Eucharist and the fiat,” adding that these “are not merely ‘private’ sources of moral inspiration for worldly activity,” but the inner form of the world as world. This is the starting point for any effective evangelization of culture, any renewal of our civilization as it enters the new millenium.

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**Notes**

1. A somewhat different version of this review, aimed at different audience, also appears in a recent issue of _Cultures and Faith_, the journal of the Pontifical Council on Cultures.

2. See, in particular, two issues of _Communio_: Winter 1994 (XXI:4) and Summer 1995 (XXII:2). In the former, Lorenzo Albacete compares the new evangelization to liberation theology in “The Praxis of Resistance.”

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*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a great blessing for the Church in this period after the Second Vatican Council. The Council, in its Constitution *Dei Verbum* (The Constitution on Divine Revelation), solemnly proclaimed the tradition of the Church that Christianity is a revealed religion and that God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will. Nevertheless, a form of what may be called neo-Modernism has become widespread in the Church, particularly among the professional catechists and teachers of theology. For many of them, Catholic teaching is not based on the Word of God as it comes to us through the two channels of Sacred Scripture and Tradition, and is discerned by the Magisterium of the Church. Many dissenters from the faith of the Church have attempted to re-constitute Catholic teaching on the basis of religious experience and feminist theology.

As I was reading _Flawed Expectations_, the newspapers carried a notification from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith that a theologian, Father Tissa Balasuriya, has deviated from the integrity of the truth of the Catholic faith and cannot be considered a Catholic theologian. He has also been excommunicated because of the positions he took. The reason for this action is that Father Balasuriya does not recognize the supernatural, unique, and irrepeateable character of the revelation of Jesus Christ. He considers
the dogmas of the Church to be on the same level as theological interpretations offered by other churches, the fruit of their cultural and political interests. Jesus is simply a supreme teacher and one of the greatest spiritual leaders of humanity, a person who communicates to us a primordial spiritual experience, but whose divine Sonship is not recognized. The statements of both the extraordinary Magisterium and the ordinary universal Magisterium are denied or relativized.

This latest document, made public on January 6, 1997, is a confirmation of the existence of a culture of dissent and disloyalty in the Church’s theological and religious education systems. As the authors of *Flawed Expectations* state, “Eyebrows are only generally raised, not at what the dissenters are doing but at anybody who might venture to call attention to or criticize them.”

In this very fine example of Catholic scholarship, Wrenn and Whitehead have amply documented the state of crisis in the Church which prompted the decision to put out a catechism. The crisis consisted of this: “The truth and indeed the relevance of many of the Church’s ancient beliefs were increasingly being subjected to widespread denigration and even denial, often from inside as well as from outside the Church.” The authors describe how the Catechism was put together under the aegis of Cardinal Ratzinger and Archbishop Schonborn. Their work now makes it possible for priests and catechists working in parishes to learn exactly what the Church is teaching. This means that on many of the disputed questions about the Church’s teaching, anyone can learn the authentic teaching of the Church by consulting the Catechism. Thus, dissent on topics such as original sin, angels, purgatory, the perpetual virginity of Mary, transubstantiation, the institution of the seven sacraments by Christ, the prohibition of marriage after divorce, the immorality of the use of contraceptives and of homosexual acts, are presented clearly enough so that any literate person can learn what the Church is teaching. The Catechism is solidly based on the Second Vatican Council, and much of the confusion created by dissenters concerning the meaning of the Council can now be seen as dissent from the clear teaching of the Council itself.

Wrenn and Whitehead have provided clear evidence of the attempts of the catechetical establishment and the theological establishment to damn the Catechism with faint praise. Since they were unable to block its composition, and since they were unable to foist an ideologically biased English translation on us, the dissenters and neo-Modernists are now engaged in making the Catechism seem to be irrelevant or too difficult for non-professionals to read. This concerted effort has made clear that any hopes the Catholic bishops or the Catholic people may have entertained that the present theological and catechetical establishments would accept and automatically help implement the Catechism can now be seen as flawed expectations.

For example, the response of many religious education professionals is typified by the words of one former diocesan director of religious education who announced that the Catechism must be read in “an adult way,” i.e., the certain teaching that the Pope has assured us that the Catechism contains “must be in
dialogue with the actual practice of the Christian.” In other words, if there are Catholics who do not believe and do not follow what the Catholic Church teaches, the task of the religious educator is not to reaffirm what the Church teaches, as the Catechism attests. Rather, the task of the religious educator is to enter into dialogue with the actual practice of the dissenter.

The same professional religious educator also holds that the Catechism will contribute to “the continuing tension of balancing the weight of the tradition with the insights of theology.” The “insights of theology” are thus put on the same level as the Gospel message as it has been handed down by the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is clear that the bishops have work cut out for them in insisting that the doctrines of the Church be presented as they are taught in the Catechism and not as private individuals might like those teachings to be after dialogue with dissenting theologians.

The response of the theological establishment is even worse than that of the catechists. One professor of theology said that “it would be a mistake to hand the text of the new Catechism to everyone...Catholics without professional theological training would be confused.” Perhaps my parish has a higher intellectual level, but my parishioners have been reading and discussing the Catechism very intelligently since it came out in English. Another writer, a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, attacks the Catechism for teaching the indissolubility of marriage. She has issued her own dogmatic statement that the indissolubility of marriage is impossible. In whatever way this renowned theologian has reached her conclusions, they were not reached by any theological argmentation compatible with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

This book is very important for anyone concerned about the health of the Catholic Church today. Catholic social scientists, in particular, would be remiss if they were to neglect Flawed Expectations. As Cardinal O’Connor says in the Foreword to the book, it can help us “in becoming aware of those counterproductive theological and catechetical tendencies that The Catechism of the Catholic Church was originally intended to correct.” Don’t miss this one!

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Professor Carroll believes in the action of God in history. This makes the reading of his fine book a truly gratifying experience. To go against a taboo of at least forty years standing requires faith, courage, and a healthy detachment from the imperatives of the academic establishment. In writing as a