

Dr. Gabriel Moran (b. 1935) is Professor Emeritus of Educational Philosophy at New York University. He taught courses in the Department of Humanities and the Social Sciences, particularly ethics, philosophy of education, and international education. He directed the programs of religious education and philosophy of education.

A Roman Catholic, Professor Moran is a prolific scholar and teacher in the areas of Christian and religious education. He has held numerous academic appointments in major colleges and universities, given countless addresses, lectures, workshops, and presentations at national and international meetings and conferences, and served on a wide variety of academic boards, religious, and scholarly organizations. Dr. Moran continues to write, teach, and inspire the fields of Christian and religious education through its members young and old. Gabriel Moran was born in Manchester, New Hampshire on August 11, 1935. His mother, Mary (Murphy) Moran, worked in a textile mill for a few years before devoting herself full time to the raising of five children. Gabriel's father, John Moran, was a longstanding employee for a major transit company in Manchester and later assumed the presidency of that company. Gabriel Moran has four siblings (all living): Louise (6 years older); Mary (4 years older); John (2 years older); and Dorothy (5 years younger).

Moran attended Our Lady of Perpetual Help grammar school and Bishop Bradley High School, both located in Manchester. He began his undergraduate career at the University of New Hampshire and soon transferred to The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC where, in 1958, he graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in philosophy. Gabriel was also admitted to the prestigious academic honor society of Phi Beta Kappa. During the years 1954-1985, Moran was a vowed member of the religious order of Christian Brothers, and from 1958-1961, he taught high school mathematics and religion at La Salle Academy in Providence, Rhode Island. Gabriel then earned his M.A. and Ph.D., both in religious education, from The Catholic University of America in 1962 and 1965, respectively. It should be noted that Moran's M.A. thesis was very well received and therefore quickly published as a book in 1963 under the title *Scripture and tradition* (New York: Herder & Herder). As a budding scholar and teacher well grounded in Scripture and ecclesiology, Gabriel Moran's creative, reflective, and insightful work was now taking shape and getting more notoriety from students and colleagues alike. His undergraduate teaching career began in 1962 where he taught philosophy and theology at De La Salle College in Washington, DC until 1965.

At the level of graduate teaching, Moran instructed theology and religious education at Manhattan College, Bronx, NY from 1965-1970, and at New York Theological Seminary, NY from 1968-1973. In 1981, Moran began his faculty appointment at New York University teaching religion, philosophy, and the history of education where he remains today.

Interspersed throughout the traditional fall and spring academic semesters, Professor Moran taught at numerous summer programs and institutes at nearly twenty academic institutions. Some include the following: Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA; Andover Newton Theological School, Newton, MA; Villanova University, Philadelphia, PA; St. Thomas College, Miami, FL; Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT; Toronto School of

Theology, Toronto, Ontario; Strawberry Hill Teachers' College, London, England; Holy Redeemer College, Dublin, Ireland; Seattle University, Seattle, WA; Marymount College, Detroit, MI; and Fordham University, Bronx, NY.

As expected from such a remarkable and well-known scholar, Gabriel Moran's administrative experience is also rich and diverse. In Grailville, Ohio in the 1960s, Moran participated in the "The Catechetical Forum" which was a series of meetings convened by Gerard Sloyan, Mary Perkins Ryan, Gerard Pottebaum, and others during which Roman Catholic authors, professors, graduate students, and textbook publishers discussed the changing needs of the catechetical world and religious education. Moran also served as Director in the Graduate Program of Theology at Manhattan College, Bronx, NY from 1965-1970, and President of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Long Island-New England District from 1970-1973. Since 1973, Moran serves as President of Alternative Religious Education, Inc., and from 1974-1975, he was Director of the Institute of Religious Education at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA. At NYU, Moran was Director of the Program of Religious Education from 1986-1997 and Chair of the Department of Cultural Foundations from 1989-1991.

Given his critical insights, wisdom, and humility to serve, Professor Moran was energetically requested to sit on numerous boards of directors. The main ones include the following: The College Theology Society (1967-1970); New York Theological Seminary (1970-1973); Religious Education Association (1984-1991); Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education (1980-1983) and President (1991-1992); and the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (1992-1996).

### **Life of a Scholar: Influences**

Too numerous to itemize a lifetime of work that continues to thrive today, Gabriel Moran has lectured extensively in numerous formats and pedagogical styles throughout Africa, Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Germany, Ireland, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and the United States. Rather than merely record his countless publications, awards, appointment letters, and distinctions, Professor Moran's extensive scholarship and soft-spoken demeanor are best expressed by the ambiance of his apartment in New York City. It is the true mark of the rigorous, yet humble scholar. One views bookshelves brimming with the tomes of great thinkers of yesterday and today and the seeds of doctoral student dissertations of tomorrow, early morning and late night "ideas-in-progress" bookmarks sticking out of books and journal issues, clipped newspaper articles and note cards, and all surrounded by numerous photographs of cherished colleagues along the journey, most notably ones of his late wife, friend, and companion Dr. Maria Harris. And always - a fresh stack of library books to be devoured at his huge desk which is right next to the large, sunlit window disclosing an urban New York east village of hustle, bustle, diversity, and an errant pigeon or two looking for lunch.

Gabriel Moran received the Catholic Press Award in 1977 for his work as movie and theater reviewer of *Sign* from 1976-1981, the Unicorn Award at Boston College in 1974, the Lifetime Achievement Award from Sadlier Publishers in 1998, and, in 2003, the

William Ranney Harper Award at the 100th Anniversary of the Religious Education Association. Given the sincere testimony of countless scholars, teachers, ministers, and students over the decades, I am certain there are many more accolades than Moran chooses to mention.

