a testimony of how this school's Catholic identity exists in the dynamic between its traditional heritage and the living faith of its current community.

Recontextualisation

Stations of the Cross (1)



Holy Rosary School, Kensington (20-09-2011)

Recontextualisation

Stations of the Cross (2)



Holy Rosary School, Kensington (20-09-2011)

Recontextualisation

Stations of the Cross (3)



Holy Rosary School, Kensington (20-09-2011)

Recontextualisation

Mary Magdalene



Maria Magdalene

Recontextualisation

Recontextualisation of Catholic identity



Chapel of Revelation



Flemish Lassalian Perspective, Groot-Bijgaarden. Designed by Tom Callebaut and Cindy Tirry, TCCT

Recontextualisation

Recontextualisation of Catholic identity



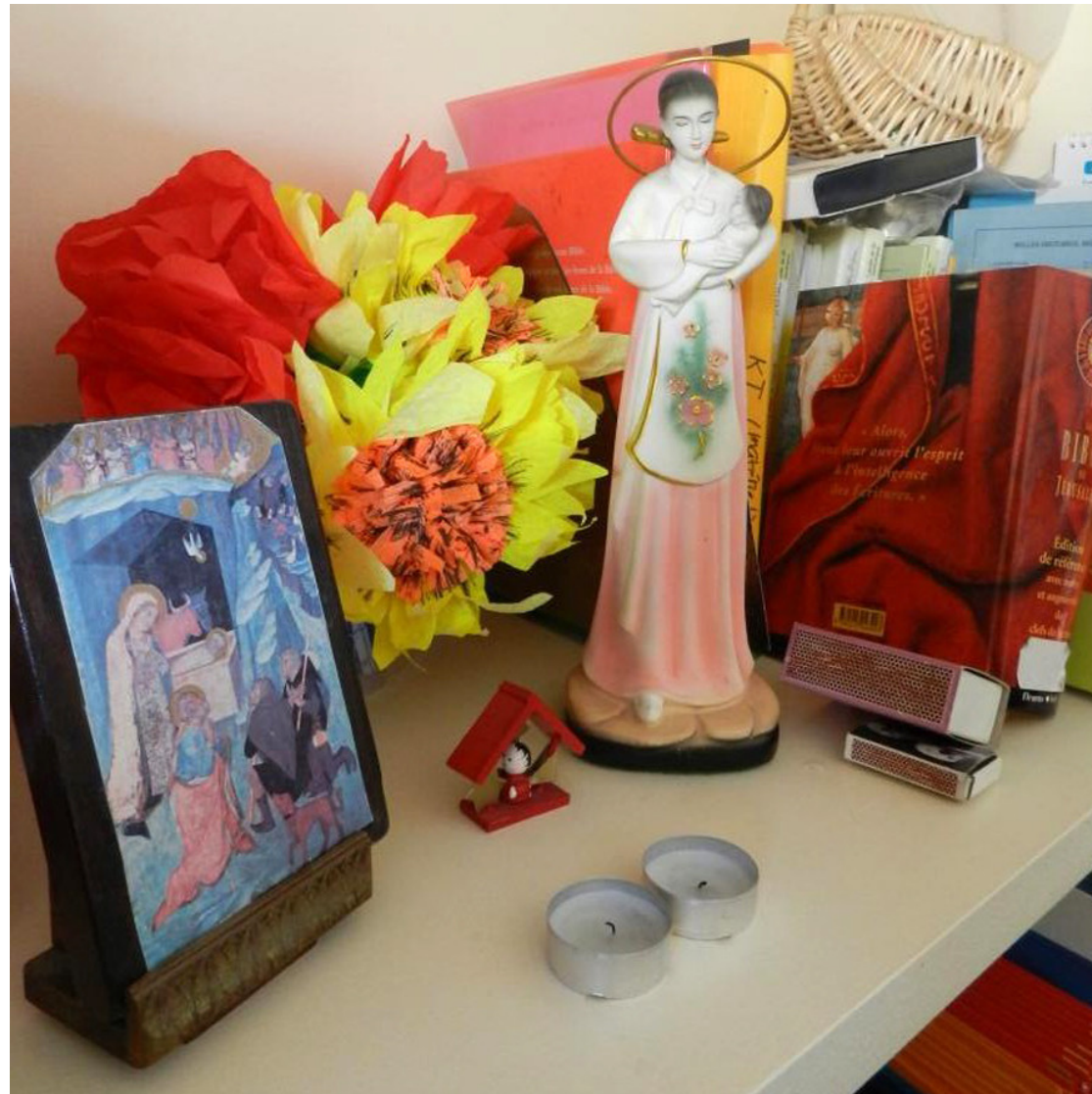
Chapel of Revelation



Flemish Lassalian Perspective, Groot-Bijgaarden. Designed by Tom Callebaut and Cindy Tirry, TCCT

Recontextualisation

Inculturation as a form of *Recontextualisation*



Recontextualisation

Esse est percipi (to be is to be perceived)



Little statue made of broken crystal commemorating the victims of sexual abuse in the church.



Cathedral of Antwerp, inaugurated by bishop Johan Bonny, Holy Saturday 30 March 2013.

Recontextualisation ?

Jesus Christ Superman



Recontextualisation ?

Colourful Mary's



Recontextualisation ?

