The Church and the Voice of the Other: The Growth of the Faith Community and Dialogue in the Church

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The Church and the Voice of the Other:
The Growth of the Faith Community and Dialogue in the Church

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty
of the
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts
Duquesne University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
by
John M. Amankwah
March 18, 2005
Acknowledgement

Dialogue metaphorically is part of human existence. It is a source of human interaction and thus it is indispensable in human interaction. Since the 1960’s, the notion of dialogue has attained a momentous academic research, and scholars in the field have attempted to relate the concept not only from Communication perspective but also from the different academic branches of psychology, philosophy, ethics, business management, and also the various scientific fields. In fact, many universities and colleges are exploring ways of establishing “Communication Across the Curriculum” in order to integrate oral and writing communication. The underlying assumptions of this attempt to emphasize the significance of communication in the “Market Place” of today consequently points to the notion of dialogue. Through dialogue, new ideas emerge to further new discoveries to keep the conversation in process.

I have chosen to situate the notion of dialogue within the Catholic Church of which I am a minister. I sincerely think that the Church is losing the voice of the Other in its pursuit of liberation of the human person from the captivity of sin, restoration of sight to the blind, and the proclamation of the year of favor to all. The task of bringing about an all embracing holistic “favor” to the human person cannot only be achieved through a uni-directional mode of communication of the Gospel. Rather, it should emerge from a dialogic ethic embedded in the historical moment that calls for responsibility toward the Other who points the Church to the primordial injunction: “I am my brother’s keeper.” This injunction is the underlying assumption of the parable of the Good Samaritan. It does not only point us to the law but also directs the Church to walk an extra mile with the Other.
To all those who have accompanied me on this pilgrimage of “Dialogue” as I explored the thicket of the field, I express my sincere gratitude to you for your patience and direction. First, I would like to thank my mother, Mary Nsowaah, who has been praying for my success since I informed her of my intention to pursue doctoral studies, and also my father who is deceased but has guided me with his spirit as I explored the academic world. I also extend my thanks to the Dissertation Reading Committee, first and foremost, Dr. Janie H. Fritz, the Director of the committee, who not only read my work but guided me with her sense of academic perspicacity, walking me through academic doors to point me to the right direction; to Dr. Richard Thames, and Dr. Clark D. Edward, who helped in directing the work to the end. I also would like to thank Rev. Dr. Paul A. Soukup, S. J. who accepted to become a consultant to the Reading Committee to keep me from wandering far away from the theological ramifications of the Church’s stance on dialogue. Thanks also to Dr. Ronald C. Arnett, Chair, Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies, who keyed my interest in the dialogic tradition through the readings of his many academic publications in the area of dialogue.

Thanks to my friends, Lucia E. Visser for her financial support and friendship; Sr. Lillian Gitzen, OSF for being there when I need someone for encouragement and help; Mary C. Boburczak, for her constant encouragement and inviting me for recreation when I needed to get away from the boredom of this work; to Cecilia Serwaa Boatemaa for feeding me whenever I was hungry; to my friend, Regina Zahn, for her material support and friendship; to Andrew and Catherine Shuster, who took me as their son and guided me with their parental wisdom; to Jane Gardner and Cindy Burke,
administrative secretaries of the department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies, who have been my friends since my entry into Duquesne University.

Last but not least, I like to thank my Bishop, Most Rev. Peter K. Atuahene, Bishop of Goaso Diocese in Ghana for the permission to continue to pursue this terminal degree in the academic field. Thanks to my good friend, Most Rev. Joseph Osei-Bonsu, Bishop of Konongo-Mampong Diocese, for his encouragement when the “going” was tough, and to Archbishop Peter Kwasi Sarpong, Archbishop of Kumasi Metropolitan Archdiocese for all the good advise you have given me when I needed direction in the priesthood. May God bless you all.

Rev. Dr. John M. Amankwah
Since the Second Vatican Council ended over forty years ago, the Catholic Church has been struggling to find a firm ground in a world of ever-advancing technological change and increasing globalization. Prior to the convening of the Council, the church virtually isolated itself from the rest of the world because it considered itself as a *societa prefecta*. Dialogue as a communicative act of openness to the other with willingness to change did not exist in the Church because of its understanding of communication as uni-directional—from the hierarchy to the rest of the people.

This study examined the church’s communicative practices prior to the convening of the Second Vatican Council and after the Council, focusing particularly on the church’s understanding of “dialogue.” By developing the paradigm of *Praxis Religious Dialogue*, this study, through the dialogical philosophy of Martin Buber, the incarnational ethics of Emmanuel Levinas, and Bernard Lonergan’s theologico-anthropological process of cognition, offers an approach to a new form of dialogue for the church. This new form of dialogue is embedded in the process of *aggiornamento* of which the Council emphasized to the church in its deliberations.

Through the analysis of the narrative of Revelation, this study encourages the church to be more open to “praxis dialogue” in which priests and laity are considered as partners in dialogue rather than recipients of religious beliefs and instructions. In this
vein, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model points the church to the notion of *sensus fidei* as embedded in the *communion fidelium* rather than in the hierarchy because the church is the People of God.

In conclusion, this study highlights the historicality of the narrative of Revelation as an ever-unfolding event. Therefore in proclaiming it, the church needs to see itself in the historical moment, that is, through a historical interpretive approach to the Revelation event, in order to discern the signs of the times and become an effective instrument in its missionary activity and its encounter with the Other.
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Introduction

On January 25, 1959, Pope John XXIII surprised the Church and the world with convocation of an ecumenical Council. The surprise came just ninety days into his papacy when he made the announcement. It was to become the Twenty-First Ecumenical Council following nearly a century after the First Vatican Council that lasted from 1869-1870. The question of what the full implications of the Ecumenical Council would remain an enigma to Christians as well as people of other faith traditions. Questions were posited concerning the chasm that existed between the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations, especially on doctrinal issues. How would the Church respond to a historical moment marked by social and political change, given its traditional bent?

Some considered this event a potential turning point in Church history when Pope John XXIII called the Council an “ecumenical” convocation. Some understood this terminology to express a new stance for the Catholic Church, one that would decrease the historic separation that existed between it and other Christian denominations and other faith traditions. With this new stance, no more would the Church enclose itself within its walls and forget the world outside from which where the very people who constitute the Church belonged. Thus, “in a positive and optimistic speech,” the eighty-year-old Pontiff in inaugurating the Council, recalled the past into the present and inserted the life of the Church into a dynamic future of hope. He indirectly chided the past prophets of doom of the Church and pointed the Church to a new direction guided by the Word it proclaims, the Word that serves as the “medicine of mercy” for people.¹

Recognizing the importance of the Church for the world and vice versa, the Pope called for “dialogue,” asking the Church and especially the Council Fathers to endeavor to engage, as a
new “testament,” other Churches and the world for their cooperation as it was essential for the Church’s missionary activities. Thus, on October 11, 1962, the Council opened to discuss and deliberate the pastoral concerns of the Church.\(^2\) It must be recalled that prior to convening the Council, John XXIII had published his famous encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, that exhorted the world to strive for justice, show concern for the poor, and emancipate the dignity of the human person. He had strongly suggested the declaration on human rights and the dignity of the human person be enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (formed on June 26, 1945). He further strongly encouraged the continuous development of the United Nations to promote the welfare and the human rights of every individual and help eradicate tyrannical governments through the pursuit of the values of justice and peace which were to be the hopes and hallmarks of all nations that had ascribed to the membership of the United Nations.\(^3\) For the first time in the history of the Church, the pope brought the Church face to face with the concerns of the world, especially in view of the tensions that existed between the West and the East.

After the death of John XXIII, Pope Paul VI opened the second session of the Council and with a tone of predecessorial collegiality (following the tone set by his predecessor), conceptualized the pastoral deliberations of the Council in a dialogic ethic.\(^4\) The notion of dialogue which found its way into the vocabulary of the Council was to serve as a pastoral “hub” from which the Church would derive and perform its missionary activities in the subsequent years. First and foremost, the Council focused on dialogue with other ecclesial bodies; the Pope had embraced the Patriarch of the East on January 5, 1964, breaking a thousand year old barrier of distance and distrust. In that same year, the Council promulgated one of its most important documents for the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church). The document defined the Church not in terms of a *societa perfecta* (perfect society) but as *Populi*
Dei (the People of God), “a people to whom God communicates Himself in love”\(^5\) in order to highlight the creative role of the laity. The emphasis on the notion of the People of God defines a people whose sense of their Christian narrative is driven by their communal adherence to the revelatory event that serves as a pilgrimage story of the new Adam.\(^6\) Further, the Council pronounced, in no uncertain terms, the significance of Episcopal collegiality that points the Church to the notion of collective responsibility of all bishops as shepherds of the People of God and to serve as a part of the whole believe in the apostolic college, each sharing in the responsibilities of the whole Church and not as mere chamberlains of the See of Rome. The promulgation of this doctrine also implied that the bishops now should dialogue with the Pope, with other Christian denominations, and other faith traditions in their respective dioceses.\(^7\)

Another important document, the Decree on Ecumenism, was formulated by the Council and was driven by the prospect that theology would lose its polemical content as an *apologia* ready to be used for refutation of other doctrines. Rather, theology in the new conciliar understanding would be concerned with the ecumenical environment in order to study the tradition(s), history, religious culture, spirituality, liturgical worship and life, and above all, the psychological tenets (no.9) of other religions in order to present a theology that removes obstacles to dialogue.\(^8\) In all this, the preparatory commission took note of the centrality of the Christian mysteries by pointing to the inherent elements of humility, respect, devotion, and charity as constitutive of the truth so that ecumenism would demonstrate “a deeper realization and a clearer expression of the unfathomable riches of Christ” (no. 11). Two other important documents, Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) and The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), were promulgated on November 18 and December 7, 1965 respectively with other decretal documents. It should be mentioned that other documents that are
also deemed important include the Apostolate of the laity which brings the lay people into the foci of the Church’s missionary activities, Sacred Liturgy, the Declarations on Religious Freedom, and the Church’s Relations with other non-Christian Religions. I do not intend to refer to all the various documents in this work (consult the Documents of Vatican II). These documents, however, offer support for the project I am undertaking here, because they define the Church’s nature and understanding of its mission toward the poor in our midst and the unity of the human race as one family. Further, the documents produced by the Council remain a milestone in the history of the Church, reminding the Church of its dialogic nature.

For the purpose of this work, I have chosen to focus on the idea of dialogue and how it is essential to the Church as a Mystical Body of Christ, the people of God, and as an organization or the effective implementation of its missionary activities, thus inviting the Church to re-read the underlying assumptions of the documents of the Council, especially the documents Lumen Gentium (The Church), Dei Verbum (Revelation), and Unitatis Redintegratio (Ecumenism). I will argue that these documents point to the dialogic nature of the Church, and that they encourage the Church to reconstitute its energies in expanding its vision of dialogue to include the uncertainties and the crisis that unfold from the sphere of the “between” which is dialogical in nature. It is in this context of the Church that I have chosen to pursue the re-enkindling of the light of aggiornamento which is the basis and guiding principle of the Council’s work and which points to my model of Praxis Religious Dialogue. The unfolding dynamism of the model rests on the assumption that the Church, as the constitution of the People of God, founded from the history and culture implicit in the revelatory event of God, is composed of ordinary people whose shared experiences and interactions are guided by the story of that same event. The interaction of the People of God does not end with the Christian initiation but is enhanced and
strengthened by the spirit of the revelatory event that calls Christians to minister to each other (the story of the Good Samaritan) with dignity and respect without downplaying the respect due to the Other.

I have endeavored to demonstrate the situatedness of dialogue within the Church by focusing on the hermeneutics of the interaction of the People of God through philosophical analysis and the situatedness of the existential phenomenon of “meeting” embedded in their interaction. I have therefore looked at various works by scholars in the field of philosophy and phenomenology to apply their wisdom and the implicit assumptions of their work to further develop the notion of dialogue as it might be fruitfully applied to the Church in this historical moment. Particularly, I have demonstrated that the Cartesian notion of “being” that historically characterized the philosophical standpoint underlying the Church’s documents does not help to expand the notion of dialogue, especially after the work of the Second Vatican Council.

Therefore, applying the concept of “triadic intentionality”¹⁰ as proposed by Calvin O. Schrag, I have related the notion of the complex interdependence inherent in the hermeneutical reference of the “self” as implicated in the discursive transactions to the church’s proclamation of the Word. The discourse is based on the understanding of dialogue which involves attentiveness to competing stories and therefore calls for engagement with multiple voices. The communicative praxis underlying Schrag’s work also reminds the Church to initiate a discourse that does not put the focus of attention on the “self” (i.e., the hierarchy of the Church) but listens to the Other (even when those voices come from “subordinates”). Further, the works of numerous scholars (Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Bernard Lonergan, John Stewart, Rob Anderson and Kenneth Cissna, Ronald C. Arnett, Arnett & Pat Arneson, Nel Nording, Kenneth Burke, and others) who have provided
perspectives on dialogue before and after 1960 guided me in my analysis of dialogue within the Church. Each of these authors has attempted to elucidate the problematic of monologue and technical dialogue and underscore these with a notion of “genuine” dialogue that defines the responsive, ethical agency of the “self” or the “I” through the presence of the Other. As Arnett observes: “. . .the “I” finds identity in the trace within the face of the Other that calls one into responsible action.”

Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Bernard Lonergan are the three main scholars whose works inform the dialogic foundation of the paradigm I have chosen for this work – the Praxis Religious Dialogue. Martin Buber’s work on dialogue, emerging from a philosophical anthropologist’s view, reminds us of the significance of attending to the Other. In his view, dialogue points to the idea that life is lived in the “between,” that is, between persons, persons and events, persons and ideas and even in crisis. For Buber, dialogue is rooted in a common center of conversation between persons; the common center is what brings people together in conversation. Thus, the common center of Buber’s understanding of dialogue is expressed in the notion of “Life is best lived between extremes on the ‘narrow ridge.’” The “Between” for Buber is concrete; it is a real place of real living. Buber thus interprets otherwise as he reconstructs the notions of the “concrete” and the “abstract.” Through the notion of the “Between,” Buber points us to the everyday understanding of the concrete, as Arnett further replicates as

“the ordered, the logical, the unresponsive to interruption and discordant, with a dialogic concrete that, on the other hand, responds to unexpected intrusions, to invasion upon our
predetermined plans. The dialogic concrete is akin to holding sand, consistently discovering seepage through one’s fingers, beyond one’s grip, beyond one’s control.\textsuperscript{15}

However, according to Buber, the abstract in the context of dialogic ethic, “holds on to,” unwilling to let go and ensuring that nothing filters through its hands. The abstract misses the concreteness of real living.