While interviewing him face-to-face, my insistent questions about his honors clearly made him a bit uncomfortable as was expected given his gentle character. To those who know the man, Gabriel Moran is not one to boast or even fain interest in keeping records of such impressive self-accomplishments. And he doesn't just sound humble. He really is humble. Ask the countless people who know him. Rather, Moran prefers to devote his energies to the task at hand, as he calls it, - working tirelessly to cultivate a richer caliber of ideas for thoughtful expression and collaboration amid the painstaking, yet important, philosophical task of making careful distinctions. Moran listens, really listens. As a result, he can offer critical and sustainable feedback to people when discussing ideas. Moran's methodology reminds one of an artful master teacher who unrelentingly subscribes to Aristotle's powerful yet humble dictum: "rarely affirm, seldom deny, always distinguish." Moran listens carefully, ruminates intently, and offers great clarity while ushering forth challenge, hope, and newness of mind.

When asked pointed questions about his academic honors, publications, life achievements, and contributions to the fields of Christian education and philosophy, the soft-spoken Gabriel Moran is nearly mute. However, when one asks about central ideas that surfaced with the ancients and still meaningfully bother us today in our intellectual, ethical, and faith-filled lives, Gabe Moran's eyes and heart light up with passion. He explains how he was and is really only interested in one simple, though crucial, set of questions. These are the questions that critically examine and challenge our assumptions, in order to open up a clearer and deeper conversation. That is, being able to better understand the moving target of ideas - a history and geography of terms and how we use them in our life's work when arguing for, against, and through our changing often competing understandings as theorist and practitioner of religious education interlaced. It is thinking about thinking, not for intellectual clarity alone, but most importantly for the possibility of concrete self-revelation and transformation of one's day-to-day life.

What makes Moran tick? When posed this question, Gabe does not hesitate to mention one of his major influences and mentor, Professor Gerard Sloyan. A Roman Catholic priest of the Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey, Sloyan remains a prolific author, scholar, and teacher today. Moran first met Sloyan while Moran was a graduate student at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. An emergent leader in the discipline of religious education, as well as liturgy, ecumenism, and inter-religious dialogue, Sloyan helped introduce Gabriel Moran to the growing need to square the old (pre-Vatican II) church with the new (post-Vatican II) church with respect to the changing ideologies of ecclesiology - how and why we understand "church" and its role in the world.

Moran explained that Gerard Sloyan was the director of the religious education program at The Catholic University of America while Moran was a graduate student and that Sloyan still teaches there even though he is well into his 90s by now. According to

Moran, Sloyan represented to him a certain and "meaningful thread" between what was going on in Europe and the United States during the tumultuous times of Vatican II. Working to better articulate how people were challenged to re-think ecclesiology and its relevant terms and languages in response to the documents and promulgations of Vatican II became a major aim of Moran's academic, personal, and religious life. Moran credits the seeds of these passionate stirrings of mind and heart to the caring and keen views of his mentor, Gerard Sloyan.

Philosophically trained and "hard-wired," so to speak, it is not unusual that Moran considers himself very indebted to the greats of Plato and Thomas Aquinas, among others. For Moran, Plato, through the enjoyable character of the great interlocutor Socrates, helped him organize and get excited about the tasks of thinking, learning, and teaching - a laudable trinity to which Moran derives much satisfaction and meaning in his life to this day. Through Plato, the masterful teacher arrives on the scene not with the alleged certitude of professorial status, but rather with the unrelenting humility of the inquiring student, a discipline (learner) in the truest sense of the word, work, and human acts. For Moran, "to teach is to show someone how to do something, how to choreograph a human body's movement" (Showing how: the act of teaching, 79). Plato serves as our guide along the journey of matters human, physical and metaphysical, profane and sacred interlaced and meaningfully so.

Thomas Aquinas, Moran comments, helped him recognize the need for clear and orderly expression of ideas, especially ideas that seem to evade human articulation through the tools of language. Moran mentions how certain early portions of Thomas' *Summa theologiae* aided Moran to develop a clearer sense of the richness and value of what Christian educators might understand as transformative revelation vis a vis the shift in contemporary Catholic thinking about revelation and its sources that sprang up in post-Vatican II teachings and dialogue. Moran characterizes his own graduate studies as a moment in time that ran parallel to the shifting ideological winds of Vatican II and its profound thinkers and visionaries. The potent (and oftentimes volatile) works of Bernard Haring, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Yves Congar revolutionized moral theology in the 1960s and 1970s.

"Haring, a Roman Catholic scholar who influenced the sweeping modernization of Vatican II by emphasizing a moral theology of Christian love rather than the cataloguing of sins" challenged the young Moran to think more intently and critically about questions of faith, reason, science, salvation, and revelation (Barbara Stewart, *New York Times*, July 11, 1998). According to Stewart, "for centuries, moral theology -- the study of the morality of human actions -- had concentrated on sin: the causes, characteristics, degrees and consequences of the gamut of wrongdoing," and "beginning with 'The Law of Christ,' several volumes published in 1954, Father Haring pioneered a much broader approach that became the standard in Catholic seminaries and universities." Such an approach of questioning and challenging, not to eradicate the Church and its teachings, but rather to help build them up stronger and more vibrant, became a major interest for the young Moran who poured through pages and pages of these so-called theological "rabble rousers" of the time, many of whom received public ecclesial reprimand and censure.

The great moral theologian Edward Schillebeeckx was another such influence on Moran. According to Peter Steinfels, "Father Schillebeeckx found alternative intellectual resources in modern phenomenology, with its meticulous attention to the actual experience of consciousness" and by re-examining Thomas Aquinas' medieval context, Schillebeeckx "recovered a Thomism that expounded the presence and mystery of God in far less rationalistic and conceptual ways than did its neo-scholastic versions" with a "strong emphases on human experience and on the importance of examining church teaching in historical context...His early writing on the sacraments, for example, portrayed them as personal encounters with God rather than mechanisms for the distribution of grace" (Peter Steinfels, New York Times, January 16, 2010).