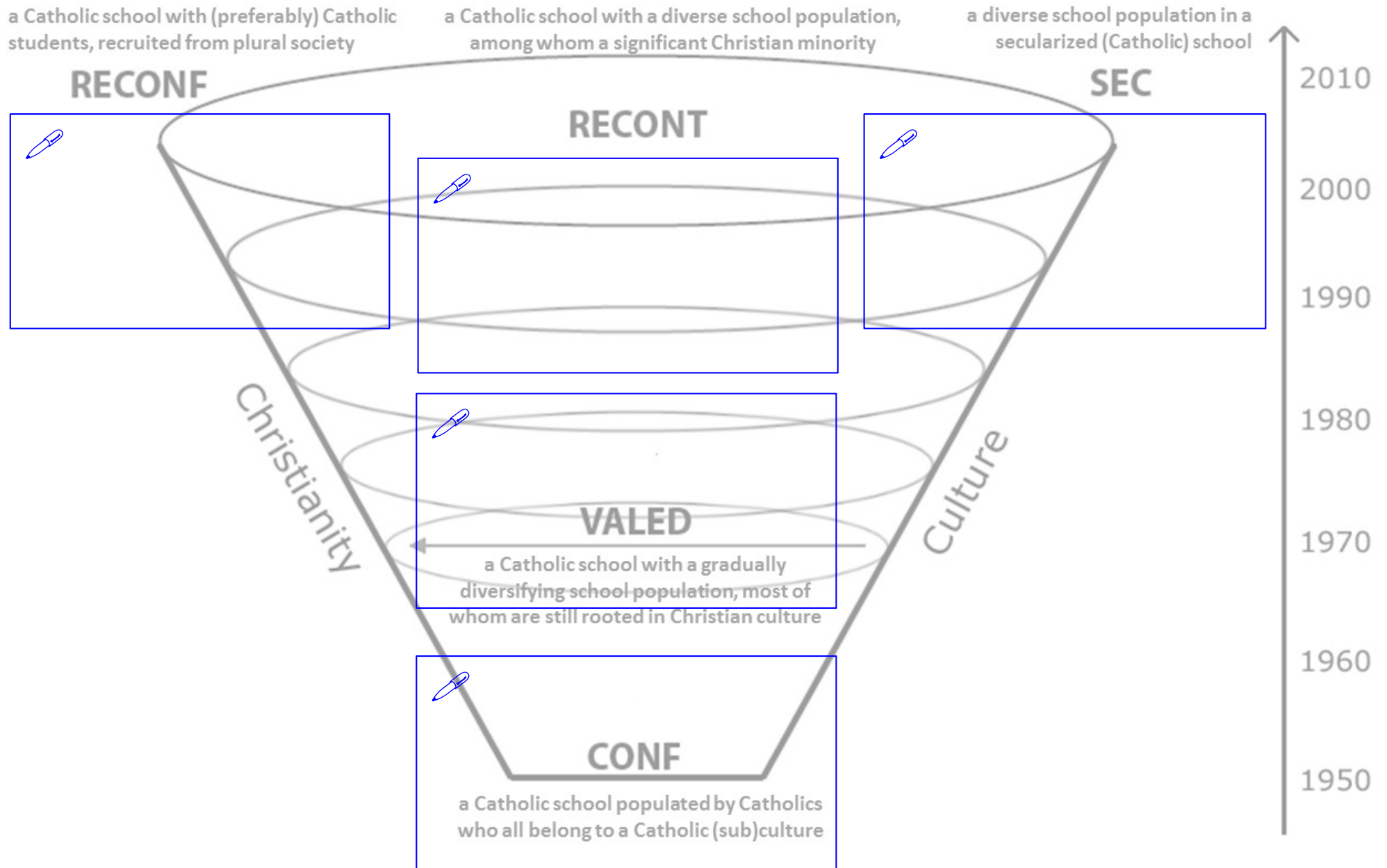
Halloween – exercise



How to handle the feast of *Halloween* in a Catholic school?