Emmanuel Levinas, on the other hand, works from a phenomenological perspective, pointing to an a priori obligation of the “I” to the “Other” – “I am my brother’s keeper.”\textsuperscript{16} According to Levinas, humanism has not served well to advance the course of human relationships because it missed the phenomenological reality of the presence of the Other;\textsuperscript{17} it is the phenomenological presence of the Other through which the “I” finds meaning. Thus, for him ethics becomes of prime significance, a phenomenological first principle in attending to the Other, who calls forth an “I” into ethical responsibility. The calling forth of the Other points to the “face” of the Other, which is a “trace” that reminds the “I” “Thou shall not kill.”\textsuperscript{18} These authors address the important elements that remove the focus of attention on the “self” as agency to the notion of the Other in relation. Their work points to and provides a foundation for the Praxis Religious Dialogue model in its ethical and philosophical views, guiding the model to combine the existential evolving of the “Between” and the phenomenological a priori “being-ness” to provide a communicative praxis based on dialogic ethic. Further, their work highlights the many facets of dialogic practices of the Church over the centuries as it performed and continues to perform its missionary activity, which emerges from the revelatory event of God.
Bernard Lonergan, working from theologico-anthropological perspectives, was influenced by Thomas Aquinas, Edmund Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty. Lonergan’s research on the cognitional process of the subject departed from the secular interpretations of the “subject” as a decentered entity burdened by “a contestation of multiple, conflicting discourses … making it difficult if not impossible to account for agency.”\textsuperscript{19} Lonergan therefore argues that from a Christian theological perspective, the interpretation of the fragmentation of the subject points to the notion of sin, from the fall of humanity. Therefore, interpreting otherwise the traditional theological understanding of the fall of humanity, Lonergan links theology with anthropology to transcend the boundaries of contemporary continental thought. For him, the subject is not limited to cognition but transcends it. Michelle Saracino notes that for Lonergan, authentic subjectivity emerges in religious experience and conversion.\textsuperscript{20} Through feeling for others by way of incarnate being, the subject is converted into a position of being-in-love-with-God – an idea which echoes postmodernity’s emphasis on the dislocated subject.\textsuperscript{21}

Both Lonergan and Levinas remind us to understand and appreciate a common element in their perspectives that point us to the notion of openness to the Other, while emphasizing that it is in being human that we become a gift to the Other in relationship. These perspectives point to the underlying story of the paradigm of the Praxis Religious Dialogue, which rests on the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 29-37). The story of the Good Samaritan opens a horizon for the Church in its search for an authentic dialogic ethic to engage the Other “between extremes on the narrow ridge”\textsuperscript{22} in order to discover its own human face and the face of the Other who calls forth the Church to responsibility.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue model further understands the Church as both a mystery and a human organization, possessing all the different characteristics of any other organization.
and composed of well-defined boundaries which are structurally hierarchical in nature. The mystery dimension of the Church points to the Holy Spirit as the soul of the Church. This mystical dimension points to the vertical axis, complementing the sociological axis – the horizontal dimension of the Church. According to the ecclesiological model of the Church as a Mystical Communion, the Holy Spirit vivifies the Church to keep it as the Body of Christ, an organic union which is the People of God.\textsuperscript{23} The Spirit lives within each incorporated member and vivifies the community in pursuit of their missionary work. The presence of the Spirit within the Church makes it all the more imperative for the Church to situate its work within the notion of dialogue because the mystical communion and the organic union of members, derived from Christ, point the Church to mutual union, interdependence, and mutual concern for each other in the community, and the presence of the Spirit is to bind the community together through their dialogic interactions rather than divide them.\textsuperscript{24}

It would be plausible to argue that among the People of God, there would be mutual concern emerging from the ethical responsibility inherent in their communion so that each member would be encouraged to recognize in the heart of each other the “face” which is the “trace” of the Other and which points to an a priori obligation: “I am my brother’s keeper.”\textsuperscript{25} The ordained as well as the non-ordained form the community of the People of God, and through the sensus fidei of this sensus fidelium, the hierarchy receives its legitimacy to shepherd the non-ordained.

This notion is reinforced by the definition of the “Church” provided by the Second Vatican Council as the “People of God” which is based on the understanding of the community as a people whose ministry points to the notion of “service” to each other, the antithesis of the concept of “lording power” over others, a notion from the management literature elaborated by
Blake Ashforth\(^{26}\) that includes elements such as the authoritarian personality system, the “bureaucratic individual,” the dictator, and the schoolyard bully.\(^{27}\) These behavioral tendencies to “lord power” Ashforth terms “petty tyranny”\(^{28}\) which corresponds to the biblical notion of the one who lords his power over others (Lk. 22:24-25). He observes that empirical work amply suggests that tyrannical behaviors include arbitrariness and self-aggrandizement, belittling others, lack of consideration, a forcing style of conflict resolution, discouraging initiative, and noncontingent punishment.\(^{29}\)

These constructs are contrary to the Christian spirit where each member is called to engage others in mutual dialogue based on ethical responsibility that reminds us of the Christian compassion, enunciated in the gospels so that together the people of God can touch the world in without contempt for those who differ from their opinions. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, “The temptation of official Christianity is to resist the adulthood of the world and to try to force man back into a state of childishness.”\(^{30}\) The Praxis Religious Dialogue model therefore encourages the Church to enter into dialogue with its non-ordained as well as its ordained faithful in mutual respect and accord the same dialogic respect to Christians of other denominations and people of other faith traditions.

I have therefore in humility invited the Church to be open to the historical moment, the “kairos,” the time of fulfillment (Mk. 1: 15), and allow the revelatory event of God to guide the Church. The historicality of the moment encourages the Church to defy the fear of renewal that demands change so that it will read the work of the Council through a new lens in order to allow the traditions of the Church to be dynamically operative within and outside the Church in order to be effective in its missionary activities. The development of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model situates its foundations in the dialogic, theological, organizational, sociological, and
anthropological perspectives to analyze some of the philosophical and existential concepts of man, his purpose in this world, and his interaction with the Other. Further, Bonhoeffer’s words are still encouraging for they remind the Church to rethink the various definitions permeating the documents produced by the Council, revealing that the place of the Church is among the people in the world. He noted: “God is teaching us that we must live as men who can get along very well without him.” This assertion defines the work of the Council, a new vision of the gospel for man’s salvation. Dialogue therefore becomes an orthopraxis paradigm for the Church in all the dimensions of its activities. The Praxis Religious Dialogue therefore seeks to:

- enhance its dialogic interaction with its own members – priests, religious, and the laity, who, together, form the community of the people of God.
- facilitate its missionary activities as it encounters different socio-political, traditions, and cultures and other nations
- adopt a respectful attitude toward other faith traditions through its ecumenical approach.

I have therefore provided the following chapters to explore the notion of allowing the people of God to grow in maturity through the narrative of the Revelation as they go on their pilgrimage. The scope of the chapters offers new existential horizons in the sphere of dialogue and an interpretive approach to some of the significant documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Chapter I explores the “The Discipline of Dialogue” by analyzing the philosophical hermeneutics of dialogue, the nature of dialogue, and the Praxis Religious Dialogue model as a faith-theory-action paradigm. The chapter explores the works of Buber and Levinas, both of whom privilege a new vocation of philosophy- philosophy as ethics - which defines the Dasein
This new philosophy is absent in the church’s form of communication which usually refers to homilies, encyclicals, the teaching of adult religious education, and the use of the media technology. The church’s understanding of the concept of dialogue invariably points to the notion of instrumentum (a tool), through instructional materials and the notion of obedience which does not call for dialogue.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue model, on the contrary, enhances this understanding by departing from a one-way orientation to communication, situating dialogue within Buber’s understanding of the “I-Thou” relationship within which language becomes a medium of discourse that opens horizons for an ongoing conversation whereby the subject is implicated and the agency of the “I” defines its meaning through the presence of the Other (Levinas, 1988; Schrag, 1999). The I-Thou relationship and the reciprocity of dialogue that sustains all human conversation is grounded in the works of Buber and Levinas. Buber breaks with subject-object ontology and privileges the “encounter,” the “relationship,” the “between,” which defines the call of being as “presence” or “co-presence” to grant the ultimate support of meaning to ontology, which Western tradition has reduced to mere experience of knowledge. This new perspective on dialogic theory encourages a reconsideration of communicative praxis. Thus, I argue that the paradigm of Praxis Religious Dialogue enhances the church’s current communicative practice, a on tradition- faith-theory model that does not encourage full participation in dialogue.

Chapter II analyzes the emergence of dialogue in the Church and the Second Vatican Council’s understanding of the concept as it called the Church to the notion of aggiornamento. However, the Council’s discussion did not take into account the full implications of dialogue as Buber, Levinas, and Lonergan and other scholars envisaged it. For the Council, the notion of dialogue as enunciated in the Vatican II documents remained at the level of Ecumenism, an
external rather than an internal focus for dialogue. This work in the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue therefore seeks to situate the concept of dialogue within the church, the People of God. I offer an analysis of the philosophical hermeneutics of dialogue in which I articulate its philosophical foundations and point to the Praxis Religious Dialogue model as a faith-theory-action based paradigm to compliment the previous traditional faith-theory-based model of the Church which is still fundamental to the ecumenical dialogue model.

Recently, dialogue theorists have argued that the concept of dialogue exhibits a dynamic, emerging process in its transitory nature and as a metaphor, offering a horizon of understanding for the enactment of life’s experience. Thus, God’s call to his people through the revelatory event is a call to experience through faith in which the relationship becomes an experience of metaphorical encounter which depicts the embeddedness of hermeneutical experience of the I-Thou relationship. This genuine hermeneutical experience within a dialogic I-Thou relationship invites the other without any intent of objectification but in order to encounter him in the historical moment.

Chapter III, “Situating Dialogue,” articulates the goal of the Second Vatican Council through the metaphors of the space of subjectivity: movement from the metaphysico-epistemological foundations to the space of the intersubjectivity; triadic intentionality: the “self” as implicature of the story event, and ambiguity as a meaningful significance of the Christian story. It deals with Pope John XXIII’s vision for the church, highlighting past practices of dialogue by the Church. It reminds the Church of theological insights pointing to transformations in the field of dialogue that can serve as foundations for the Church in the present historical moment. It also reminds the Church to de-emphasize its preoccupation with the universal Church and admit the significance of the local Churches. By placing emphasis on the
universal Church, the Church creates a sharp dichotomy between the Church of Rome (Cardinal Kasper in his disagreement with Cardinal Ratzinger pointed out that such emphasis only creates centralism in the Church)\(^{35}\) and the various local Churches around the world and eventually becomes an obstacle to the Church’s endeavors toward dialogue in all its fruitful dimensions.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue model places emphasis on the local Churches, which are actually the *ekklesia*. The universal and the local churches mutually intertwine and the boundaries are virtually non-existent when understood within the context of the “Church.” The significant point here is that by immersing the Church in dialogue, the faith community’s experience of the revelatory event is enhanced, becoming a dynamic experience that evolves from their faith. It helps the Church to recall its tradition and the life of faith into the historical moment. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model therefore seeks to encourage the Church to situate its story within the faith-story of the believing community based on the revelatory event in order to enhance the dialogic process within the Church.

Chapter IV examines Vatican II’s conceptualization of dialogue. I analyze the position taken by Vatican II on dialogue and situate it within the Weickian notion of interpretive equivocality as a means of organizing and sensemaking, which points to Praxis Dialogue: the intent of Vatican II for dialogue, Vatican II and the concept of dialogue for the Church; the preconciliar ecclesiology and dialogue; the nature of the church, and the Christian story as a metaphor. Within the Weickian notion of interpretive equivocality, dialogue offers the opportunity for a common center from which various competing voices can articulate their opinions in moments ambiguous in their significance for the Church and the world. It reminds the Church to accept this form of dialogue with humility in order to reach out to the Other.
Chapter V looks at the Models of Dialogue by analyzing the different traditions of dialogue and relates them to the form of dialogue manifest in the Church. I then pursue the notion of dialogue in the Church which takes into consideration the self in community; confirmation and disconfirmation in dialogue, and the search for genuine dialogue. The different traditions of dialogue propounded by different authors explain the embeddedness of dialogue within human culture. The notion also points to the significance of dialogue as a dynamic process that constantly unfolds, revealing new dimensions and horizon of possibilities for partners in conversation. It also highlights the view that dialogue can be in a form of “text” in which others explain their point of view and that is always linked to the communication of the other (Bakhtin, 1986). The immediacy and the emerging elements, the collaboration and the peculiarity of others in conversation, all facilitate the dynamics of dialogue as different voices penetrate each other’s views or expressions with mutual respect. The “teasing out” of dialogic experiences in conversation lead each partner to begin to think of the other’s standpoint in order to make sense out of it. Each “self” in the conversation begins to search for the “Other” for understanding, which can create openness, acceptance, and confirmation, which are important in dialogic encounters.

Chapter VI is entitled “Implications of the Typology of Dialogue for the Church,” which combines the notions of Buber’s “between,” Levinas’s concept of the “Other,” and Gadamer’s view of interpretive hermeneutics to contextualize the significance of dialogue as a process that calls for respect of others’ opinions and situate these elements within the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue. Further, I build on the premise of Kenneth Burke that dialogue is part of our human existence because we create symbolic models and use them as a medium of communication and through this process dramatize our motives through some structures in order
to reveal our actions. I engage other authors to argue that our human discourse within a relationship or community always invites other voices, which puts us in contact with others (articulate contact). These contacts reveal to us life’s events. Thus, the Church is encouraged to embed its form of dialogue within the notion of praxis in order to understand the life experiences of its people. Thus I demonstrate Praxis Religious Dialogue as essential to the missionary activities of the Church.