Yves "Pere" Congar was a Dominican theologian and later named cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church who was well known for his efforts in supporting the widespread ecumenical movement during the time of Vatican II (Wolfgang Saxon, New York Times, June 24, 1995). Congar was a leading force intent on reexamining Church ecclesiastical structure, roles, and how best to understand ecclesiology with respect to the laity. Now, for the young Moran, the dialogue about uniting Church teachings with contemporary culture, exploring greater religious freedoms, and a modern reworking of the Thomistic phenomenology with a view to modern ecclesiology that Schillebeeckx and others privileged, according to Steinfels, became the fodder for meaningful and transforming conversations of great professional and personal interest for Moran. These thinkers embodied Moran's creative vision of what "revelation" could really mean in the life of religious education and the church in the modern world.

In addition, Moran was influenced by his participation in the "The Catechetical Forum" in the 1960s. This was a series of meetings convened by Gerard Sloyan, Mary Perkins Ryan, Gerard Pottebaum, and other major thinkers in the field of Christian and religious education during which Roman Catholic authors, professors, graduate students, and textbook publishers discussed the changing needs of and responses to the catechetical world and emergent religious education.

To quote Moran regarding our discussion of seminal thinkers who helped craft his level and spirit of scholarship on and off the printed page, he responded immediately: "Plato, the Church Fathers, and the like. But,...Karl Rahner was my salvation as a young man starting out, for he pushed my mind into tight corners and challenged me to open up the pathways of ideas for myself. He also taught me that theology need not be boring if you know where and how to look at it, how it can be both deeply rooted and transformative in one's life." Moran spoke of how Rahner's 1961 Volume I of *Theological Investigations* challenged Moran to think about the sacramental principle of what it means to be an incarnationally rooted human being, to probe the unanswered questions of how and why we search for the divine presence within the redemptive nature of our human bodily form, to ground our lives and faith traditions in ultimate meaning, and to better re-appropriate the value of Thomas Aquinas given the great Thomistic revival of the 1920s. Moran commented that "Rahner is head and shoulders above the rest at exposing and then patiently wrestling with these kinds of important questions." What is clear for Moran

is that we should not only focus on the raw content of a chosen topic, but also the pathways by which we gain greater clarity and collaborative insights.

We need to learn how to better 'teach the conversation' of critical thought and expression to one another for the purpose of enriching our individual and communal lives. It is in this process that we are truly a part of revelation since we continue God's revelatory work incarnate to the world. We abstract and conceptualize, in order to return to the self that much more clarified and concrete. Immutable, ahistorical rubrics are critically challenged so that we may be and do the great and powerful work of being revelatory instruments of God's grace and profound love within us and for one another, and this is our simple yet profound link to the Divine.

In meaningful ways, Gabriel Moran's early works, *Theology of revelation* (1966), *Catechesis of revelation* (1966), *God still speaks: the basis of Christian education* (1967), *Experiences in community* (1968), and *Vision and tactics: towards an adult church* (1968) were critical, powerful, and poignant responses to the philosophical thought processes that were surveyed and employed during Vatican II, as well as what other theologians of the day were studying. The young Moran had things to say, and prominent theologians started to listen more and more. Below is one such response from scholar Avery Dulles, S.J. taken from *Theology Today* in 1967.

"The Concerns analogous to those of Dewart are evident in the writings of the young American theologian, Brother Gabriel Moran, F.S.C., who, like Dewart, expresses himself in smooth and fluent prose. He has made himself known to the theological community through his concise and penetrating little study, *Scripture and Tradition*. At the end of this work he pointed out that the question whether all revelation is contained in the Bible cannot be answered until one has dealt with the prior questions of what revelation is and how any revelation is contained in the Bible. Recently he has set forth his views on these matters in his *Theology of Revelation*.

Following the general direction of contemporary European phenomenology, Moran holds that revelation is essentially "a personal union in knowledge between God and a participating subject in the revelational history of a community" (p. 93). Putting the accent on personal encounter, he tends toward a somewhat actualistic position, and evaluates the historical and doctrinal aspects of revelation almost entirely in terms of their power to contribute to a present existential communion with God. Having reached its unsurpassable fullness in the consciousness of the risen Christ, revelation continues to be given in the history of the church and of the world. Moran has rather independent views on the manner in which revelation should be taught. His latest book,

*The Catechesis of Revelation*, emphasizes the need of proportioning religious instruction to the needs and capacities of the student, neither overburdening him with exegetical and doctrinal materials which have no religious meaning for him, nor demanding a fullness of commitment which his youth cannot yet sustain. Moran's observations on making catechesis relevant to the contemporary American adolescent offer a clear and forceful challenge to the prevalent biblical-kerygmatic approach.

In a number of recent articles, Moran has begun to speak with a radicalism not apparent in his earlier work. While admitting that there is a God who is in the process of revealing, he rejects the idea that Christ delivered any revealed truths or that Christians can lay claim to any knowledge which others do not have. "The distinctive character of Judaic-Christian revelation is that God has left us no revelation." The Christian, therefore, should renounce the effort to deliver any message, whether dogmatic or biblical. "Other religions demand that men accept this or that thing. Christianity only invites men to accept themselves and their own freedom in a community with God." Moran's position is actually more nuanced than these isolated sentences would seem to suggest. He protests quite rightly against any tendency to look upon revelation as something in man's possession or at his disposal. He insists that our knowledge of God, especially within faith, is slippery and elusive. "God reveals and conceals himself in the naming of every truth. In the incarnation, God does not become obvious and comprehensible but, on the contrary, more paradoxical than ever before.

While Moran's views seem at first sight incompatible with Rahner's evaluation of dogma as "thematized truth," the gulf is not so wide as one might think. Rahner maintains that dogma lives off mystery, the thematic off the unthematic. For him as for Moran, revelation does not adequately consist of the formulas and professions of faith which have won approval in the community. Indeed, the formulas are not revelation at all unless they are seen against the horizons of a spirit which is tending into the unfathomable mystery we call God" ("Theological Table-Talk," *Theology Today*, Vol.24, No.3, October 1967).