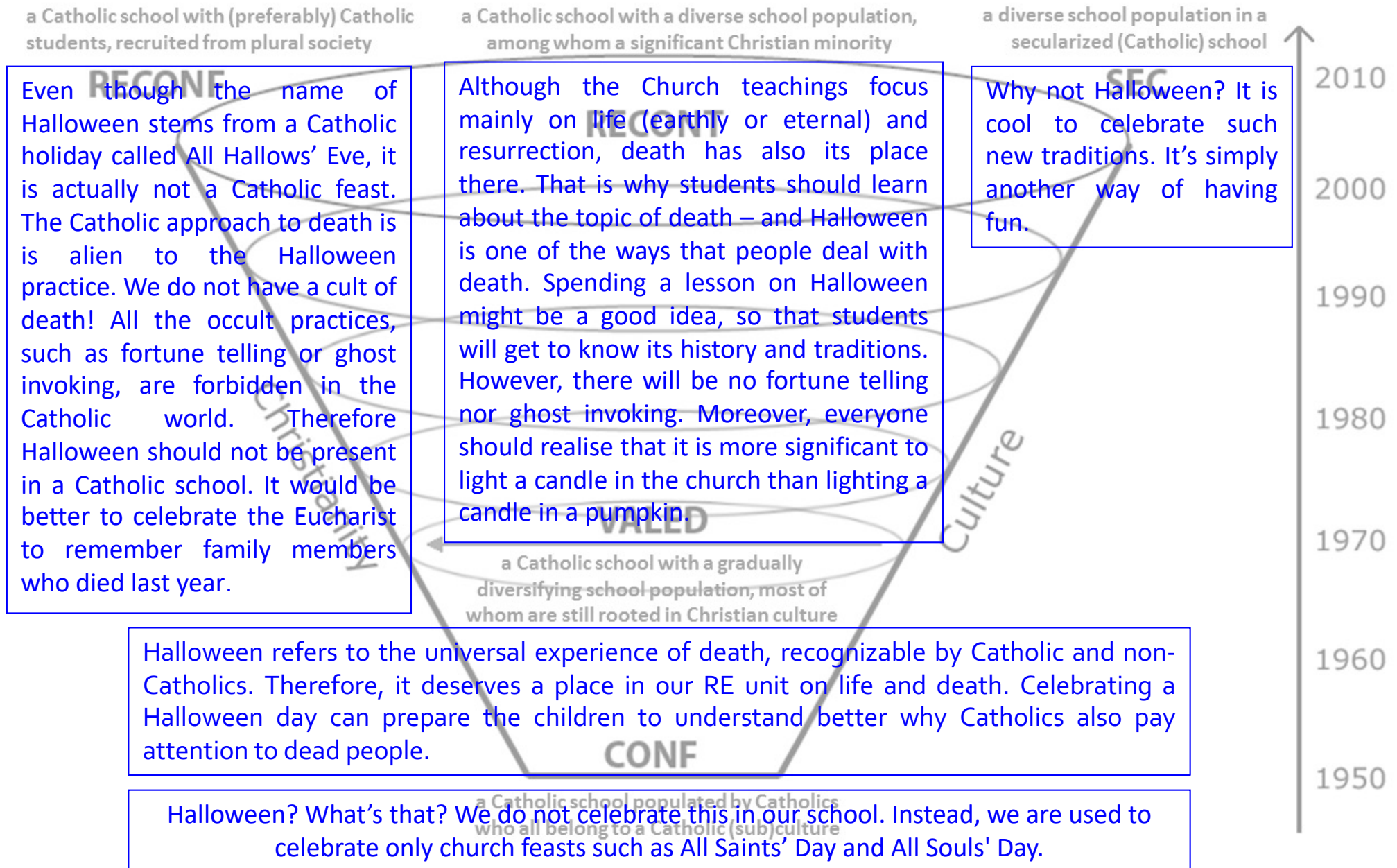


How to handle the feast of *Halloween* in a Catholic school?



What does it mean to *recontextualise* Catholic identity in a plural culture, in distinction from the alternatives?

How to handle the feast of *Halloween* in a Catholic school?



What does it mean to *recontextualise* Catholic identity in a plural culture, in distinction from the alternatives?



Types of dialogue

Everybody likes dialogue.

But is it kerygmatic or *Recontextualising*?

Victoria Scale, Dialogue School subtypes

A kerygmatic and a recontextualising variant



After factor analysis it seems that, within the Dialogue School type, there are two separate subtypes: a **kerygmatic variant** (focus on maintaining a traditional Catholic confessionality in the middle of pluralising culture) and a **recontextualising variant** (focus on the hermeneutical renewal of Catholic school identity through the dialogue with pluralising culture).

Dialogue School, kerygmatic variant



Dialogue School, recontextualising variant



Victoria Scale, Dialogue School subtypes

A kerygmatic and a recontextualising variant



Dialogue School, kerygmatic variant

The Catholic faith presents a very meaningful and valuable message that should be heard by all. Ultimately, we believe that the truth offered by Catholicism is more fundamental and fulfilling than the views of other religions or philosophies of life. So, ultimately, a Catholic school may give priority to Catholic faith and practices, over other religions or philosophical outlooks. After all, **the students in our schools deliberately chose to enrol in a Catholic institution**. It is clear that, in Catholic schools, religion should not be an individual, private matter that doesn't figure in daily school life. Catholic schools must be involved in the faith formation of the students. Students should be discouraged from taking refuge in the individual, private realm.