Chapter VII explores the notion of “Church” historically, discussing how the meaning of “Church” has changed over the years. I take a critical look at the concept of “ekklesia” in the early Church which also meant in the Greek states “free men” and how the concept has undergone some metamorphosis throughout the church’s history. I also analyze the notion of the “hierarchical structure” in the Church from the period in which the term became part of the church’s operational structure to how it is understood today in accordance with the definition of the Second Vatican Council. From the Praxis Religious Dialogue perspective, I argue that the meaning of “ekklesia” points the Church to Jesus as standing at the beginning of the church’s history and therefore is essentially a discipleship of Jesus and his message. This notion of “ekklesia” is important to the church’s presence in the world. Thus, all the developments leading up to the convening of the Second Vatican Council pointed emphatically to Jesus as the very “history of the Church” and not the other way around. This historical examination of the events of the Church and its practices over the centuries emphasizes the embeddedness of the Church in its traditions within historical moments and how these traditions can be interpreted to enhance the church’s human relations, or connections among its members, in the context of dialogue.

Chapter VIII examines the concept of “model” and its application within the context of ecclesiology. Using the paradigm of Dulles within the context of model, I explore the
ecclesiological dimensions of the Church to analyze both the vertical and the horizontal axes as pertaining to the Church. From this perspective, I examine the Church from institutional and mystical dimensions and situate those notions within the concept of “organization” to point to the sociological view of the church, given its nature as made up by people. I have relied on Dulles and George Cheney’s definitions of Church and particular understandings of Karl Weick’s notion of “organizations” and situated them within the Praxis Religious Dialogue model. The purpose of this synthesis is to point out the conflict inherent in the call to strict adherence to obedience to the Magisterium which at various times has prevented new insights that could resituate the Church within the historical moment. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model further points the Church to the understanding that it is rhetorical in its proclamation of the message of Jesus, the Christ, and by virtue of this activity, should adopt the new dimensions of dialogue to facilitate its missionary activity. As an organization, the Church grows and expands its vision of its activity through its relation with the environment. The different behavioral and cultural models emerging from differences in world views are enrichment factors for the Church to adapt to the existing situations as it strives to dialogue with the challenges it encounters.

Chapter IX conceptualizes the Church from its biblical images and situates it within the notion of physical realities: the Church is compared to a piece of land, a vineyard, a sheepfold and a mother. I argue that these symbols reveal the church’s intrinsic nature embedded in the narrative of revelation, from which the Christian community derives its biblical story. The different narrative theologies that have emerged from the narrative of revelation all point to the practice of faith embedded in a religious community. These narrative theologies are linked to everyday life experiences, because those experiences happen in time and are therefore contingent, addressing questions of identity and the finality of our existence. From the
perspective of The Praxis Religious Dialogue, I examine concepts related to narrative and
narrative theology in order to emphasize the notion of the legitimation of Revelation as a
Christian narrative.

Chapter X introduces Revelation as a foundation for the voice of the Other, examining
the notion of revelation from theological, philosophical, and psychological perspectives.
Theologically, the concept is understood as God’s self bestowal to human being in order to invite
them to conversation. Other interpretations point to individual revelations based on their
religious vision. The Catholic Church interprets and understands biblical revelation as God’s self
communication to man. Beginning with biblical interpretation to the historical ramifications of
revelation, the chapter examines the concept from Israel’s experience of God to the new people
of God understood as the baptized from the New Testament view. Theologians of antiquity
understood Revelation from a faculty psychology, interpreting revelation as transcendence,
immanence, existentialism and Idealism, but in the postmodern sense, revelation has been
understood more from an anthropological posture.

I then argue, basing the Praxis Religious Dialogue model on the observations of Bernard
Lonergan, that the human person is a knowing “being” who is capable of making decisions
through experiences with the environment. I therefore situate Lonergan’s view within the
Buberian tradition in order to articulate the existential phenomenon of revelation within the
Praxis Religious Dialogue model. The model points the Church to the notion of “responsibility”
as embedded in its very nature, a notion succinctly maintained by Levinas. From the story of the
Good Samaritan, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model directs the church’s attention to the Other
whose face reveals the trace of God.
The final chapter (XI) perspectivizes the notion of unity of contraries, which points to the danger of extremes and reminds the Church that life is a complex reality lived out in the confusion of contradictions and not the certainty of “yes” or “no.” I therefore explore the different notions of “unity in diversity” embedded in the idea of dialogic transaction, the legitimation of diversity as part of the renewal process called forth by the Second Vatican Council. Renewal admits the notion of dialectic because of the challenges involved in the process (for instance, being “in the world but not of it”). The Council, even though it did not explicitly spell these tensionalities out, it encouraged the Church to incorporate dialectic within its dialogic ethical transaction.

I have maintained that the conception of aggiornamento by the Council was for the purpose of calling the Church to recognize the face of the Other as enunciated in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 29-37). I have argued within the model of the Praxis Religious Dialogue that in the Twenty-First century, the church’s theological theorizations should be directed toward the embeddedness of “otherness and justice” which are foundations of the gospel. These chapters point us to the idea of “ecclesia,” a community in which each member defines his being in the Other. This development is necessary because it challenges the Cartesian view of “being” that has influenced and dominated the philosophical understanding of the “subject” as monadic so that the notion is brought under a broader dimension of the human person who is simply not a mechanistic, disengaged “being” but one whose shared experiences are embedded in the historical moment and lives a life based on hope of the future. Within the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue, the human person is understood as a being who comprehends his surroundings through a hermeneutical and historical process in order to enhance his worldview. His interaction with his surroundings and his relations with others draw
him into a discourse (through language) so that he can respond. The process embeds him in a conversation with others which facilitates his understanding of the other. In religious context, the human person is called to live that relationship by being responsible for the Other. The parable of the Good Samaritan thus underscores this notion and forms a foundation to the Praxis Religious Dialogue paradigm. Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Bernard Lonergan offer immense insights in the process of “being there for” the Other.
ENDNOTES


2 See Introduction to *The Vatican II Documents*.


5 Vatican II Documents, Introduction to the document *Lumen Gentium*.

6 Ibid.

7 For all the materials cited, see the “Introduction” to Vatican II Documents.

8 Ibid. p. xvi – xvii.

9 The concept of the “between” is central to Martin Buber’s work on dialogue and it emerged from his existential phenomenological world view that indicated that our being in this world always points us to other people and events. For Buber, the “between” was in response to the predominant overplay of a psychological world view applied to explain our human condition and our actions. For further reading, see *The Knowledge of Man: A Philosophy of the Interhuman*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

10 Schrag’s notion of “Triadic Intentionality” of discourse is: about something, by someone, for the other, which demonstrates the interdependence of the complexity of hermeneutical reference. In the triad, the subject is implicated in its discourse in the way, according to Schrag, “that an unfaithful husband implicates himself in his unmonitored conversation.” See *The Philosophical Papers: Betwixt and Between*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 191-224.


21 Ibid.


23 Avery Dulles, Models of the Church, (New York: Image Books, 2000), p. 42-43. For biblical reference, see Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12 where St. Paul explains the mystical Communion and the Body of Christ as a mutual union that demands mutual concern and mutual interdependence of members in the believing community.

24 See the work of Stanislaus J. Grabowski, The Church: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Augustine (St. Louis: Herder, 1957), especially page 3-92.


29 Ibid.


31 Ibid. p. 219.

32 Alan Udoff explains vividly in the Introduction to The Knowledge of Man (1998), the departure from the metaphysics of consciousness of German Idealism by Buber, Levinas, Roesenzweig, Kierkegaard, Marcel, Heidegger, and others to the new understanding of philosophy as “Ethics,” that focuses on the responsibility underlying the I-Thou relationship which German Idealism has understood as objective knowledge.


Chapter I

The Development of the Discipline of Dialogue

The German Philosophical Traditions on Ethics

I. The Dialogical Thought

II. The Conceptualization of Dialogue in the History of the Church

III. The Message of Vatican II: Dialogue as a new Ground for the Church

IV. The Crisis nature of Dialogue

V. The Goal of the Praxis Religious Dialogue

VI. The Purpose of the Praxis Religious Dialogue

The German Philosophical Traditions on Ethics

There were two schools of thought in the field of dialogue that emerged from the German genealogical descent, one from the dialogism of Fuerbach and the other from the existentialism of Kierkegaard. The Feuerbach’s school of thought has among its principal representatives Ebner, Ehrenberg, Buber, and Rosenstock, while the Kierkegaardian School had Barth, Gogarten, Jaspers, Grisebach, and Heidegger. The common horizon overreaching the differences that distinguished these two schools was the “spirit of the age.”¹ The age in question was characterized by metaphysics of German idealism but each of the schools directed its attention to the facticity of human Dasein² as the common beginning.

The common beginning of both schools was a referent point that indicated an “otherness” or a new way of experiencing and thinking, which was a departure from the metaphorical

processesual stream of thought that characterized the Cartesian “cogito” doctrine of being in
which relationships of beings were reducible to mere experience of knowledge (Progress became a God-Term). The construction of a new beginning of dialogical philosophy in German philosophical tradition by Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, and Emmanuel Levinas introduced a new concept of engagement, a notion that was so influential in both pre-Enlightenment and post Enlightenment thought. The works of Buber and Levinas emphasized a new vocation of philosophy - philosophy as ethics - which defines the Dasein's in terms of relations and responsibility rather than objectified knowledge.3

In his introduction to the Buber’s Selected Essays in The Knowledge of Man, Alan Udoff summarizes Levinas’ account of Buber by arguing that “According to the letter of the texts” 4 Buber breaks with subject-object ontology of Western tradition that served as the context of relationship while privileging “the encounter,” “the relationship,” and “the between” as the call of being defined as presence or co-presence which becomes the ultimate support of meaning.”5 In Levinas’ view, this new Buberian call to dialogue and responsibility becomes a recuperative address that originates Buber in the horizons of the beginning and the end of the German idealism. Udoff concludes by contending that Buber founded a new field for dialogue in which the call (vocation) of philosophy no more addresses knowledge as experience but rather as a call to which dialogical thinking must respond.6

The problem with philosophy in the Western tradition, according to Levinas, is its resolute stance that yields to no other doxa7 and not prepared to humbly submit to other opinions without clinging tenaciously to the “cogito” or objectified knowledge as the end of all things. While Buber, Levinas, and Marcel, take philosophy from its rigorous pursuit of “To think being is to think to its measure and to coincide with oneself”8 to privileging it with the dialogical thought, there are others who took a different turn from their standpoints. Some French
contemporary philosophers countered their stance by maintaining that their doctrine of the relationship to the Other that they think assures the otherness of the Other and his transcendence that relates to the Thou addressed to God in which the Other is encountered does not respond adequately to the vocation of philosophy. Levinas answer red, contending that

The I-Thou relationship, the reciprocity of dialogue, which sustains all human conversation, is described in Buber as a pure and in some sense formal face-to-face confrontation, but then appears immediately as qualified: responsibility of the one for the other, as if the “face-to-face” were from the start, and always, an ethical concreteness. . . . Buber’s entire oeuvre is a renewal of ethics. . . . An ethic of heteronomy which is not a servitude.

Levinas’ reading of Buber thus clears the misunderstanding of Buber’s view of Western philosophy by highlighting the significance of “dialogical reading” of Buber’s writings in order to surmount the argument that Buber privileged philosophy in his work. In fact, while it is argued by Buber himself that his texts are at times philosophical in content, it is however explained by him that his understanding of philosophy within the context of dialogue points to the notion of dialogical philosophy. Thus he stated:

I call my philosophy “dialogical philosophy” not without a certain irony, because basically it cannot be pursued otherwise than
dialogically, but the writings dealing with it have been cast into the, for the most part, quite undialogically constituted human world of this hour – and must be cast there. “Philosophy of existence” appears to me an imprecise and unsteady concept. I have never included myself in such, but feel myself as standing perhaps between an existential thinking in Kierkegaard’s sense and something entirely different, something which is still out of sight.\(^{11}\)

For Buber, the dialogical thought inherent in his philosophy must be reached through a penetrating eye because “each bold metaphysical setting manifests its origin in a meeting of the knowing person with an element of being that announces itself in the shape of that which meets him in a living way.”\(^{12}\)

The idea of dialogue that spreads through the work of Buber was still in its nascent formation before the 1960. In this period the idea of dialogue focused on the Platonic notion of dialogues as applied to the Socratic dialogue. For instance, D. A. Hyland has maintained that Plato adopted the Socratic dialogue form as a means to explore the tension inherent in human experience and how reason plays a role in these experiences. Thus, it is not surprising that some of the scholars in the field of dialogue point to some Platonic intimations of dialogue in their work.\(^{13}\) Anderson, Baxter and Cissna point out that in the 1970s, a series of seminal articles announced new ways of thinking the inherent elements of communication, some of which are speakers, listeners, and readers.\(^{14}\) Merging the traditions of rhetoric and the new understanding of interpersonal relationship, some of the articles that appeared in the 70s attempted to respond to the humanistic perspectives embedded in psychology traditions of the 1960s. It is worthy
mentioning that the humanistic psychology of the 1960s which was championed by theorists like Carl Rogers (1961), Abraham Maslow (1964), Father John Powell (1969) and others broadened our views of human experience and communication, thus preparing the ground for expansion in the field of human communication development as a discipline. Many of these authors placed emphasis on interpersonal communication as a significant “virtue” in human existence.

While the works of these early authors helped to chart the path for further developments in the field of communication, the notion of dialogue was somewhat simmering at the background of the communicative process. Thus, it is important for this work to briefly mention those who have foregrounded the discussion on dialogue in the field of communication to open the path to research taking place in the field. Concepts emerging from the early works of scholars like Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin propelled others like P. Tournier in 1957 to publish some of his works that focused on dialogue: The Meaning of Persons, and The Human Dialogue (1967). These publications gingered other scholars in the field of communication to further replicate the concepts that emerged from Tournier’s works. In 1968, Keller and Brown published their work on dialogic ethics and in 1971, R. I. Johannesen boldly recommended that the evolving concept of dialogue within the Communication discipline should receive more attention.