Gabriel Moran also mentioned to me the person who influenced and continues to influence him the most. It is his friend, colleague, and wife, Maria Harris, who died in 2005. Gabriel explained that Maria knew a lot about the emergent women's movement because she associated herself with the pressing need for revival in the Church through the development of meaningful roles for young women in particular and that Maria was heavily influenced by well-known and published religious educators Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith. Gabriel said that he learned all kinds of educational experiments from Maria and of the profound and lasting impact her tireless dedication had on her students who knew, respected, and loved her. Gabriel also mentioned that Maria had a rare talent for conducting exciting classes and developing curricular pedagogies that used Biblical material in creative and sustainable ways. Moran asserts that he is most proud of his scholarship from 1990 to the present, for it crystallizes Maria's sense of incarnational theology within religious education and best utilizes themes of uniting teaching curriculum with the associated themes of revelation and transformation.

Among many texts, Gabriel Moran highlights the influence that Maria Harris' *Fashion Me a People* (Westminster Press, 1989) had on his own thinking in the field of Christian education. Maria Harris identifies the five forms of church curriculum: (1) kerygma, proclaiming the word of the Resurrection; (2) didache, the forming process of teaching; (3) leiturgia, uniting in prayer to re-present Jesus as sacrificial Christ in broken bread; (4) koinonia, formed community of fellowship; (5) diakonia, caring for and serving

others (16). Harris immediately contextualized the value of these above forms as tools of a living church, not a stagnant one. The human needs of the individual amid the community serve as the guiding principle by which the life of the church body becomes manifest in the spirit and fellowship of a living Christ. Life is the link. The church becomes the primary focus of a living Christ as Emmanuel, God among us. Gabriel internalizes Maria's words: "...we are the church, the fashioning of the forms becomes the fashioning of us..." (17).

### **Life of a Scholar: Those He Influenced**

In short, loads of people. Gabriel Moran is first and foremost a patient teacher. I discussed with him that when I first read Harris' *Fashion Me a People* and Moran's *Showing How*, I did not think very much about the meaning of curriculum as remarkably alive and a missionary form of being with God. In alignment with Maria Harris' critique, I viewed much of church curriculum under the false identification of only one of its forms: schooling, complete with instructors and agendas for youth. I had also envisioned curriculum as a canon of set texts, prayers, and individual and communal expressions of love as a component of the faithful. Now, after reading both Harris and Moran, I internalize church curriculum as the expression of love as the totality of the faithful, for the faithful is none other than called by God to be living Christ for and with others as teacher (*didache*), healer (*diakonia*), brethren (*koinonia*), prophet (*kerygma*), and sacrificed victim (*leiturgia*). The very forms of the church are what sustains and challenges it to be transcendent. Curriculum is not limited to texts and prayers. It is expanded into the living narratives of the people of God in outpouring word and life-filled action of meaning.

Now, I better understand what Harris and Moran mean by the multifarious dimensions of the curriculum of teaching as a repertoire of forms. There are teachers and lessons taught in classrooms, but not limited to classrooms. The curriculum of the church extends to settings of worship, service, fellowship, growth, and witness. The power of teaching must radiate to all such corners of contact with God's people. The simple conversation is an opportunity for grace; so is the shared praxis of a community in an ongoing formation of spirit and body. Since we are called to God by the living Christ Who humbles Himself to share in our daily humanity, we too are called to fully participate in our life source with fervor and thought. Gabriel reflected on how Maria astutely held that some people are more tactile learners and teachers than others, some more imaginative, auditory, personable, charismatic, abstract/conceptual, practical, verbal, sacramental. The benefit of these realities, for Harris and Moran, is that we may utilize them all in becoming a more transformed and transforming body of Christ to others in the world. Working to better receive such insights is the call to consciousness and love that allows us to be more fully alive in Christ with others. This is what creates community, asserts Gabriel Moran, namely teaching one another in cycles of knowledge, reflection, and action.

Over the years, countless individuals would gladly agree that they owe a large debt of gratitude to Gabriel Moran as they went on to contribute to the field of religious education. Such names as Francoise Darcy-Berube, Gloria Durka, John Elias, Padraic O'Hare, Harold ("Bud") Horell, Mary Perkins Ryan, Kieran Scott, and Michael Warren,

among others come to mind, not to mention the many current and recent masters and doctoral students who continue to tackle intriguing research projects through the critical philosophical and religious lens of Gabriel Moran, including yours truly.

Another way to answer the question "Who is influenced by Moran?" would be to do three things: (1) look up all the scholarly books, articles, religious education curriculum textbooks, sermons, newsletters, and internet blogs that cite, employ, and/or argue for or against Moran's scholarship (an enormous and comprehensive task no doubt); (2) research all the masters theses and doctoral dissertations whose titles indicate that the study itself principally concerns the life and works of Gabriel Moran; (3) laugh with a friend at the next APPRRE (Association of Professors and Practitioners of Religion and Religious Education) annual meeting when attendees to Moran's Research Interest Group presentation or colloquium draws more crowds than the Good Humor man at the playground in the summer.

Here is an example of #2 above. Consider Finola Cunnane's doctoral dissertation, mentored by Dr. Kieran Scott:

"This study explores the meaning of religious education through the lens of Gabriel Moran. It seeks to name key problems inherent in contemporary religious education and, in particular, the absence of a field or discipline that can accurately be named. In order to unveil the potential meaning of religious education, four themes permeating Moran's educational thought were selected: (1) The meaning and forms of education, (2) The meaning and forms of teaching, (3) Moral education and educating morally, and (4) Education toward adulthood. Problematizing the current languages of religious education, Moran proposes an educational framework comprising family, school, work, and leisure. Each of these forms partially embody the universal values of community, knowledge, work, and wisdom. Teaching within this framework is understood as showing someone how to do something.