BUT a school should not expect all students to become Catholics. After all, it is important for Christians to respect people being different. We must never force our beliefs upon our fellow men! It is perfectly compatible with the Catholic faith, to live within a plural society, sharing our friendship and love with all other people. But in order to do so, we must search creatively for good ways to be truly Catholic in the midst of contemporary culture. We must find renewed ways to live as true Catholics in today's multicultural society, allowing the Catholic particularity to sound amidst many other voices. It is important to keep an open mind while doing so. There must be open communication with other philosophical views, but without taking over too many 'un-Catholic' influences. **Our quest is about a new 'public relations' policy; it's not a matter of fundamental theological development.**

After all, the 'Catholic package' of beliefs and truth claims, rites and rituals, moral and political convictions, typical prayers and music – in short the traditional Catholic 'way of life' – is more or less established and fixed. **It is generally not desirable to creatively change too much of the content and form of the Catholic way, in order to make it 'fit better' into the ever-changing, contemporary cultural mainstream.** Therefore Catholic schools should try to avoid apparent non-Catholic / anti-Catholic views and practices, because they could undermine its Catholic mission. The essence of Catholicism – largely defined by tradition – must be preserved and, if necessary, safeguarded and defended against other views.

Dialogue School, recontextualising variant

In dealing with our Catholic faith, while living in a multi-religious society, we must adopt an open, searching, hermeneutical approach. **For the truth of Christianity isn't fixed, but is to be rediscovered and made real through a continuous search for it.** We should look creatively and with an open mind for renewed insights in what it could mean to be Catholic in the midst of contemporary culture. For in every new historical context, the Catholic faith is to be re-profiled – *recontextualized*.

This process of recontextualisation has been going on since the dawn of Christianity, and now it is up to us to continue this tradition into the 21st century. The Catholic tradition has always evolved and developed itself in manifold ways, and should continue to do so. Along the way, as God walks with us on our path, new revelation occurs and the faith tradition keeps expanding itself.