The concepts that seemed to have drawn the curiosity of communication scholars were mostly assumptions on expressive covertures in human relationships as it is evident in the conversation between Martin Buber and Carl Rogers, each coming from a different humanistic discipline of philosophical anthropology and psychotherapy, organized by the University of Michigan in 1957. Further research has been in the area of politics (Freire, 1979), philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1998). The attention of the numerous research focused on language as a
medium of human relations that considers the historical and the social context as significant components. The hermeneutics that challenged the old notion of communication as a linear process embedded the process, according to Gadamer, in unforeseen meanings and even prejudice. In the Gadamarian tradition, meanings are produced rather than reproduced by recipients and the process is a collaborative kind. It leads to a continual process whereby those involved in the act of conversation listen to each other and question one another. The emerging process takes a different form of “back-and-forthness” processual stream of discourse that evolves uncertainties and clarifications through immediate interpretive action that keep the conversation going.

According to Anderson, Baxter, and Cissna, in the 1970s, the conversation in the field of communication stretched to include public discourse on account of public wavering confidence in government (Beatty, Behnke, & Banks, 1979, McGuire & Slembeck, 1987). Thus, some scholars whose research interests were in rhetoric began to analyze public rhetoric and many of them turned to Jurgen Habermas who offered insights in communicative rationality that was not based on individual perceptions but on social normative theories that sought social consensus. Towards the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, Habermas was the subject of study by many scholars especially in the area of public discourse and many scholars published their research (see Journal of American Forensic and Quarterly Journal of Speech, 1979, 1982, 1986). Later in the development of communication research, works of Mikhail M. Bakhtin drew the attention of scholars as the underlying assumptions of Bakhtin’s work focused on the notion of multivocal foundations of human shared experience involving human language and its context. Bakhtin’s work explored the dialogic nature of human speech which consequently attracted responses from theorists in the communication field. According to Anderson, Baxter
and Cissna, many scholars applied Bakhtin’s notions especially to mass communication, to performance studies, and to theories in feminine perspectives on literature and creativity. The developments in the communication’s field around the 1970s and 1980s slowly served as a breaking ground for the encounter between interpersonal communication and dialogue. Authors such as Giffin and Patton published in 1970 their book (*Fundamentals of Interpersonal Communication*) emphasizing the interpersonal elements within relationship, and then in 1973, John Stewart, in his book *Bridges Not Walls* focused on the human element of empathy and appreciation within interpersonal relationships; Brown and Keller followed with their publication *Monologue to Dialogue* 1973 and in 1982, Thomlison published a textbook, *Toward Interpersonal Dialogue*, which was a further exploration on his earlier research (1975) which dealt with the concepts of Buber and Carl Rogers.

During this gradual development of the notion of dialogue in the 1970s and 1980s, many of the scholarly work focused on the assumptions of dialogue in the College and University campuses, and the research was designed to emphasize the significance of dialogic interactions between professors and their students and the relationships on the campuses. So much scholarly research proliferated as Journal articles that brought to light the wok of Buber, Gadamer, Bakhtin, and also Habermas and other with the intent of introducing readers to their ideas on dialogue. According to Anderson, Baxter and Cissna, one of the most elucidating works in the field was published by Ronal C. Arnett on *Communication and Community: Implication of Martin Buber’s Dialogue* in 1986. In that same year, Calvin O. Schrag, a philosopher, published his well known book on *Communicative Praxis and the Space of Subjectivity*, a scholarly work that is cited on numerous occasions in this work. The amount of scholarly work that has been produced over the years in the field of dialogue has opened a wide scope of understanding in the
field. Notably, in the field of rhetoric, Walter Fisher in 1987 produced his well known work, *Human Communication as Narration*, which explicated the various dialogic qualities of communication together with its tensionalities that reveal to us the depth of human experience when we engage one another in dialogue.

I. **The New Dialogical Thought**

The new dialogical thinking, according to Buber and Levinas, is situated within a panoramic horizon of dialogical philosophy in which the Thou is not a mere participant but is encountered within a space in which each partner is assured the dignity of the other “as that of a Thou addressed to God.”\(^{25}\) Buber, departing from Marcel’s deeper bond\(^ {26}\) which is not dialogic but embedded in a structure of incarnational and ontological mystery, situates the ultimacy and irreducibility of the I-Thou within the dialogic language of the Saying that says Thou and which strives to achieve the pure allegiance and responsibility emanating from dialogue.\(^ {27}\) It is in this context too- with reference to the vocation of philosophy which is the pure allegiance and responsibility of dialogue and which precedes all knowledge- that Levinas locates Buber.\(^ {28}\)

While Marcel was concerned with a concrete life which overflows and leads man to the heart of his being, Buber saw such movement as fatefulness which has its end not in dialogic relationship but in ontology.\(^ {29}\) This fatefulness, according to Buber, appears as the course and discourse of dialogue. Thus Buber wrote:

> In the dialogue between man and man given and received contents are so manifold that he who treats the nature of
dialogue as a basic relationship of human existence cannot keep them in mind. Naturally, the contents in general allow generally valid and generally binding propositions to be transmitted; but in so doing the peculiar, that which by its nature is unique, is lost.30

Buber therefore understood dialogue as a process of unfolding events inherent in the giving and taking; a process that demands that the focus of the partners be directed toward accepting each other without reservation and further the motivation to face the crisis which is the unexpected challenges and surprises that may evolve from the encounter. This wave of crisis can be termed as “crisis-informed dialogue”31 which seeks to address the concrete human situation central to the lived experiences of those engaged in conversation. In fact, in a time when the Church is trying to understand society where collectivism and individualism is considered as opposing options, Buber addresses the crisis as the “between” to remind the Church of the significance of both the “I and the Thou.” For Buber, the encounter is a confrontation – a confrontation that does not set the partners apart but brings them together to discover and explore the meaning of the conversation found neither in any of the partners nor in both together, but only in their dialogue itself, “in the between which they live together.”32

The concept of the “Other” which also is foundational to Levinas’s work and conceived as *alterity* reflects Buber understanding of dialogue for in both their works, there is crisis inherent in the relationship, emanating from the “encounter,” “the between,” and “the responsibility.” For Buber, the crisis is the “between,” while for Levinas, it is a “command of revolt” and both rest on “the radical transcendentalization of the ethical”33 inherent in the
encounter within which the notion of the between and the responsibility take the high seat. Further, for Buber, the crisis is ontological because it is embedded in human experience of both the ‘I–Thou’ while Levinas also conceptualizes the idea in the relationship with the Other as naturally demanding responsibility from the “I” whose subjectivity must give way to the “trace.” In the main, both address the issue of discourse which Calvin O. Schrag articulates as “about something by someone, and for someone.” In the context of discourse therefore, Levinas presents the relationship with the other as “an experience and as an a priori to all experience on the “hither side” to the extent of making the experience possible. The responsibility inherent in such relationship defines itself as putting oneself in the place of another, a characterization that is a hallmark of the story of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel (Lk.10:25-26). The story highlights an “encounter,” a “between,” and finally a “relationship.” Levinas further notes that “Through becoming interchangeable with anyone, I take on the weight and consistency of one that bears the burden of being, of alien being and of the world. I become substantial and a subject, subjected to the world and to the others.”

However, while these considerations in the field of philosophy as ethics have a path to new ideas in the field of dialogue, in a wider perspective, Christianity as an influential cultural system has not yet embraced the new thoughts on dialogue that could serve as an advantage, especially to the Catholic Church and its mission. One reason for this indifference toward the new thoughts on dialogue is that the Church has always upheld the combination of the beliefs of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies and has developed its theology on the foundations of these two worlds. Throughout the centuries past, Christianity has based its beliefs in the dualistic sources of Platonism, ascertaining and comprehending the contrast between elements of the senses and the things of the mind, between body and the spirit and these sharp dichotomies has
invariably stood against the notion of “wholeness” which Buber contends as necessary for a genuine dialogue.\textsuperscript{38}

Further, it has fundamentally accepted the hierarchy of things- superior-subordinate relationships- a notion that permeates the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle\textsuperscript{39} and which characterizes Thomas Aquinas’s theology and philosophy which has become the foundation of many theological writings of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{40} While on one hand, Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Aquinasianism offer the Church a tremendous understanding of the biblical message, Levinas, Buber, and Lonergan on the other hand, inject new insights of the philosophical foundations of the past in an attempt to look at philosophy in a new light so as to offer new conceptual tools both for the philosophical and theological sciences in the hope of offering a new ground of dialogue of which the Church too can respond positively to the Second Vatican Council’s call to dialogue (see “The Opening Message “ in Vatican II Documents).

**The Conceptualization of Dialogue in the History of the Church**

Dialogue both in the textual concept and in its relational aspect has been practiced in the Church throughout its history. The concept takes on different roles and emphasis depending on the historical context in which the Church finds itself. Whenever, for instance, the early Church Fathers used the word “Dialogue,” in their writings, it was either in reference to responding to an accusation leveled against the Church on doctrinal issues or an attack against the entire Church. For example, in the “Dialogue” of Justin, the martyr, Justin responds to the Jew, Tryphon, by refuting an accusation that Christians did not observe the Law (of Moses). Justin argues that according to the Prophets themselves, the law should be abrogated, it had only been given to the Jews on account of their hardness of heart and that the eternal law had been laid down by
This notion of dialogue is one of the many examples in similar fashion that characterized the early Church and it was conducted to address and correct misunderstandings concerning some important doctrinal issues. Further, the role of dialogue in the Church was at times extended to the idea of catechesis, what the Early Church Fathers termed as “didaskalia” (διδάσκαλία, διδάσκαλειν: to catechize, instruct), and in the Vulgate, doctrina, which also means “catechesis”). Until the Second Vatican Council, the notion of dialogue was understood as an instrumentum rectum (an instrument for restoration) or instructions to explain, correct, or dismiss a misunderstanding or rejection of a doctrine found to be a distortion of the Church’s teachings as shown in the works of the early Church Fathers.

During the period of the preconciliar Church, around 1700-1900, the notion of dialogue took on another different meaning. An example was when the Council of Trent, in an attempt to dialogue with the Reformers (Luther and Calvin, Zwingli and the other Reformers), indirectly applied a different method of dialogue through pastoral approaches to maintain its practices in line with its traditions and also to instruct its members on where the Church stood on matters of doctrine contrary to the Reformers accusations. In entering into this pastoral dialogic approach, the Church strengthened its Catholic heritage, that is, the Apostolic Tradition and the whole compendium of the Church’s teachings. The Council of Trent therefore, from a strategic dialogic pastoral approach, produced The Roman Catechism which in a sense became an indispensable reflection of Trent, just as the recent Catechism of the Catholic Church has become a pastoral reflection of the Second Vatican Council. Contrary to the old ecclesiastical approach to dialogue, Vatican II engaged dialogue from a different perspective by situating it within the context of ecumenism, and extending the engagement to other social and political...
environments in order to maintain relations with other different Church denomination and secular organizations. Thus, in his encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, Paul VI noted:

Accordingly, bearing in mind the words of our predecessor of venerable memory, Pope John XXIII, in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* to the effect that the doctrines of such movements, once elaborated and defined, remain always the same, whereas the movements themselves cannot help but evolve and undergo changes, even of a profound nature, we do not despair that they may one day be able to enter into a more positive dialogue with the Church than the present one which we now of necessity deplore and lament.47

Paul VI reminds the Council Fathers of the practice of dialogue in the past and encouraged them to take note of the encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, addressed to “all men of goodwill” and open the channel of communication situated within the notion of dialogue that aimed at “assisting the cause of peace between men”48 by providing “a method which sought to order human relationships in the sublime light of the language of reason and sincerity, and by making a contribution of experience and wisdom which can stir up all men to the consideration of the supreme values.”49 The Pope emphasized some of the essential elements of dialogue concerning the exclusion of pretense, deceit and betrayal. He maintained that dialogue cannot be confined “to relationships with the heads of nations, but must set them up also with the body of the nation
and with its foundations, whether social, family or individual, so as to diffuse in every institution and in every soul the understanding, the relish and the duty of peace.\textsuperscript{50} These reflections point back to John XXIII’s encyclical \textit{Pacem in Terris}, in which he called for peace among nations. Further, he extended the Church’s engagement in dialogue to people of other faith traditions, the Jews and the Moslems However, the Pope was quick to add: “Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that there is but one true religion, the religion of Christianity. It is our hope that all who seek God and adore Him may come to acknowledge its truth.\textsuperscript{51} He further asserted that it is better in ecumenical dialogue to concentrate on the commonalities rather than those elements that divide the Churches because they provide a good and fruitful subject for dialogue.\textsuperscript{52} In fact, in a mode of certainty, the Pope noted:

But we must add that it is not in our power to compromise with the integrity of the faith or the requirements of charity. We foresee that this will cause misgiving and opposition, but now that the Catholic Church has taken the initiative in restoring the unity of Christ’s fold, it will not cease to go forward with all patience and consideration. It will not cease to show that the prerogatives, which keep the separated brothers at a distance, are not the fruits of historic ambition or of fanciful theological speculation, but derive from the will of Christ and that, rightly understood, they are for the good of all and make for common unity, freedom and Christian perfection.\textsuperscript{53}
It must be mentioned that the purview of dialogue as enunciated by Paul VI, was based on certainty; certainty of one’s position in the dialogic process. The Church could not compromise its position on certain ecclesial issues, which in the field of ecumenism makes sense but fails to fulfill the full implications of dialogue. Further, calling to mind the goal of the Church, the Pope noted:

“this fundamental principle of Holy Church has not as its objective a supremacy of spiritual pride and human domination. It is a primacy of service, of ministration, of love.54

The observation raises a number of questions regarding the Church’s position. On account of the Church’s nature as service, it is plausible to assume that by entering into dialogue with certainty of its stance, the Church will avoid any crisis that may seem to challenge its views. Further, the Church will avoid any discussion that will create tension and that it will maintain a linear model of communication that the Pope says should not characterize the Council’s deliberation on ecumenism.