Three families of teaching languages are identified, "homiletic, therapeutic, and academic," all of which show someone how to live and how to die. The study proceeds within this new educational paradigm. A second language in which to speak about religious education is presented and religious education is understood as comprising two complementary but differing aims: (a) to teach religion and (b) to teach to be religious. Thus understood, religious education in this study is examined in three different settings--family, school, and parish--with the above four educative themes interwoven through each one. The roles of the family, school, and parish as educator, teacher, moral educator, and educator toward adulthood are explored through the ways in which they are designed, model a way of life, and engage in the languages of teaching.

These settings provide educative opportunities, some predominantly focused on teaching to be religious, others primarily oriented to understand religion. Ultimately, religious education in these settings is directed to educating people toward religious maturity. In summary, this work examines the identity of religious education. The corpus of Gabriel Moran's writings is the vehicle for unveiling the richest possible meaning of religious

education for our time" (Finola Cunnane, "Unveiling religious education: Gabriel Moran and the exploration of meaning," 2000, doctoral dissertation).

Here is another example. Ilze Bulbika-King's "Embracing the dance: integrating spirituality and sexuality in single young adult women," 2010, doctoral dissertation: "The three hermeneutical lenses of body, pleasure, and control of birth provide the overall framework of the study. These themes run throughout the work and highlight deep and persistent wounds, both spiritual and sexual, promoted both by official Church teachings and popular media culture. The study's theory of religious education is grounded in the work of Gabriel Moran and Maria Harris. Moran's three teaching language forms of homiletic, therapeutic, and academic provide a framework that articulates a theory of religious education, authentically Incarnational and Trinitarian and open to the everyday renewed experiences of single young adult Roman Catholic women."

Reflecting on the impact that Gabriel Moran had on his own scholarship and vocation as a teacher, religious educator John Elias writes:

"One course with adults eventually shifted my vocation into an adult educator, even though I never formally studied adult education. Gabriel Moran and James Schaefer were our teachers in those days, calling for an adult education for an adult church. What made adult education especially satisfying was the rich experiences that adults brought to the classroom and the dramatic changes taking place in society and the Catholic church. Adult Catholics brought up on the Baltimore catechism and an apologetic or defensive approach to Catholicism deep down knew that there was something more to the faith than what they had been previously taught. In the 1960's armed with the new theology incorporated in Vatican II and the writings of prominent European theologians, my colleagues and I established adult education centers in each high school in a Pennsylvania diocese. We lectured extensively and enthusiastically. We provided adult education for all teachers in the Catholic schools and trained hundreds of catechists in the new catechetics, championed by Gerard Sloyan, Johannes Hofinger, Gabriel Moran, and the graduates of Lumen Vitae in Brussels. Later, I myself went on to graduate school where I encountered Paulo Freire, the adult educator par excellence", (John Elias, "Reflections on the Vocation of a Religious Educator," 2002, in [religionseducation.net](http://religionseducation.net)).

### **Teaching the Conversation: Moran's Teaching Languages and Forms**

Ludwig Wittgenstein studied the inter-relationships of words and thoughts with respect to their meaning and significance on daily life. In intriguing ways, he would constructively challenge the difference between what could be said and/or how it could be said (cf.

Tractatus logico-philosophicus and Philosophical Investigations). For many, Wittgenstein's was a mere fastidiousness with semantics and a tedious preoccupation with meaning. Exactly! There are few life endeavors more valuable and pragmatic than uncovering the potency of words. Language is the conduit to intelligibility. It structures how we see the world and thus, makes it understandable. For Wittgenstein, the power of language is not simply restricted to the word itself or to its signified meaning to a thing in the external world. Its real power lies in its inter/outer relationships with other words, meanings, expressed and un-expressible thoughts. That is, the potency of language lies in

its family resemblances, its interactive similarities and differences, much like the height and mannerisms we inherit and/or skip from our grandparents. For Moran, this power of language is accessed and meaningfully pushed and pulled by a process of interplay. Language reveals a life. More precisely, language reveals the yes/no paradox of life itself. As a result, language can be revelation.

Like the interaction between three brothers in a family, teaching is a reciprocal endeavor of lived interactions that we learn daily. For Moran, teaching is showing someone how to do something, how to choreograph the mind and body. Moran distinguishes between what he calls three related 'families of languages.' The first two families have intentionally contrary effects, while drawing meaning from their connections to bodily surroundings. The third family gets its meaning from a deliberate, yet careful, reflexive unpeeling of itself and the other two families. In the best sense of the word, it is the 'black sheep' of the family who challenges presuppositions while intending expanded meaning and growth. Though often unwelcome and misunderstood for good reasons, this family guest is not attempting to disrupt matters simply out of boredom or for destructive purposes. Rather, vigilance to the process of intentional subversion and dissonance for constructive dialectical purposes is the authentic pedagogical aim for this interlocutor. It is the genuine teacher who calls you to temporary disbelief, so that you might decide for yourself how and why you believe what you believe. For Moran, the true educational process is one of lifelong maturation within an emergent revelatory context. It is an interplay of contraries, in order to bring forth a critical faithfilled belief and way of life. It is important to draw our attention to Moran's three families of teaching languages, each of which shows us how to choreograph our mind and body to do something in particular (Moran, G. 2002. *Both sides: the story of revelation*. New York: Paulist Press).

