

Franchi, L. (2021) Brian Pedraza, Catechesis for the New Evangelization: Vatican II, John Paul II, and the Unity of Revelation and Experience. *Innes Review*, 72(1), pp. 97-99. (doi: [10.3366/inr.2021.0297](https://doi.org/10.3366/inr.2021.0297)) [Book Review]

The material cannot be used for any other purpose without further permission of the publisher and is for private use only.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/239178/>

Deposited on 21 April 2021

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of  
Glasgow

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

Brian Pedraza. *Catechesis for the New Evangelization: Vatican II, John Paul II, and the Unity of Revelation and Experience*. Catholic University of America Press: Washington D.C..2020. 317 pp. £39.59 Paperback. ISBN 9780813232737

When Pope John Paul II visited Scotland in 1982, it was only right that he should speak at St Andrew's College of Education, which was, at that time, the national teacher education centre. Following the merger with the University of Glasgow in the final years of the twentieth century, this important mission became the task of an ancient Scottish institution.

Historically, education has been central to Scottish identity, not least with its three pre-Reformation universities and justified pride in its recognised contribution to culture and engineering. The Catholic Church in Scotland plays a major role in Scotland's educational system with its network of state-funded schools, itself a visible reminder of the 1918 Educational (Scotland) Act. It is in these schools that, for the most part, young Catholic children are prepared to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist. The focus on sacramental preparation in schools seems to merge the established (although porous) categories of Religious Education as a school-based phenomenon and catechesis as a wider ecclesial responsibility.

Brian Pedraza's volume, published by the Catholic University of America Press, offers some interesting and specialised treatment of the field of catechesis and its connection with the phenomenon of the New Evangelisation. As an academic in theology at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University, Baton Rouge, LA., the author is very much at home with the pontificate of Pope John Paul, whose thought as a scholar and as Bishop of Rome is central to the book. The principal argument of the book is that the catechetical mission of the Church—and it is not necessarily a mission which should be driven principally by Catholic schools—requires careful thought on the balance between the need to pass on a body of doctrinal content and to do so while recognising the importance of the life experience of those to be taught. This seemingly simple partnership grows from a deep reading of two documents from Vatican II: the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) and the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). The best lenses to interpret both documents, argues Pedraza, are Pope John Paul's earlier philosophical work on the nature of the human person and his first encyclical, *The Redeemer of Man* (*Redemptor Hominis*).

Another important thread to the book is the history of modern catechetics. Catechetics (the theories underpinning the practice of catechesis) has an interesting relationship with wider educational thought. This in itself is a sign of a Church which recognises the importance of dialogue with wider thinking (although this has sometimes been hindered by a desire to consolidate established ways of thinking): the early years of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century catechetical movement, for example, focussed on reforming teaching methods. It was only later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that more energy was spent how to frame the content of catechesis. Reading the chapter on the history of catechetics reminded me of the urgent need to explore in much more depth the Church in Scotland's engagement with the multi-layered, complex but ultimately essential academic dimension of catechesis and education. The Innes Review has a role to play here.

The book is a valuable addition to the debate on the relationship between theology and catechesis. The bibliography is comprehensive. While some chapters, in particular chapters 3 and 4, are highly specialised and require careful reading (with very close attention to copious footnotes), other chapters offer more digestible food for thought for those who plan and oversee catechetical initiatives.