For the Pope therefore, dialogue was understood as a predictable and finalizable process as long as the partners can accept such position with mutual understanding. This was the view of the Church concerning other denomination and non-Christian religions. However, for the members of the believing community in the Church, the Pope pointed to the definition of the Church as “mother and head”55 of the Roman Church and invited them to engage in dialogue with the Roman Church in faith, charity, and through good works, arguing that such dialogue should be intimate and familiar. Further, he reminded members of the virtue of obedience and noted that authority would be exercised according to its proper function while expecting
members to submit to it.”56 In the context of theological understanding of dialogue, the Pope noted that it was the desire of the Church that “the dialogue within the Church should take on new fervor, new themes and speakers, so that the holiness and vitality of the Mystical Body of Christ on earth may be increased.”57 The theological ramifications of dialogue, according to Paul VI was directed toward a search for understanding of doctrines and religious cultures of other Christian Churches and non-Christian religions in the context of ecumenism. S. Wesley Ariarajah has noted that theological explorations of dialogue primarily seek “new and creative relationship within which one can learn about and respect others and also can give authentic witness to one’s own faith.58 Ariarajah further points out that others see it as an important historical moment in the development of religious traditions in which each of the faith traditions in dialogue is challenged and transformed by the encounter with others. The transformation process has also been observed by Julia T. Woods, who argued that dialogue means “that interlocutors are immersed in a process that shapes and forms them even as they shape and form it and one another in ways that are no entirely predictable and finalizable.59

Within this theological perspective, one can surmise that this type of dialogue can serve as a common ground for Christians and non-Christians to search for the truth in view of their common pilgrimage so that each tradition can share the way it perceives and responds to its religious truth with each other. The search for understanding and the truth of religions offer a challenge to the various Churches especially in the way it clarifies the nature, purpose, and goal of the ecumenical dialogue and especially to exercise caution to avoid syncretism which has been the fear of many Churches. Further, ecumenical dialogue must struggle to draw the line between interfaith relations and mission which defines the overall process of mission activity because through the mission of a particular Church, the challenge of culture becomes a real contentious
element because of the fear of relativistic pluralism. In one of his recent publications, John Paul II has argued that dialogue did not mean relativistic pluralism, and that in the last two centuries, the popes have developed and proposed certain moral teachings concerning “many different spheres of human life in order to support and encourage the whole of humanity.” He argues:

In fact, a new situation has come about “within the Christian community itself,” which has experienced the spread of numerous doubts and objections of a human and psychological, social and cultural, religious and even properly theological nature, with regard to the Church's moral teachings. . . . In particular, note should be taken of the “lack of harmony between the traditional response of the Church and certain theological positions,” encountered even in Seminaries and in Faculties of Theology, “with regard to questions of the greatest importance” for the Church and for the life of faith of Christians, as well as for the life of society itself.\footnote{60}

In the above text, the Pope continues the traditional trend of thought of his predecessors concerning certain misunderstandings regarding some doctrinal issues on which certain competing voices had taken a different stance. Rather than meeting other competing voices, the Pope chose to address the issue in an encyclical as a means of dialogue to refute, explain, and instruct in accordance with the Universal Catholic Church’s tradition. An issue here that needs clarification is the notion of Church. The confusion surrounds the interpretation of universal Church and the local Church. Recently, Cardinal Kasper engaged Cardinal Ratzinger in dialogue
over this issue. Kasper argued concerning the interpretation of “Church” it is the belief of Catholics that the Church as pre-existent is Scriptural but it is the same Church that exists in the local Churches. He argued “The theological basis for the validity of these principle is the doctrine that a local Church is not a province of a department of the universal Church: it is rather the Church in that particular place, The bishop is not a delegate of the Pope but rather a representative of Jesus Christ: he enjoys his own sacramentally-based individual responsibility.”61 On ecumenism, Kasper maintained that if Catholics believe that the aim (of ecumenism) is to restore Christian unity by bringing all other Churches into uniformity under the one Roman Church, the other Churches will resist “reconciliation.”62 The notion of universal Church often confuses even bishops because it connotes the Pope and the curia and when understood in this fashion, it perpetuates the notion of Roman centralism.63 For many bishops, a restoration of the institutional Church will prevent and derail dialogue.

Thus, the American Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on “Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response” in 1983 stood in contradiction to the Holy See’s preferred notion of dialogue within the context of the universal Church. The Bishops opened the matter to their Church members for discussion. While maintaining their allegiance to Rome, the Bishops, on the other hand, observed the cultural ramifications of the issue on armament within the cultural understanding of the American society by involving different perspectives of the American public. The Bishops noted:

Building peace within and among nations is the work of many individuals and institutions; it is the fruit of ideas and decisions taken in the political, cultural, economic
social, military, and legal sectors of life. We believe that
the Church, as a community of faith and social institution,
has a proper, necessary, and distinctive part to play in the
pursuit of peace.\textsuperscript{64}

The stance of the Bishops to involve different views and insights from qualified theologians, competent scholars engaged in the studies of arms proliferation, those working to promote justice and peace in the world, and the ordinary voices in the pews demonstrated a new different kind of dialogue at the local level of the universal Church. In the same vein, the Medellin Conference of the Latin American Bishops on justice, peace and poverty in 1968 was seen as a dialogic process with society to diffuse the oppressive elements of the rich and imperial nations that supported and sustained them. These new trends of dialogue have at times been understood by Rome as a form of dissent that invites punishment for those involved.

From the foregoing analysis, it becomes apparent that theological dialogue in the Church can take on different forms and roles depending on the emerging situation. In fact, Vatican II used the term “dialogue” but without its various ecclesial explications. It is assumed that such deliberate omission was to leave its application to the various local Churches in furtherance of the pastoral needs. In the main, the Church’s understanding of dialogue takes on different meanings, according to the different historical periods in the Church’s life. In the preconciliar ecclesiology, the understanding of dialogue as communication in a relational view never existed. The form of communication was what Pottmeyer characterized as the universalist view of the Church, that is, those who had voice in the Church were the ordained office holders over the lay faithful for they possessed the charism to speak.\textsuperscript{65} Further, the notion of monarchy
over collegial structure was indicative of the “Rome has spoken, the matter has ended” (Roma loquita, causa finita). This notion even prevailed between Rome and the bishops of the various dioceses around the world. Third, the priority of uniformity over plurality was thought to be primary and therefore the communication was one-way from the top down, and usually in instructional form. This view of dialogue of the preconciliar Church was steeped in the pyramidal pattern of dialogue whereby information was disseminated from Rome through bishops around the world and then to priests in various parishes so that it could be filtered down to the lay people. Fredrick Taylor termed this model of dispersal of information the “scalar and functional process” which is embedded in the Scientific Management theory.

The view of dialogue, according to John XXIII, pointed to an ecumenical engagement for Churches to sort out differences that separated them and if possible to reach an agreement on certain tensional issues. Thus, John XXIII founded the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in 1960. Paul VI in turn set up three Secretariats – Ecumenism, Non-Christian Religions, and the Church in the Modern World – in order to bring the Church face to face with other Churches, religious traditions, and with the world. Dialogue in these various sectors meant working toward “concern for the poor, unity of the human family to uproot discrimination, and the building of a just and peaceful society” all of which had to be carried on in cooperation with all men of good will. The Pope therefore observed:

In recent times he has begun to bestow more generously upon divided Christians remorse over their divisions and a longing for unity. Everywhere, large numbers have felt the impulse of this grace, and among our separated brethren also there increases from day to day a movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy
Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians.

Taking part in this movement, which is called ecumenical, are those who invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. They join in not merely as individuals but also as members of the corporate groups in which they have heard the Gospel, and which each regards as his Church and, indeed, God’s. And yet almost everyone, though in different ways, longs that there may be one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God. 71

The Pope encouraged theological reflection on the Decree Unitatis Redintegratio to be contextualized in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. Finally the Pope called on all Catholics to recognize the signs of the times and participate actively in the work of ecumenism with transparency and respect rather than consistently maintaining a fixed position.72

It is within this context that this study brings into the foregoing conversation the notion of Praxis Religious Dialogue which emerges as a pointer to a new horizon in the field of theological, anthropological, sociological, and philosophical dimension of dialogue. The conversation focuses on the notion of “otherness” within the Catholic Church and also introduces a new direction toward a new understanding of the narrative of Revelation as an ever unfolding dialogue in religions both in the Catholic Church and other faith traditions. Praxis Religious Dialogue therefore takes as its starting point, the different philosophical traditions of dialogue and situates them—dialogue from the perspective of human meeting or relationships (Buberian),
ethnomethodological dialogue (more a quantitative understanding of dialogue), a Bakhtinian cultural view of dialogue, and finally, the Gadamarian form of dialogue which focuses on textual understanding and interpretation from a philosophical foundation—within a common horizon in which the Church is invited and encouraged to engage others in sincere dialogue, especially with its own members toward the fulfillment of the call to aggiornamento which the Second Vatican Council laid down.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue model is all significant especially in this period of postmodernity when society is ever more experiencing a crisis emerging from the confusion of metanarrative and self identity. This crisis exists in the Church and can be likened to the radical spirit that characterized the revolutionary age of modernity, an age that shared the destiny of “every brute inversion of the world . . . that knows the disinherited to whom the past no longer belongs, and not yet the future.” The Council’s call to aggiornamento was an ever new beginning for the Church but it has encountered a fateful opposition especially within the ranks of the hierarchy, some of whom view the renewal process as an indication of a totalization of authority in the Church. However, implicit in the Council’s call to renewal is the notion of a religious reality in which the believer is encouraged to tap into all the tangible and intangible gifts of the Spirit and consider himself as a whole human being and not an object “for it is only as a unified being that he is able to live religiously.” As Buber points out:

. . . In this wholeness thought is naturally also included as an autonomous province but one which no longer strives to absolutize its autonomy.
Praxis Religious Dialogue thus seeks to encourage the Church to understand the concrete existential reality of the human person not only as “thinking autonomy” but as a gateway opened from thought processes which philosophy has bypassed in its speculation of being so that each member of the believing community is judged concretely from where he is and not where he is supposed to be. This philosophical and phenomenological appraisal affords the Church a unique opportunity to understand dialogue as not merely based on rules and doctrinal premises but as a relationship that yields manifold events in which the unexpected happens in the “encounter,” and in “the between,” with members of the Church. Thus envisioned, the Church will be in a better position to extend mutual respect to members and engage them in dialogue based on the notion of compassion, empathy, and acceptance inherent in the event of Revelation. Compassion, empathy, and acceptance are essential elements that point the Church to its very existence and it is from those essentials that each member of the Church derives his religious vision of hope for the world.

The insights on dialogue drawn largely from Buber, Levinas, and Lonergan serve as an interpretive framework for the paradigm of Praxis Religious Dialogue in the Church because dialogue as a concept, challenges the Church to depart from the Cartesian notion of subjectivity embedded in abstractions in order to adopt a new dialogical philosophy which understands the Other as a whole unified being capable of living responsibly through his religious beliefs. Further, Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks to insert and embed the Church in communion with all members of the Church – bishops, priests, religious, the laity, and Christians of other faith traditions. The model points to the diversity in the Church as a challenge and encourages the Church to heed to the call of being “the loving mother of all”76 as Pope John XXIII intimated in his opening address to the Council Fathers. The notion of the Church as a ‘loving mother of all’
was used by John XXIII as a metaphor intended to ask the Church to love, guide, teach, direct, and foster mutual interrelationships among her children and strive to protect the People of God.

In the context of this study, the metaphor is applicable because the dialogic nature of encounter is to open all available channels of communication without prejudice and reservation and it allows each partner to articulate his opinions and concerns for mutual exploration and discovery of the goals of the conversation. As an ongoing process, the conversation seeks to bring the interactants together in mutual cooperation and understanding, while requiring the participants to respect and accord each other with dignity and rights. For almost 2000 years now, the Church has weathered itself through history and can therefore be assumed that it has “grown up” in maturity through its numerous experiences and therefore can accept the new trends in dialogical philosophy with members of the believing community and Christians of other faith traditions. The implication of being a “mother” also points to the notion that the whole body of the People of God as a Church has the responsibility of a “mother” to love, guide, teach, foster mutual relationships within and outside the Church and become the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-36) for the world.

Within this understanding, Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks to invite the Church to adopt a participatory communication rather than the closed-up classical type of communication (a one-way channel of communication) in order to involve its members in the religious experience and conversion that create a ground for a loving relationship among the members. As a kerygmatic paradigm, the story of the Good Samaritan opens for the Church a channel of love without boundaries, love, which Dietrich Bonhoeffer notes, exists for others. Bonhoeffer writes

The Church is the Church only when it exists for other. . .
The Church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving.\textsuperscript{77}

The notion of service which is highlighted in the Gospels serves as the guiding light for the Church in the world – to act as servant of all. Anything less is contrary to the tenets of the Word of God that is preached by the Church.

III. The Message of Vatican II: Dialogue as a new Ground for the Church

On account of the foregoing, the Second Vatican Council labored not only to speculate on the nature of the Church but also to assiduously include in its numerous documents some chapters on dialogue in an attempt to invite the Church to critically examine its past and open its doors to encounter the world in dialogue especially with its own members and members of other denominations. First, the Council was concerned with the problem of dialogue within the Church’s own walls, that is, betwixt and between the hierarchy, priests, religious, and the laity and second, with other faith traditions. In its introductory work, the Council clearly presented its message for the Church “as the kernel of the Christian faith, in terms resonant with the biblical strength.”\textsuperscript{78}

These opening words of the Council focused on “renewal (aggiornamento) of the Catholic Church, to compassionate dialogue with modern men, to peace, to social justice, to whatever concerns the dignity of man and the unity of mankind.”\textsuperscript{79} The message of the Council point to the dialogic traditions of Levinas, Buber, and Lonergan because it seeks the quest for a community of peoples and the cooperation with all men of good will. The search also definitely calls for a responsibility toward the Other whereby the “I” stands before him as the accusative
“me” (Levinas) and ready to die for him, the desire and the willingness to “be” in conversation with the “thou” (Buber), all of which calls for a deeper religious experience of God (going beyond what is seen – meta-physics (μετα-φύσις) in order to fall in love with Him and one’s neighbor) Lonergan.

Thus, in his opening address to the Council, Pope John XXIII clearly noted that the Council’s main task as looking at the previous teachings of past Councils of the Church with new vision. The Pope noted: “The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration…” The Council therefore visited the issue of dialogue especially in the documents *Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes, Unitatis Redintegratio*, and *Nostra Aetate* in order to bring the Church face-to-face with the world. Over forty years have passed and the issue regarding the Council’s call to dialogue is not being allowed to take the appropriate direction toward the fulfillment of the call.