### **Homiletic**

The first family of languages is used to show someone the anticipated goal or finish line. This language is clearly motivated by an 'end-in-view' approach. It is a 'teaching the way' language. Its forms are rhetorical, catechetical, and homiletic in nature. This is the language we hear in sermons, catechetical directories, lectures, and during storytelling. Its purpose is to summon people to action beyond the church pew. It works to keep the vision alive after words have been spoken, to tell a story of inspiration and imagination, and to inform and persuade people to move from words to deeds. There is nothing inherently wrong about this family in and of itself. It is a very worthwhile and sound form of pedagogy when used appropriately. However, it must not be idolized as the sole language employed or argued from. The possibility of such an idolatrous triumphalistic arsenal can breed stagnation, exclusivity, shame and fear tactics, rather than integrative growth and fellowship amid dissonance. When used inappropriately, it can manipulate and cloud people, rather than enlighten and challenge them. The biggest strength of this family of languages lies in its ability to team up with the other two languages in a healthy sibling rivalry, if you will. Let us not forget that a family of one is limited, both in scope and promise. In the best sense, it is to be used as part of a healthy tension.

### **Therapeutic**

The second family of languages is used to show someone the possibility of healing, renewed strength, and a return to wholeness (*integritas*). This teaching language is clearly motivated by a 'no-end-in-view' approach. It is a 'teaching to remove obstacles' language that is grounded in counseling, spiritual direction, and therapeutic models. Its discursive tone centers on a litany of praise, thanksgiving, welcoming, confession, forgiveness, mourning, comforting, and input/output emotional assessment. The aim is to remove debilitating obstacles in order to heal the individual again. For Moran, it is the language of the now, a psycho-social presencing of the self, in order to "calm, soothe, and heal" (1997. *Showing how: the act of teaching*. Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 104). In this context, the teacher works to help recuperate the person back to wholeness. According to Moran, "...in those situations where people need healing words, the therapeutic is appropriate. One uses speech to soothe, to relieve feelings of anger, guilt, or sorrow...in therapeutic speech we temporarily suspend some of the intellectual, aesthetic, and moral standards for the sake of reconciliation...the aim is not achieving an object of choice but reestablishing the ability to choose..." (74-5). In the best sense, it is a restorative language that builds up and encourages one to step back into the community refreshed and with renewed trust and more wisdom than before.

### **Academic**

The third family of languages is used to show someone how to reflect upon the other two families and thus, reflexively upon itself. It is 'speech about speech' for the purpose of an engaged pedagogy of dialectical discourse. This 'teaching the conversation' language is clearly motivated by a 'with end and without end' paradoxical interplay. It is a language that is grounded in a reflective, reflexive, and dialectical nature, in order to facilitate the conversation of discursive pathways. It proceeds by way of a deliberate yet careful hermeneutics of suspicion approach. Cultivated life forms are meaningfully challenged to help bring out and critique the reasons how and why we think and act the way we do. The focus of this family is to help facilitate the point of critical intellectual engagement, while offering sustainable feedback to evaluate the bedrock and nuances (both strong and weak) of our viewpoints (cf. Scott, K. 2002. *Is adult education unique?: probing some premises and possibilities*. *The Living Light* 39(1): 74-86). Academic speech is not swayed by party politics. Its true mission is disinterested in the what per se, and focuses more on the how and why. It works to investigate assumptions, biases, meanings, and contexts. It intentionally yanks the carpet from under itself for the purpose of exploring multiple pathways of thought. But, it does so in small dosages and for the right reasons. Eradication is not sustainable for anyone.

The emphasis lies in the tentativeness of a given text. Academic speech attempts to intentionally present multiple conflicting perspectives. Its aim is to promote a certain level of monitored suspicion, a careful vigilance to test theories in the hope of developing better and fuller understandings, images, and metaphors of learning. Academic speech is revisionary by nature. No understanding is final. All can be improved upon. None should assume idolatrous status (Scott 2002). If it does, then genuine academic speech is not present. It claims allegiance to nothing other than its own self-reflexive way of proceeding. The hope is to motivate us to perpetually recognize that dialectical discourse matters, rather than what specific path to choose. It is a language that teaches how to

better engage the conversation as a process oriented and 'towards which' approach, rather than a fixed endpoint alone. In the best sense, it is both a constructive and deconstructive language, for the purpose of growth amid needed welcomed (and even unwelcomed) constructive criticism. Its point is not merely to explain, but rather to help us understand and sustain our views and those of others. We learn to teach the conversation by genuinely engaging in this interplay itself at a rigorous level, for Moran.

According to Moran, this third family of languages involves dialogical forms of speech. These forms serve as "paradoxical reminders that the truth is possessed by no one, but that a search for the truth is the human vocation" as a vigilant and profound resistance to idolatry (Moran, 2002. *Both sides: the story of revelation*. New York: Paulist Press, 211). Examples such as dramatic performance and artistic narratives also work to engage and test our ability to abstract for purposes of maintaining a critical distance to the issue(s) at hand. They can be helpful exercises for the discerning mind and evaluative tongue. Academic speech helps us re-evaluate, and possibly redesign, our pedagogical environments once we see how truly hospitable or not our linguistic patterns are, should, or should not be.

Genuine dialectical discussion only commences when its conversants subscribe to a level playing field, so to speak. That is, where a common base of knowledge and mutual respect is reached and maintained throughout. Its roots are medieval. In such disputations long ago, a speaker was not allowed to proceed with his own point or argument until he adequately understood and explained his opponent's viewpoint to his opponent's satisfaction. A good pedagogical lesson to inherit today (though much to the chagrin of contemporary and popular trashy TV talk shows), genuine dialectical discussion can help avoid the debilitating habit and frequency of misunderstanding one another. Avoiding this unnecessary problem, we can get on to the more profitable business of challenging one another's views and paradigms, while, in turn, challenging our own. This way, we can benefit from the richest traditions of collective wisdom. For Gabriel Moran, we 'teach the conversation' by engaging in and modeling the very reciprocal process ourselves (1989. *Religious education as a second language*. Birmingham: Religious Education Press).