We are continuously looking for new ways to express the Gospel, new practices to make it come true today. While doing so, **we're standing with one foot in the Christian tradition, and with the other in a yet unwritten future.** It is uncertain what the outcome of our search will be. It might be possible that valuable things from the past fade away in new times... Nevertheless we rejoice about new discoveries along the way, and we may hope that the Holy Spirit walks with us always.

People in Catholic schools should be searching for what it means to live as Catholics in today's multicultural society. To achieve this, an active dialogue with other philosophical views should be greatly valued. It is important that many different philosophical views and lifestyles should be allowed to co-exist in a Catholic school. Because precisely by respecting and really valuing people being different, a school rediscovers its *Catholic* identity – time and again. **This receptivity towards 'the other' is fundamental. It is important to really meet our fellow men, and this means to really listen to what moves his/her spirit. Only when we look the other in the eye, we can see the face of Jesus. Through our offering shelter to 'the stranger', God reveals Himself in new, unexpected ways.**

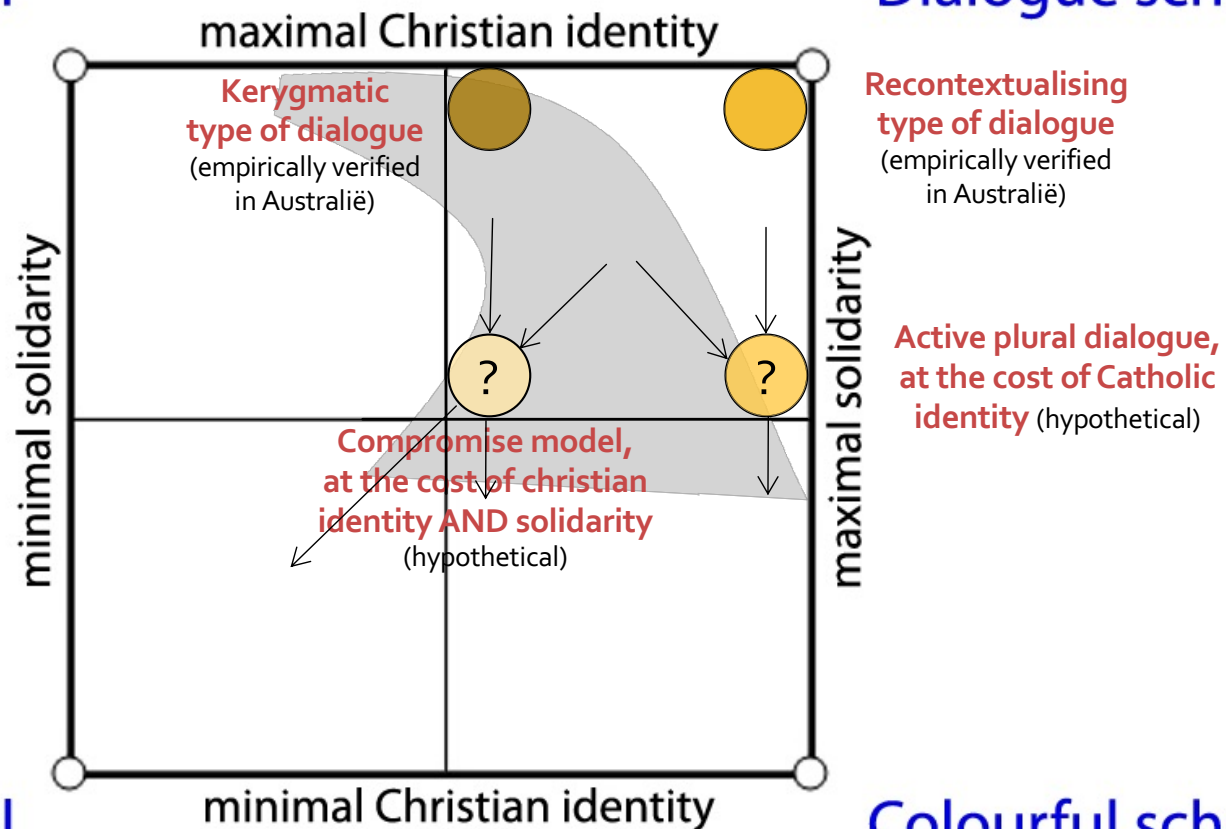
Victoria Scale, Dialogue School subtypes