Subsequently, other theologians have further articulated the Council’s understanding of dialogue for the Church from different perspectives (Yves Congar, 1972, Hermann P. Pottmeyer, 1990, J. Leon Hooper, 1996). Most of the documents aim at a new understanding of dialogue, that is, to open up a new relationship between the hierarchy, the laity, other faith traditions, and especially to thrust the Church into a new kind of evangelization process (*Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Gaudium et Spes, Nostra Aetate*, and *Unitatis Redintegratio*), enhanced by its desire to be fully engaged in dialogue. While these documents pointed the Church in the direction of dialogue based on *faith-theory-practice* model, which only requires the Church to engage in dialogue according to certain principles without admitting any doctrinal compromise, the new dialogical thought of Buber, Levinas, Lonergan, offers a new approach (Buber, 1947;
Levinas, 1979; Lonergan, 1968) which is deepened by the praxis of dialogue which is directed toward the explications of the nature of crisis inherent in dialogue and calls for openness, respect, and the acceptance of the challenges that may emerge from the crisis within the encounter.

IV. The Crisis Nature of Dialogue

The crisis nature of dialogue, for Buber, is inherent in the *between*, a metaphor that sustains and supports dialogic life. Buber’s notion of the crisis of dialogue can only be understood within the context of meeting life relationally, understanding the ontological necessity of both self and other in order to discover meaning in the *between*. The evolving nature of the *between* simply dislodges the appropriation to oneself the meaning of the ongoing conversational event. The meaning is rather co-constituted between them (the conversationalists) in cooperative interaction. This crisis nature points to the central issue of Buber’s insight of dialogue, that is, “Life is best lived between extremes on the narrow ridge.”

For instance, there have been numerous interreligious faith discussions concerning baptism, the Eucharist, faith, morality, Christian marriage, and the whole environment of the concept of “justification and salvation,” but these discussions have so far not achieved a far reaching desired goals because the Catholic Church still maintains, in a large measure, a stronghold on biblical interpretation and the fundamentals of its theological discourse. Further, the reason for the failure in some of the areas mentioned is on account of the Church’s inability to accept the theological standpoints of other faith traditions which concretely address the human situation of the believer and his interaction with others understood as central to the gospel message. For the Christian, the central issue of Christianity is always a crisis because it calls for
a complete *kenosis* (emptying of oneself) which is a challenge for all human beings and therefore opens a horizon for the Church to concretely address the issue of dialogue in the historical moment. Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson call such failure in dialogue as *crisis-informed dialogue* – a dialogue that is characterized by a ‘quandary of direction.’

Another area of failure worth mentioning is the avoidance of the “crisis in dialogue” which surfaces in the hierarchy’s authoritative posture towards the priests, the laity, and people of different religious views. The crisis here is not to be understood as a call for a radical change but the meeting of the other in his concrete situation in order to understand, appreciate, and respect the opinions of the Other without objectifying his views. The following article which appeared in the “Catholic World News Service’ (Daily Briefs), from a Synod of Austrian Bishops is an example of the Church’s authoritative stance on dialogue. During the conference, the Patriarch, Nerses Bedros XX of the American Catholic Church observed that the local Churches are not vicariates of Rome. He further added: “An excessive centralization by Rome could suffocate the riches of the particular Churches.” Bedros contention points to a problematic space of authority in the Church which does not admit open dialogue but seeks to dictate in doctrinal tone the tenets of dialogue. The view of the bishop simply asks Rome to humbly understand that bishops in the Church of today do not have a choice in the world of today because today’s world is a world of questioning and research.

However, the Vatican would later criticize the bishops for their views on dialogue at the synod and berate some of them for straying away from the basic doctrinal teachings of the Church concerning authority of the deposit of faith. At a meeting in Austria on November 20, 1998, the bishops joined representatives of various Catholic groups and dissent organizations “in endorsing a series of statements about the life of the Church.” Several of those statements were
on the issues of contraception, homosexuality, divorce, and the ordination of women at least to
the deaconate. These endorsements attracted the anger of the Vatican to the extent that Pope John
Paul II reminded the Austrian Bishops that the process of dialogue required “a minimum
agreement on basics.”91 Here again, the inclusion of multiple competing voices in a conversation
was not being observed and accepted by the Pope and that calls into question the Church’s
understanding of dialogue because genuine dialogue also admits some form of baseline
agreement or as Sissela Bok terms it a ‘minimal value’92 of understanding that can offer a
common ground in the celebration of diversity of views that are central to the challenges faced in
open dialogue and which Viktor Frankl maintains as finding meaning in “the midst of
disruption.”93 Bok offers a constructivist approach to dialogue for common ground on which
dialogue can thrive. She notes:

A constructivist basis for morality thus interpreted calls for
no extra human or superhuman guarantees of objectivity or
absoluteness. To the extent that is a minimalist basis, it offers,
rather, common ground or footing upon which to undertake
dialogue, debate, and negotiations within and between other-
wise disparate traditions; a set of values that can be agreed
upon as a starting point for negotiation or action.94

Bok admits a local and translocal common ground. John Paul’s comment goes contrary to this
view because it does not recognize the crisis that emerges from negotiations especially in this
postmodern era when people of different cultures strive to find a common ground amidst the
concatenating currents of self-identity. Kenneth Gergen, *In the Saturated Self*, has argued that people have lost confidence in metanarratives systems but he at the same time notes that postmodernity has something to offer the contemporary communicator (which of course the Church tries to do in her proclamation of the gospel message). Gergen thus emphasizes

The relatively coherent and unified sense of self inherent in a traditional culture gives way to manifold and competing potentials. A multiphrenic condition emerges in which one swims in ever-shifting, concatenating and contentious currents of being. One bears the burden of an increasing array of oughts, of self-doubts and irrationalities. The possibility for committed romanticism or strong and single-minded modernism recedes, and the way is opened for the postmodern being.

Gergen points the Church to the direction of understanding postmodernity within its historical moment and to accept the bare fact that people in this present era do not abide by one major narrative system but open to multiple possibilities of significance in communication. While Bok suggests that we do not hang on to postmodernity eternally, she concurs with Gergen that minimal values do admit a common ground for negotiation. Thus, what the Austrian bishops and others were requesting from the Church was not a compromise on ecclesiastical doctrines but a minimal ground of values that admit and offer a common ground in order to see the power of the moment of crisis.
Praxis Religious Dialogue model, as a communicative praxis, foregrounds dialogue not with certainty but crisis emerging the extremes because of the very nature of dialogue as between the extremes on the narrow ridge. Further, the model is dynamically embedded in the historicality of the conversationalists who struggle through uncertainties to co-constitute a meaning from their dialogic life experiences emanating from the crisis of the dialogue.

John Paul II further noted concerning the Bishops’ synod in Austria that dialogue among Catholics cannot obscure the fundamental reality that the Church is not merely a human community, but also a transcendent mystery – a sort of icon of the Holy Trinity – engaged in the divine plan for salvation,” and thus insisted that “all dialogue must be based on that understanding, . . . and that communion within the faith is indispensable to any dialogue.” While the Pope’s intention is admirable because of his desire to protect the authority of the deposit of faith, it is also significant to point out that there are multiple ways of understanding dialogue and that the approach being offered by the Pope might not frame most helpfully the historical moment. It further propels one to ask whether dialogue is appropriate at all for the Church as historically understood.

It must be recalled that in line with the vision for the Church, John XXIII had emphasized in his opening address to the Council Fathers that while the Council was to preserve the sacred patrimony of truth received from the Fathers, it was at the same time to look “to the present, to the new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate.” This foresight of John XXIII has been interpreted conservatively and replaced with a preconciliar understanding of dialogue which enters into the engagement with certainty and appropriation of meaning constituted within the framework of superior-subordinate relation embedded in the traditions of paternalism. The new
understanding of dialogic theory invites a reconsideration of communication in the Church of which Praxis Religious Dialogue is appropriate and necessary for this historical moment.

Within the Church’s own walls, the chasm between bishops and the See of Rome has widened and the ripple effect has affected the very people the bishops serve as shepherds; relationship between priests and their communities still remains a field of distrust filled with uncertainty and fear of the other. These ecclesiastical anomalies stem from the lack of understanding of the rich field of dialogue within the Church because the Church’s hierarchy is still reading the work of Vatican II with a preconciliar lens which avoids the implicit assumptive nature of dialogue as the Council attempted to perceive it (See Pottmeyer, 1992; Catholic Theological Society of America: Report from the Committee on the Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity, 1990; Yves Congar, 1972, Martin Buber, 1966).

V. The Goal of the Praxis Religious Dialogue

The goal of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model seeks to enhance the Church’s old communicative practice based on faith-theory model. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model aims at decentering the subject (in this case the “Church”) and also to decentralize it through a movement from the old metaphysical and epistemological characterizations of the individual in order to embed it within the historical moment so that it will live out the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 27-39) whose presence to the Other broke barriers and restored hope in the weak, wounded and frail stranger. The objective outcome of this process of decentralizing the subject is to provide the Church a flexibility in becoming more effective through interaction with its own members (the community of faith), other faith traditions, and the larger society because by its very nature, the Church is dialogic on account of the biblical commission granted to it to
liberate, confirm, and enhance the dignity of the human person (*Lumen Gentium*, and *Gaudium et Spes*)

The assertion does not condemn in any measure the historical and paternalistic technical dialogic model of the preconciliar Church, because the Church has adapted very well to different historical epochs during which it engaged in the process of redefining itself. However, the present invitation through the Praxis Religious Dialogue model is a movement towards a new vision of dialogical philosophy for the Church because it opens a horizon of possibilities for the enhancement of its ministry through dialogue by decentering its “subjectivity” and refocusing its attention on the Other. This new vision of dialogue is also an invitational posture for the Church to recognize the responsibility it owes to the community of believers which forms the *ecclesia* and through whose *sensus fidei*, through the Spirit makes present the Other who calls forth the subject (hierarchy) to responsibility.

The *Praxis Religious Dialogue* model is grounded in the centrality of the works of many scholars (Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Bernard Lonergan, Calvin O. Schrag, John Stewart, Paolo Freire, George Cheney, Rob Anderson, Kenneth N Cissna, Leslie A. Baxter, Barbara Montgomery, Ronald C. Arnett & Pat Arneson), and others who have shed so much light on dialogue. Their scholarly research not only challenges the notion of “one-way directional communication model” but also offers different perspectives on dialogic ground for discussion, deliberation, understanding, and appreciation of other competing voices. In their view, dialogue is guided by mutual respect in which each subject attempts to remove the focus of attention from the “self” but this notion stands in contradiction to the Church’s old understanding of dialogue. The Church has retained a posture of “technical dialogue” which affords it the opportunity to gather and disseminate doctrinal and
ritualistic information formulated in encyclicals and pastoral letters to the faith community. This preconciliar understanding of dialogue could be characterized as both monologic and technical dialogic.

VI. The Purpose of this Work

I have attempted to point out that it will serve the Church immeasurably to open itself to the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue so that it can involve the faith community in living out the revelatory event, which for the work, points to the story of the Good Samaritan. The essence of the involvement of the community will help the hierarchy to soften its tenacious grip on authority which supposedly derives its legitimation, according to the magistrium, from the conservation of the narrative of Revelation of which the hierarchy is the sole custodian. Revelation belongs to the historical moment from which members of the faith community live out their daily experiences and it becomes the basis for their ongoing existential story. Its interpretation relies on the shared and lived experiences of the faith community and not on the experiences of a particular group. Further, Revelation belongs to the domain of the faith community (sensus fidei) whose consensus validation emanating from their shared biblical story points to their hope of the future. The Church needs an understanding of “communication ethics that embraces life as it is lived and simultaneously keeps alive the hope of a more ideal mode of interaction.” Thus, both the theological and ecclesiological praxis of the twenty-first century become a testing ground for the Church as it advances and enhances its missionary vision.
The purpose of this dissertation therefore is to invite the Church to adopt a Praxis Religious Dialogue to:

- enhance its dialogic interaction with its own members – priests, religious, and the laity, who, together, form the community of the people of God
- facilitate its missionary activities as it encounters different socio-political, traditions, and cultures, and of other nations
- adopt a respectful and dignified attitude toward other faith traditions through its ecumenical approach

in order to become a “mother of all” and recognize the voice of the Other which underlies the very foundation of its existence. In this study, I have attempted to explain what I would like to pursue concerning the Church and dialogue and I have pointed out from some of the scholars whose expertise in the field of communication has opened a wide array of dialogic issues for further research. Some of their academic endeavors would guide me through this work as I attempt to explain the new direction I am proposing- a Praxis Religious Dialogue model - for the Church to move from a one-way-directional communicative practice which is monologic and technical in nature to a new understanding of dialogical philosophy. The new direction also will enhance the effectivity of the Church’s missionary activities as it strives to pursue the renewal process proposed by the Second Vatican Council. Thus, in the next chapter, I intend to develop the emergence of dialogue, analyzing different approaches and understanding of the concept from different scholars who have shared their thoughts on the subject.
ENDNOTES


2 M. Heidegger concept of “Being” is expressed in the German understanding of the human person in his/her totality: Da-sein, literally “being there, presence.” The concept is taken from the Greeks’ notion of *Being*- οὐσίας to stand for the foundational constitution of the human being. Heidegger uses the concept to mean any person who has such Being, and who is thus an “entity” himself. See footnote 1 & 2 of *Being and Time.* (John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, eds.), p. viii

3 Alan Udoff explains vividly the departure from the metaphysics of consciousness of German Idealism by Buber, Levinas, Roesenzweig, Kierkegaard, Marcel, Heidegger and others to the new understanding of philosophy as “Ethics,” that focuses on the responsibility underlying the I-Thou relationship which German Idealism has understood as objective knowledge.

4 See introduction to *Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays.* p. ix


6 See introduction to *Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays.* p. ix..

7 E. Levinas, “Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, and Philosophy, p. 313. Allan Udoff explains in his footnote to Levinas’s objective expression of philosophy that in Western Tradition, it has become so resolute that other opinions from other sciences could not be admitted as emerging from sound ground nor as possessing sound reason, and thus Levinas attempts to strip philosophy of its transcendent reference (see Plato’s *Republic*: 486a-b and also the commentary by Averroes) and infuses the “cogito” with an ethical transcendence.

8 See Introduction to *Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays,* p. ix.


10 Ibid. p. 317-318.
There is a problematical understanding of Buber’s philosophy of dialogue according to some scholars, but as Buber himself explains, his understanding of his view of philosophy still remains on the plane of dialogue because according to him authentic philosophizing begins with a new vision of the different fulgurations surrounding the I-Thou relationship which affords no objective knowledge. (See p. xii of the introduction of The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays, by Allan Udoff).