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### **r. Gabriel Moran has published the following 24 Books:**

- Moran, G. (1963). *Scripture and tradition*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Moran, G. (1966). *Theology of revelation*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Moran, G. (1966). *Catechesis of revelation*. New York: Herder and Herder.
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- Moran, G. (Forthcoming March 2011). *Living nonviolently: language for resisting violence*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

**Dr. Gabriel Moran has published over 200 articles and essays in scholarly journals and periodicals such as:**

- *America*
- *British Journal of Religious Education*
- *Christian Century*
- *Commonweal*
- *Cross Currents*
- *Education Week*
- *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*
- *Living Light*
- *National Catholic Reporter*
- *Panorama: International Journal of Religious Education*
- *Professional Approaches to Christian Education*
- *Religious Education*
- *Theological Studies*
- *Theology Today*

**Some Relevant Published Articles and Essays of Gabriel Moran**

- (1974). *Two languages of religious education*. *The Living Light* (14), 40-50.
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**Many of Dr. Gabriel Moran's books and essays have been translated into the following languages**

- Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish.

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#### **Excerpts from Publications**

**Moran, G. (1966). *Theology of revelation*. New York: Herder & Herder.**

"...In his Theology of Revelation Gabriel Moran describes revelation as process rather than proposition. He uses the interchange between two people as a model for God's self-communication to the listener. According to Moran, revelation emerges from history without fanfare, 'At a later stage there was truth and meaning in experience which was simply not there previously'..." (Maggie Kast, "Liberal Catholicism," America Magazine, April 30, 2007).

**Moran, G. (1967). *God still speaks: the basis of Christian education*. London: Burns & Oates, 123.**

"...The catechist ought to think of himself as a voice through which Christ can speak to his members. A teacher has neither the right nor the power to determine the religious life of another..."

**Moran, G. (1968). *Vision and tactics: towards an adult church*. New York: Herder & Herder, 95.**

"...I would be more than a little skeptical of attempts to bring on an ultimate and total commitment to Christian faith as early as possible in the lives of students. Life must be kept multi-dimensional"

**Moran, G. (1970). *Design for religion: toward ecumenical education*. New York: Herder & Herder, 100.**

[If children] "...are finally to live as followers of Christ and members of the Church, they must grow into this style of life at their own pace..."

**Moran, G. (1974). *Religious body: design for a new reformation*. New York: Seabury Press, 141-2.**

"...Community is also a vision, or at least the unrealized ideal is available now only as a vision. The vision is not necessarily of religious origins. Religion is more concerned with

the concrete embodiment of the ideal; vision is more the domain of philosophers and seers. Religion exists in the lives of masses of people. Even supposing a religious education for everyone, it is doubtful that the majority of people will become philosophers or seers. Nonetheless, education can provide a sense of direction for individuals and communities. The social sciences and philosophy have to be part of the education which clarifies the religious possibilities. Without this support of social scientists, philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, etc., there is a serious danger of religions trying to resubmerge individuality...And today the social sciences hold great possibilities for religious understanding by the study of persons in relationship...If I had to choose a single phrase to characterize the ideal it would be universal sister/brotherhood. Such a community would include humans and nonhumans in a relation which cultivates differences in unity. Sister and brother are not perfect terms but they do have several things going for them: (1) they connote some parity or comparable significance; (2) they signify a familial bond; (3) they can include all humans and nonhumans; (4) the words came as easily to the gentle St. Francis as they do to today's revolutionary groups..."

**Moran, G. (1979). "The Claim to Uniqueness" in Christian Century, August 29-September 5 edition, 817.**

"...Many statements in Christian history can be misunderstood if one misses the paradox in the word unique. For example, when it has been said that "Jesus is the unique revelation of God," the statement may be a way of excluding everyone else or it may be a paradoxical way of including everyone else. It is unfair to the first, fourth or 13th century Christians to assume that they were ignorant of such paradox. Perhaps the paradox cannot be conveyed in the same language used in the past, but if we are to do better, we will have to appreciate the accomplishment of the past.

In Christian history, reflection on Jesus of Nazareth led to a distinction between nature and person. Far from being an esoteric shuffling of categories, these concepts were the very center of a creationist metaphysic that sharply contrasted person and nature. Thus it was that "person" began its long ascent to the head of philosophical concepts. In not being reducible to nature, a person is not a what but a who. Every person has dignity, individuality -- and uniqueness..."

**Moran, G. (1983). *Religious education development: images for the future*. Minneapolis: Winston Press. (Book Review authored by Maria Harris in *Theology Today*, Vol.41, No.1, April 1984)**

"One of the major distinctions made at the World Council of Churches Vancouver meeting was between an ecumenism which meant community between churches and one directed to communion among the world's peoples. In this, his twelfth and perhaps finest book, Gabriel Moran offers a meaning for religious education that can provide a basis for education religiously appropriate for that global context. The work has three major components: an exploration of the meaning of development; a commentary, critique, and elaboration of those developmental theories currently most influential in religious education; and the proposal of a "grammar" of both religion and education which forms the basis of a religious education understood as lifelong. Moran raises the question early on of the presence of the term "development" in two arenas of life, economics and psychology. He explores the meanings as they appear in these two fields, and comments on the peculiar and puzzling circumstance which apparently sees little or no relationship

between the two. He looks with care at the imagery of development especially when it connotes linear, upward, straight, logical movement toward greater and greater growth. He offers illuminating critique of such imagery, often from feminist and aesthetic perspectives, as well as from religious and mystical traditions throughout the world. Secondly, Moran examines Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, and Fowler as these embody and limit the approach to development most present in today's educational work. He praises the relational aspects of both Erikson and Piaget, at the same time offering the double observation:

"Anyone whose distinctive approach is Piagetian cannot incorporate Eriksonian material. And anyone who starts with an Eriksonian pattern can incorporate Piaget only in minor ways." At the same time, he elaborates on the former while noting subsequent work on adult development (Levinson, Vaillant, Sheehy, and perhaps more importantly, Marjorie Fiske Lowenthal), which is complementary to Eriksonian approaches. He affirms the genuine genius of Piaget's contribution, while pointing out that his "cognitive" development actually describes only how the human mind comes to the capacities to abstract and to reason. He suggests educators bring a narrowness of vision to religious life if they similarly limit the understanding of knowledge and cognition.