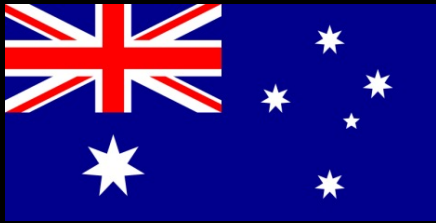
Diagram – types of dialogue



Monologue school

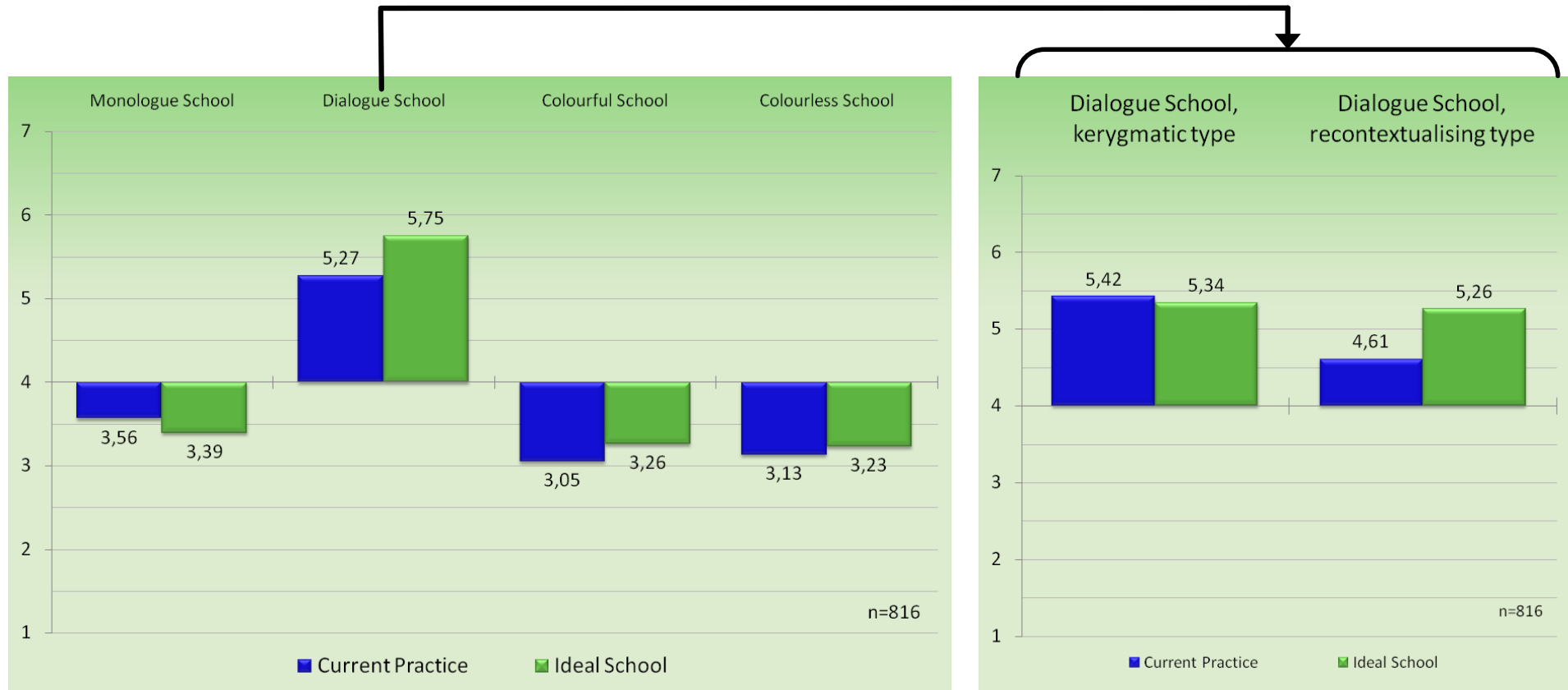
Dialogue school





Dialogue School subtypes

Scale means, adults (no CEO members)



After factor analysis it seems that, within the Dialogue School type, there are two separate subtypes: a **kerygmatic variant** (focus on maintaining a traditional Catholic confessionality in the middle of pluralising culture) and a **recontextualising variant** (focus on the hermeneutical renewal of Catholic school identity through the dialogue with pluralising culture).