See introduction to *Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays*. p. xi

ibid.

For Buber, Marcel’s understanding of the relationship between God and man is an ontologic mystery which helps man to be in touch with his being. Thus Buber took a different path which made him note that: “I call my philosophy “dialogical philosophy” not without a certain irony because basically it cannot be pursued otherwise that dialogically, but the writings dealing with it have been cast into the, for the most part, quite undialogically constituted human world of this hour- and must be cast there. “Philosophy of existence” appears to me an imprecise and unsteady concept. I have never included myself in such, but feel myself as standing perhaps between an existential thinking in Kierkegaard’s sense and something entirely different, something which is still out of sight.

Martin Buber. *Replies*. p. 697


Buber later explains that the between only becomes a reality when each person grants the other a share in his being. It is this notion that underlies Buber’s notion of dialogue- the authenticity that comes from the sharing of each one’s being. This concept also projects his view of philosophy as ethics.


36 Ibid. p. xxix.


38 Buber, *The Eclipse of God*, p. 44.


41 See Justin, the Martyr (100 – 165 A.D.), “Dialogue” x-xxx. The article can also be retrieved from [http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08580c.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08580c.htm) See also Origen *Commentary on Romans* XVI:14; Eusebius *Church History* III, III, 6; Jerome *Lives of Illustrious Men* X.; Irenaeus *Against Heresies* IV, XX, 2; Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* II, I; II, IX; II, XII; Tertullian *On Modesty* X and XX.; Quasten, *Patrology*, I:92-93.

42 *The Didache or The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles*, was an instructional handbook for Gentiles which dealt with matters of morality, liturgy, and Church life. Discovered in 1873, this oldest extant handbook of Church order and conduct prompted a torrent of scholarly debate and discussion. But down the years to the present, the author (or compiler) remains unknown and the setting (Syria, Palestine, or Egypt) can be given with no real confidence. As to the date of composition, reasonable estimates range from A.D. 60 to 90. See Larry V. Crutchfield, *Early Christian History and Culture*. Crutchfield is a professor at the Columbia Evangelical Seminary, Longview, WA and his work can be accessed on line: [www.consevativeonline.org/journals/02_06_jurnal/1998v2n6_id02.htm](http://www.consevativeonline.org/journals/02_06_jurnal/1998v2n6_id02.htm)

43 See Irenaeus *Against Heresies* IV, XX, 2; Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* II, I; II, IX; II, XII; Tertullian *On Modesty* X and XX
See the October 1994 issue of The Homiletic & Pastoral Review. Also for further reading, see article by Stephen F. Brett on “Reception and the Catechism.” Published online: http://www.ewtn.com/library/CATECHISM/RECEPCAT.HTM

Ibid.

Ibid.

Paul VI, Encyclical, Ecclesiam Suam, August 6, 1964, no, 105.

Ibid.

Ibid. no. 106

Ibid.

Ibid. no. 107.

Ibid. no. 108.

Ibid. no. 109.

Ibid. no. 110.

Ibid. no. 111.

Ibid. no. 114.

Ibid. no. 116.


John Paul II, Veritas Splendor, no. 4.


Ibid.
61 Ibid.


66 Ibid.

67 See Bishop De Smedt speech at the during the Second Vatican Council.

68 Ibid.


70 John XXIII, Encyclical: Pacem in Terris, no.35-36, 42, 45 and 56.

71 John Paul II, Encyclical: Ut Unum Sint (That they all may be One). May 25, 1995, nos.7-8. Also see Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism Unitatis Redintegratio, 1.

72 Unitatis Redintegratio, no. 1

73 See Duino Elegies. The verse appears in Walter Kaufmann’s From Shakespeare to Existentialism (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1960). p. 225

74 See Buber’s work, The Eclipse of God, p. 123-129; also see Vatican II Documents, Gaudium et Spes, no.10.

75 Ibid. p. 44


79 See “Opening Message” in The Documents of Vatican II, p. 2. (See also Lonergan: The Incarnate Word: Supplement. (Boston: The Lonergan Center, typescript); J. Leon Hooper: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular: Selected Writings of John Courtney Murray. Georgetown University Press, 1944; George


83 “Opening Address of John XXIII,” in *Vatican II Documents*, p.715.

84 The *Between* is a metaphor pointing to the events that arise in any given situation where dialogue takes place. Buber would use the notion of the *narrow ridge* to express the crisis that points to the uncertainty of the eventual consequence of the ensuing conversation.


87 See *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age*. p. 294.

88 “Synod of Bishops Discuss Dialogue” *Catholic World News Service* (Daily Briefs), October 3, 01.

89 Ibid.


93 Viktor Frankl. *Tripod of Meaning*, In *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p.15. Also see other works that address the issue of finding meaning in the midst of

94 Ibid. p. 76.


96 Ibid. p. 80.


100 Ibid. *Lumen Gentium* (introduction) and *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 12, 15, and 17.

101 Vatican II Documents, *Dei Verbum* (Revelation), no. 10.

Chapter 2
The Hermeneutics of Dialogue

I. Philosophical Interpretation of Dialogue

II. The Nature of Dialogue

III. The Praxis Religious Dialogue as a faith-theory-action Paradigm

The notion of “Dialogue” can be construed to be explanatory, instructional, even as a rejoinder to an attack on one’s beliefs or person or as a conversation within a relationship or among nations, or organizations. As explanatory, instructional or a rejoinder process, it is expressed in a uni-directional mode with or without the necessary expected feedback. However, when dialogue takes place with a relationship, it is assumed that parties involved will allow the development of the conversation through mutual expressions of different opinions. Given the different notions of dialogue expressed by scholars (Buber, 1965; Levinas, 1989; Gadamer, 1998; Lonergan, 1968; Anderson, Cissna, Arnett, 1994, Baxter, 2004, Arnett, 2004), I intend to ground the Praxis Religious Dialogue model within the standpoint of philosophical hermeneutics of dialogue. I will relate the findings of the different authors to the revelatory event of which the Catholic Church contends to be the custodian and interpreter.\(^1\) Further, I will establish within the Praxis Religious Dialogic context that the story of God’s revelation is a dialogic event,\(^2\) that is, “God is a personal God who has spoken to men”\(^3\) and initiated a dialogue with them and has invited them not only to listen to his words but also to respond, by becoming a “responsive I”.\(^4\)

The implicit assumptions inherent in this relationship within the revelatory event are that God invites man to be a sharer in the conversation and that this participation calls for a disposition that is embedded in a hermeneutical experience of a “Thou” and “language.”
I. The Philosophical Interpretation of Dialogue

In the minds of many people in the Church, the general understanding of dialogue is that of defending one’s position on an issue or asking the other person to accept information being delivered by a superior to a subordinate. In the context of the Church, usually the communication is between bishops/religious superiors and their priests/nuns and also priests and the laity. Generally, the kind of “dialogue” being referred to takes the form of listening to homilies, reading or explaining instructional materials to priests or the laity, or an explanatory teaching from an encyclical or pastoral letter. Further, the use of the term “communication” refers to the notion of “ecumenical dialogue” between the Catholic Church and other faith traditions and another application of the concept is in reference to the media.

The application and usage of the concept of dialogue in this sense is similar to what many scholars have referred to as a kind of dialogue taking place in other life contexts that serves as an “antidote to impersonal forces in a complex technologized world.” Recent research in the field, however, has developed a new understanding of the concept “dialogue” to include a variety of historical, cultural, and social elements which have been taken for granted in our attempt to “want better listening from the other person and more acceptance of our side of the argument.” The Church’s usage of the concept, “communication” is usually equated with the term “dialogue,” and its implications vary depending on the prevailing context. While Vatican II called on the Church to open itself to dialogue, subsequent interpretation of the concept is intrinsically linked to submission to authority and obedience to the tradition of the Church. In a recent work, Dialogue: Theorizing Difference in Communication Studies, Julia T. Wood, in a “Foreword” to the contributions of the various authors to the book, makes an allusion to the Roman god Janus, with two faces simultaneously looking into the past and future and compares
the notion of dialogue to the god’s dual face that points to the foundations and recent
developments in the field. The different contributors give different definitions and metaphors of
dialogue: utterance and responsiveness, multivocal process (uncertainties between people);
emergent rather than performed, fluid rather than static (Baxter, 2004); processual with a goal of
forming and shaping rather than predictable. Further, it means that there are many inherent
tensions in dialogic interaction; dialogue allows differences to exist rather than finding a
common ground which is characteristic of dominant cultures; it is a ground for discovery of
selves through relationships, therefore it is open to being formed through the ensuing
interaction.¹¹

First, Gadamer has argued that the “Thou” in an encounter “is acknowledged as a person”
and the relationship between the “I” and “Thou” is not something immediate but reflective.¹²
That is, at the time of the conversation, the participants are usually unaware of the total
implications of their dialogue until they reflect on what has taken place. Each partner deeply
reflects on the experience of the dialogic relationship that is other than the “I.” In fact, Gadamer
notes that this reflectiveness allows each of the partners in the relationship to constitute the
reality of the I-Thou relation in order to come to terms with the inner historicity of the
relationship.¹³ The partners are also challenged to struggle for mutual recognition of the other
usually through confirmation and appreciation and through the emerging elements in the
relationship. The struggle to recognize, or be “in the world of the Other” is embedded in the
historical and cultural purviews of the partners and it differs from the type of I-Thou relation
which either merely seeks to idealize or searches for a common ground or predicts the behavior
of the other.

From a moral orientation perspective, Gadamer notes that the search to idealize of predict
the behavior of the Other in relationship leads to self-regarding and contradicts the moral
definition of man gained through the knowledge of man.\(^\text{14}\) He contends that it is an “illusion to
see another person as a tool that can be absolutely known and used.”\(^\text{15}\) The other hermeneutical
experience of “I- Thou” relationship is “tradition,” which Gadamer argues is “a process that
experience teaches us to know and govern; it is an experience embedded in language, i.e. it
expresses itself like a Thou”\(^\text{16}\) because one brings oneself to encounter that experience and
attempt to decipher and interpret the inherent meaning of the experience. In this context, the
“Thou” is not an object; it relates to the Other. In this context, Gadamer argues for “meaning”\(^\text{17}\)
detached from the objectified meaning attached to the notion of “tradition” of the Thou.
However, an encounter with this kind of experience also teaches us something about
hermeneutical experience, which he notes points to the notion of “tradition”\(^\text{18}\) as a genuine
partner in dialogue.

It is arguable that when dialogue is conceived as taking place on a linear scale, it
constitutes simply the knowledge of human nature which objectifies man. Within such a
relationship, the partners confront each other because they are detached from historical reality\(^\text{19}\)
that constitutes the relationship. Further, it derails the assumptions of dialogue, because the
dimensions of dialogue point to a communication quality that brings the communicators to focus
more on mutuality in the relationship, responsiveness rather than expressiveness, selflessness
rather than on self interest.\(^\text{20}\) It is also concerned with discovering the Other together with his
world rather than simply disclosing oneself with the intention of gaining access to the Other’s
world.

In this same fashion, Martin Buber situates the relationship of the Interhuman within a
systematic method which deals with the concrete, existential characteristics of man, his life, and
his experience in the world which focuses on reaching the fullness and the uniqueness of his reason to be in this world — “I am my brother’s keepers.”

For Buber, philosophical anthropology attains its fullest foundation when it articulates man in his totality in this world and grants him the ability to enter into a relationship “with the world and things, with men both as individuals and as many and with the mystery of being . . .which transcends it.”

In Buber’s view, the relation between man and ordinary things (I-It) is different from the relation between man and man (I-Thou). The former, according to Buber, occurs when man refuses or fails to enter into a relation and distances himself by recoiling into himself. Buber maintains that in such a disposition leads to the thickening of the distance between himself and the world of It.

Two things stand out as significant to Buber’s idea of relation, first, the necessity of distance and second, the importance of being in relation through distance. Being able to establish a relation with the world is for Buber a “synthesizing apperception,” that is, the primal setting that is attributable to all beings. We are capable even as knowing beings to live without ‘knowing’ and simply live. Buber makes a difference between simply being there in the world of things and the ability to enter into a relation with other men in the world even at a distance, and he grounds the notion of man’s ability to enter into relation with other men in philosophical anthropology, by extending the definition of man beyond thought and experience and pointing to that capability as the sphere of a genuine wholeness . . . capable of contemplation of all its manifold nature.

The I-It relation does not have the intensity of a relation between man and man because that kind of relation is characterized by “experiencing and using,” it is technical and purely “psychical” and it happens within oneself and not between oneself and the world, hence it is subjective and lacks shared, common and reciprocated character of a genuine relation.

Whereas in his essential relation with men, he opens up to another life, man offers himself not
simply as assistance but as a genuine one who establishes a connection to be able to constitute his whole being. There is no definite withdrawing from the concrete to solely conceptual perceptions. Buber writes:

In human life together, it is the fact that man sets man at a distance and makes him independent that enables him to enter into relation, as an individual self, with those that like himself. Through this ‘interhuman’ relation men confirm each other, becoming a self with the other.

For Buber, man’s relation with the Other does not depend on the distance between them but how man makes use of the distance in his relations. Distance does not matter, it is how one brings himself to “lighten” it, so to speak, in order to keep the relation going while respecting the independence of the other person and allowing the Other to grow. Entering into a relation thus precedes distance, according to Buber, and strikes a difference between a relation between I-It and the I-Thou. The I-Thou relation is ontological because it constitutes man as man able to overcome the I-It relation, which rests on false security.

Elsewhere, Buber notes that while the I-It relation is the enlargeing and thickening of distance, “it can be defined as the objectification of the I-Thou relationship which sometimes serves as the way back to it and sometimes obstructs the return.” The I-Thou transcends this objectification of the other because in the mutual relationship between people, the self is not induced, as Buber points out, by man’s relation to himself “. . . but by the confirmation in which one man knows himself to be ‘made present’ in his uniqueness by the other.” The I-Thou is
characterized by “mutuality, directness, presentness, intensity, and ineffability.”  

There is a common thread running between both Buber and Gadmaer’s notions on the relationship between I-Thou and I-It. Gadamer does not use the term I-It but indicates in his analysis that when the “I” or the “Thou” experiences the other by trying to discover typical behavior in him and further makes predictions on that experience, such behavior remains solely on human nature based purely on knowledge. The relation does not depend on mutuality, openness, respect, and trust for we only understand the other person “in the same way as that we understand any other typical event in our experiential field and we deem the other person’s behavior as a means to our end as any other means.”  