His analysis of Lawrence Kohlberg's work is restrained yet devastating. Not only does he continually reveal the disembodied attitude to morality conveyed by a movement toward an abstract point where a principle of justice determines moral decision, he contrasts this with a movement where issues of moral responsibility are always set in the context of the questions: "To whom, with what, and for what purpose am I responsible?" He then develops a morality learned through the centuries, one arising from an ethic of virtue/care/character/community which "does not choose the individual over the social or the particular over the universal." He concludes with a brilliant and moving revisioning of the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, courage, and temperance. Finally, he provides a gentle and probing introduction to the work of James Fowler, noting the as yet incomplete synthesis of Piaget and Erikson in Fowler's work, as well as the ambiguities and complexities of the central category of "faith" as defined in that work.

Drawing on what is best in all of these, he then offers a "grammar" for the development of religion, a three-stage movement related to, yet broader and more communal than the Fowler scheme. One is (a) simply religious as a child; moves to (b) acquiring a religion (our people's belief-and then disbelief); and is lastly (c) religiously Christian, or Jewish, or Muslim, a phrase intended to capture the attitude and experience where one does not so much "have" a religion as one is religious in a particular way. He follows this with a complementary grammar for educational development, where one is educated through the interplay of community, work, leisure, and schooling. And then, in summation, he proposes three stages for religious education: (a) Simply Religious Education, with the two moments of the physical and the visional/mystical; (b) Christian (Jewish, Muslim) Education, with the two moments of narrative and systematic; and (c) Religiously Christian (Jewish, Muslim) Education, with the two moments of Journeying/ Inquiry and Centering. Essential to both the "grammars" and to the stages, however, is an imagery of interdependence, of mutuality, of integration of opposites, and of recurring return to

source and to people. My own prose does not do justice to this always absorbing, original and creative work.

Moran has never been clearer, and paradoxically, more poetic. The power of the work- and it is powerful- is in its writing, clean and beautifully edited; in its scholarship, thoughtful and thorough; but most of all in its concreteness, its vision and its language. Investigating what exists and what has been, he incorporates these into an education reverent and responsible to all communities, including one's own, while showing the way to educate toward greater communion. Pastors, teachers, professors, workers, and contemplatives will be moved and inspired by this major volume. It is a work I can only hope will receive the wide readership, understanding, and implementation it richly deserves.

**Moran, G. (1997). *Showing how: the act of teaching*. Valley Forge: Trinity Press.**

"...The best that a teacher can do is work with student and environment to improve the present design... I design, or rather redesign, language in the hope of evoking within the reader images and understanding..." (59).

"...For a human learner, the shaping is of the human organism in relation to its environment..." (69).

"...To teach is to show someone how to do something, how to choreograph a human body's movement..." (79).

"...Moran remains a prominent figure in religious education and teaching scholarship. In this text, Moran meaningfully nuances his longstanding position that teaching is a fundamental human act and therefore time well spent for student and teacher alike. Recognizing traditional academic (school) based models of teaching do not exhaust the breadth of curriculum learning, Moran works to take stock of the basic ingredients of classical wisdom and current environmental flavors to present rich accounts of what is best in the learning process. For Elliot Eisner, curriculum refers to a course of studies run for a desired telos (an "achievement of certain desired end-states"). For Moran, the quest 'to teach' is bound up with an inevitable and meaningful invitation to environmentally redesign the conditions of pre-existing human designs for the purpose of an enriched life activity as student-teacher..." (Robert J. Parmach, 2004).

**Moran, G. (2007). *Fashioning a people today*. New London: Twenty-Third Publications.**

"...The hallmark of community is mutuality, an interdependence in which the good of one is the good of all. In a perfect community, all things would be held in common, no one would be short-changed, and each person could exercise his or her creative powers. The obstacles to the realization of such mutuality are twofold. First, each person experiences a self-dividedness that interferes with a wholehearted self-giving. Second, the spatial and temporal conditions of human life set severe limits on the possibility of mutual exchange..." (56).

"...The English words "serve" and "service" have an undistinguished history. They are closely allied to the term "slavery," the ultimate degradation of the human being. A servant is a step up from being a slave but it is still not a desirable condition for a human being. While serving rich and obnoxious people still dominates the lives of many poor

people, at least we no longer think that being a servant or a slave is a good and necessary condition for some people. Aristotle thought that some people were born to be slaves. On this point we seem to have made progress, at least in our theories..." (130).

(In response to Maria Harris' discussion of the terms servant, service, and diakonia.

Harris, M. 1989. *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press).

**Moran, G. (2008). *Speaking of teaching: lessons from history*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 163-4.**

"...The reader who has got this far may be inclined to conclude that the only lesson to be drawn from history is confusion about the meaning of teaching. Certainly, there is no easy consensus that emerges from the previous pages but there are lessons to be learned. Perhaps the most important lesson is that history is not a straight line of progress and that the relation between teaching and learning remains problematic. The purpose of engaging a variety of writers from other times and other places is not to find confirmation of what the reader already thinks. It is rather to make the reader aware that there may be other ways of seeing the issue that are worth considering... Teaching is a fundamental activity of all human beings and at least some other animals. Etymologically and historically, "teaching" is showing someone how to live, including how to die..."

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### **Recommended Readings**

(in alphabetical order by author's last name)

**Harris, M. (1989). *Fashion me a people: curriculum in the church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.**

**Moran, G. (1963). *Scripture and tradition*. New York: Herder and Herder.**

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#### Author Information

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