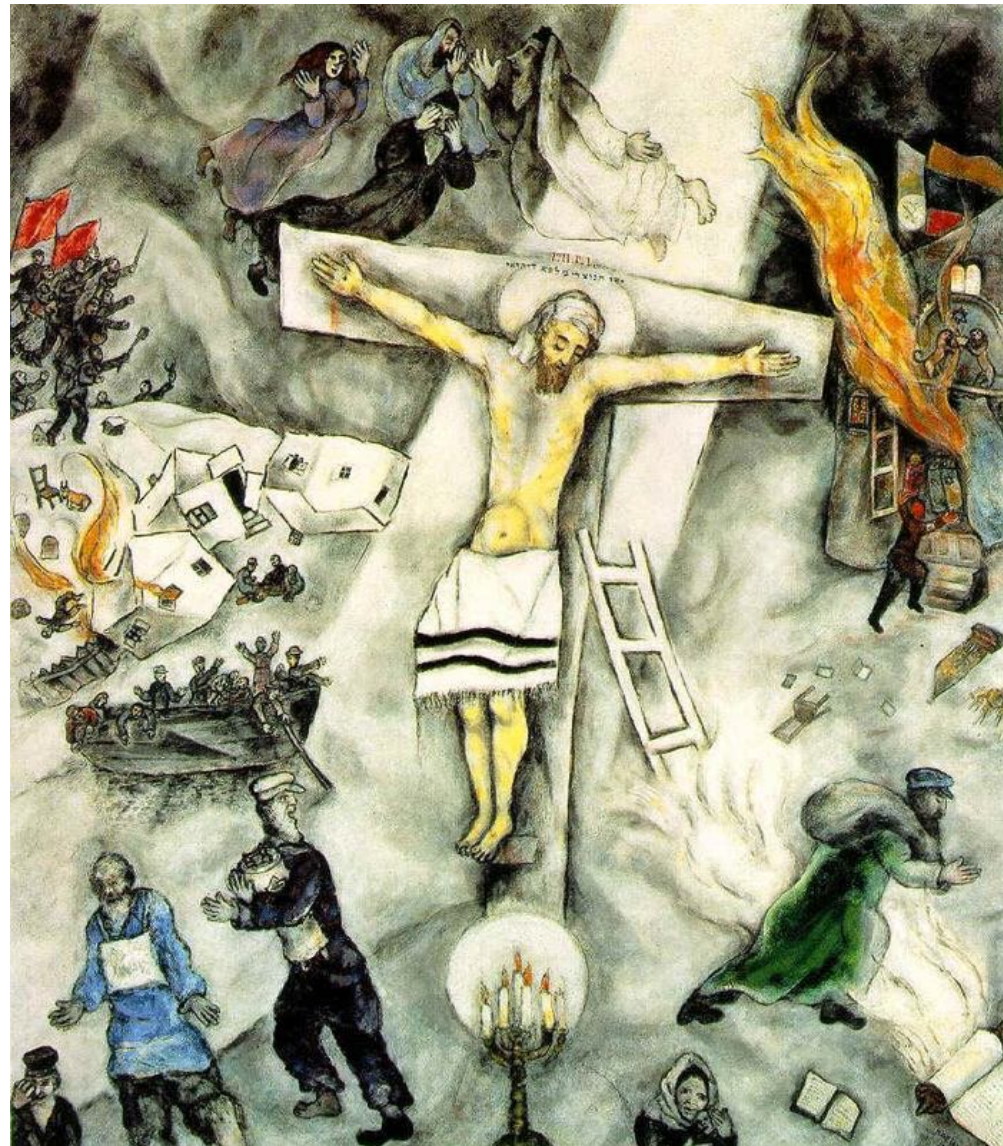
Recontextualisation

Pentecost Sunday forest walk, 2012



White Crucifixion

Marc Chagall



His favourite painting.

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