For Gadamer, the relation is based on “naïve faith.”  

Our understanding of the Thou in relation in Gadamer is based on our ability to interpret the past of the Thou in his traditionary moment and in the midst of all the tensions that may go with it, and bring it into the historical moment to make sense of the tradition. Tradition, according to the Gadamarian view, involves not only a process that teaches us to know and govern but the whole discourse that constitutes the history. This approach is different from an attempt to understand the other in advance without any concern for participating in his life because by claiming to know the other in advance, “one robs his claims of their legitimacy.”  

Gadamer argues that this form of knowing and experiencing is called historical consciousness. It only knows the other through his otherness; it knows about the past in its otherness. By attempting to know the otherness of the other in his past, one only purports to claim to transcend one’s own conditionedness. This condition is a false dialectical appearance because one seeks only to become master of the past, which is indicative of some of the ideals of “perfection” of absolute knowledge inherent in the enlightenment teachings. Gadamer notes in this historical
consciousness of the enlightenment:

. . . the dialectical illusion which historical consciousness creates, and which correspond to the dialectical illusion of experience perfected and replaced by knowledge, is unattainable ideal of the enlightenment. A person who believes he is free of prejudices, relying on the objectivity of his procedures and denying that he is himself conditioned by historical circumstances, experiences the power of the prejudices that unconsciously dominate him as a \textit{vis a tergo}. . . 37 (Italics mine)

A genuine hermeneutical experience situated within a dialogic relationship is therefore to seek the other not as an object but in his historical otherness, interpreting it in light of the present moment so that justice is done to him without laying claims on the relation. The significant thing in this process is not the otherness of the person but his historical existence; it is not of his tradition as through some kind of a critical method but through a sincere openness to the sources of the tradition in its historicity because it is through listening to the “Thou” in the relationship that one also listens to oneself. “Listening”, Gadamer argues, “is openness that allows the other to say something to us. Openness to the other, then, involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so.” 38 There is a hermeneutical implicature involved in the process of being present to the other in dialogic relation because the “I” in the relationship not only define his presence to the other but also implicates himself within the encounter in order to become mutually involved in the ensuing
Calvin O. Schrag analyzes the notion of the hermeneutical implicature of the subject and notes that in a discourse in which the I-Thou are implicated, the reflection of the intellectual odyssey enunciated by scholars like Hobbes, Descartes to Rousseau, Locke and Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Dilthey whose idea of the human person was situated in a state of metaphysical heaven\(^\text{39}\) where as Isaiah says: “the panther lie down with the kid . . .” (Is. 11: 6) is removed. The subjects in discourse become intertwined as they express themselves. These Enlightenment thinkers believed that “reason is a natural disposition of the human mind which when governed by proper education can discover certain truths.”\(^\text{40}\) According to Benhabib, the assumptions of these thinkers were directed toward the notion of clarity and distinctiveness of the assumed truths as sufficient to ensuring that intersubjective agreement among like-thinking rational minds could arrive at the truth. For instance, the Hegelian proposition of the Absolute Spirit\(^\text{41}\) as the substrate of historical experience was directed toward a “dynamic and restless subjectivity that yearns for a self-unification and self-objectification, whereby the crisis of its own development might be sublated.”\(^\text{42}\)

Further, Marx’s anti-Hegelianism was prompted by the numerous historical consciousness that created a crisis of consciousness. Marx’s notion of human relation was embedded in man’s concrete socio-economic existence. According to him, Hegel’s philosophy of the Absolute Spirit did not provide the necessary relations capable of establishing a I-Thou relationship; rather it created estrangement or what he called “alienation.”\(^\text{43}\) From this perspective, the Hegelian conception of the Absolute Spirit points to both Buber and Gadamer’s view of “experiencing and using” (Buber, 1998) and the experiencing of “otherness” (Gadamer, 1998) of the other respectively. Marx’s philosophy did not provide answers to man’s alienation
as he purported to demonstrate because his answer did not address the real existential concrete problem of social existence.

Even though Marx tried to place his concept of “being” in existential philosophy, his goal was limited to man’s social and economic existence which of course did not answer the crisis of historical consciousness. Wilhelm Dilthey’s notion of man grounded in his idea of verstehen only limited man to his imaginative interpretation and understanding of his activity and that of his community for a purposive goal.44 His understanding saw man’s past as extant and could only be imaginatively re-enacted and comprehended. Here again, man is removed from his past and immersed in the present in which his connection with history can only be interpreted “through the imaginative interpretation and hence a hermeneutic art, of the organization of an individual or communal life-style in terms of the purposes that it projects and the values that it realizes.”45 This sad projection of man, his being and his dialogic relationship with the past, present, and future reduces him to mere isolated purposeless being. In fact, in Diltheyian sense, the individual’s connection with the past which is historical seems to cease. Husserl, on the other hand, resuscitates the disconnected being by Husserl immersing man in the Lebenwelt (life-world)46 of experiences but his historical being negates the concrete existential experience and is rather grounded in internal temporality (historical horizon). The dialogic view of man in theses scholarly analysis of these authors is negated because of the generational compartmentalization of his historical experiences.

The structure of this historical horizon is limited to man’s seeing, doing, and comprehending and they serve as a background to his intentionalities that prejudice his experiences. The relation of “Being” are prejudged through his intentions, a notion which Gadamer understands as the subject’s claim to transcend his own conditionedness to know
completely the other which is a false dialectical appearance. Gadamer’s observation points to an explanatory note that the transcendental ego of the subject, in the Husserlian sense, is separated from the subject and his historical horizon is also determined by an internal temporality which can be defined, analyzed, and known through repetition. Schrag, too, explains Husserl’s view of repetition as the “process of reclaiming the past in such a manner that its sedimented sense is made visible or disclosed through a projected sense-formation.” For Husserl, past events are facts rather than possibilities, intentionality corresponds to consciousness, and it is the process and the place where the subject places his attention, that is, between the object and himself. David Stewart and Algis Mickunas have argued in this connection pointing out the correlation of Husserl’s noetic and the noematic, noting:

To underscore the phenomenological view of consciousness, Husserl introduced new terminology which would avoid the subject-object dualism of older philosophical views while respecting the polar structure of consciousness. The activity of consciousness he called *noesis* (from the Greek word νόεσις, meaning “mental perception, intelligence, or thought”), whereas the essence to which this mental activity is correlated he called *noema* (from the Greek word νόημα, meaning “that which is perceived, a perception, a thought”). . . . One would fail to understand Husserl if he identified the noetic with the subject and the noematic activity with the object. . . . Husserl stressed repeatedly that noetic activity cannot be identified with psychological activity . . . . This unit of meaning is another indication of the
importance of the intentional structure of consciousness. . . . One
never finds the noetic and noematic in isolation from each other
but always correlated; they are two sides of the same coin. 48

Thus, the object being perceived and the subject perceiving, in Husserlian sense, reveals an
important element in the process, that is, the “focus of “attention.” For Husserl, the focus of
attention is on the object being perceived. However, in the work of Arnett and Arneson, the
significance of the “attention-focus” is about where one places his “intention” and “attention” in
the process of the subject’s perceiving and the object being perceived. 49 The authors note that
“What one is actually “conscious of” frames the focus and the meaningfulness of the
communication.” 50 If the focus of attention is on the subject himself and not the object,
something goes skewed; the process reverses itself and destroys the goal of the process. It
assimilates the Cartesian “monadic” signification, but whereas the focus is placed on the object,
there is something to be learned here. Again, Arnett and Arneson explain six connections
between intentionality and the notion of the between. 51

First, both intentionality and the idea of the between are non-psychological elements.
Second, both imply an ontological understanding of relation. Third, each points to a reality
beyond the common everyday understanding of the empirical. Fourth, each approach suggests
the importance of the intersubjectivity of phenomenological otherness and the subject. Fifth,
each reveals an alternative focus of attention beyond self and object and finally, both announce
the ontological nature of interdependence of the subject and the object which could be the
subject and the other who listens, the knower and the known. 52 One would have to place the
different views being processed by the different scholars within the prevailing crisis of the
period, that of the crisis of historical consciousness. The field spanned from empiricism to the psychological insights. Husserl’s phenomenological work was an attempt to question the notion of both schools of thought – empiricism and psychology, and it is out of these that Buber contributed his views from the school of philosophical anthropology. While Husserl situated the subject’s intentionality within the consciousness and separated from subject, Buber brings the subject into his concrete, particular, and unique existence to be able to dialogue between the historical moment of others and the event taking place. This view is essential in understanding the Buberian standpoint on dialogue as different from other scholars in their treatment of the subject and his relation to and with the world.

Buber’s reflection brings us face to face with the reality of man’s existence as grounded in his use of “distance and relation,” things, and his fellow men. The author moves away from the Hegelian concept of the “dynamic and restless subjectivity,” the Marxist definition of man as grounded in socio-economic forces, and the Heiddergarian metaphysical notion of Dasein which is conceived as separated from its past but grounds being ontically. The Buberian ontic being is capable of maintaining living relations with other men because being is able to demonstrate its presentness even at a distance and its experience with the other is based purely on mutuality which grants it ability to share in other’s mystery of being. In this contextual analysis, Buber connects his “being” with his world and the Other without disconnecting the subject from his being. In this mode, he is able to conceptualize the situatedness of dialogue “between man and man just as, according to Gadamer, the grounding of dialogue within a hermeneutical experience between an interpreter and text results in a mode of thinking and questioning. It is an attempt to revitalize a dialogic conceptualization based on knowledge which the Praxis Religious Dialogue model recognizes that knowledge presupposes a questioning,
positioning, and embeddedness within a historical tradition in the Buberian and Gadamarian sense and in a given historical moment. Therefore, it encourages the Church to situate its tradition within the historical moment in order to conceptualize “being” as interconnected with his environment, his past, present and future and that his experiences are made up of all the different phases of life which in fact make him a complex being. The model points to these different perspectives about the nature of man, his environment, and his connection and relation with the world of men and things in order to point to the ontological situatedness of man as a dialogic being whose very existence “points to the between as real living embedded in the primal setting at a distance and entering into relation.” The “distanciation and the entering into” of Buber and “the hermeneutical experience of tradition” and the Husserlian focus of attention embedded in the notion of “consciousness of” points us to the importance of man’s existence as not compartmentalized throughout his life but as a mutually interrelated dynamic and complex wholeness immersed in a process that begins with a past into the present and points toward the future.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue takes the notion of “hermeneutical implicature” further and articulates that man’s attempts to understand (verstehen) the world may create differences in perspectives and approaches but the different approaches coalesce into an understanding of his existence in the world as intertwined with all that is within his environment. However, his need for relation in his environment is not tied to collectivization but to his dialogic relations with others and things around him. Thus, Carl Jung, whose views on man were punctuated by the inner life of man, feared the destruction of human relations in society through the process of collectivization and thus stated:
The mass State has no intention of promoting mutual understanding and the relationship of man to man; it strives, rather for an atomization, for the psychic isolation of the individual. The more unrelated individuals are, the more consolidated the relationship and of the inner cohesion of our society is an urgent one in view of the atomization of the pent-up mass man, whose personal relationships are undermined by general mistrust.58

The relations between men in their society, their surroundings, and the world cannot be atomized or segregated into portions for studies for fruitful outcomes if in the last resort, the different parts are not related in some fashion for complete comprehension of the whole. In this light, Emmanuel Levinas has criticized the over emphasis placed on ontology and psychoanalytic theory by the West, because of both internal and external “totalization,” violence, and thematization violate the very being of the “Other” and those negative elements are direct result of the compartmentalization of the human person. Levinas’ rejection of the views of many of the enlightenments scholars emerged from the theme of historical crisis that was prevalent at that period because those views erased not only the individuality of the “Other” but also his very being-ness.59 According to him, the Cartesian and the Hegelian themes only helped to set a fixation on the “Other” as “object” in the mind of the subject. Thus, the statement, “I am my brother’s keeper” is the key to philosophy as ethics and not the other way round.60 Ethics, for him, as a responsibility for the Other, is an action for it makes human life possible and phenomenologically, it is the first principle61 because it calls forth the being of the subject into responsibility. Thus he notes, “the face of the Other is a trace” which reminds the “I” not to kill
because “I am my brother’s keeper.”

Levinas thus takes philosophy to a higher level of ethics without the usual Western philosophical thematization of the Other by the subject because thematization strips the Other of all the things that constitute his being as human and he is left to become the object of need of the subject. By raising philosophy to a higher plane, Levinas constructs a relationship based on compassion towards the Other and which focuses not on “reason for” but an “inordinate responsibility, the infinite responsibility of being-for-the-other before oneself” and which defines one’s authenticity of human existence which is constitutive of intersubjective relations. Levinas’s scholarship points to an ethico-theological metaphysics inherent in the Praxis Religious Dialogue model that frames the notion of selflessness and renunciation by the “I” for the sake of the “Other” which is embedded in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 29-37) – the calling forth of the subject to responsibility of being-for-the-other which Cohen frames as “the ethical relations.”

Levinas resists positivist theology because of its analytical approach to God by interpreting “proximity” and “distance” as a call to man into a relationship (Ex. 33:23) that is paradoxical in the sense of God being close yet far. In this paradoxical sphere of relationship, Levinas accentuates the separation and alterity that exist between divinity and humanity. Distance, for Levinas, “welcomes” the other into Recollection and representation . . . concretely as habitation in a dwelling or a home. Michele Saracino explains this Levinasian radical alterity by noting that “the vacillation between the proximity and distance determines the relation of the subject to the Other and leads to the responsible posturing of humanity for-the Other.” Thus in “Transcendence and Height,” Levinas wrote:
The putting into question of the self is precisely a welcome to the absolutely other. The Other does not show itself to the I as a theme. Rather, the epiphany of the absolutely Other is a face by which the Other challenges and commands me through his nakedness, through his destitution. He challenges me from humanity and his height.69

With Levinas, the “Other” is important in the life experience of the “I’s” existence in this world but it must be understood in relation to a third party that keeps the relations alive, an essence he terms the “face.” This face has no cultural ornament, but points to God’s proximity and distance as the alluring element that signifies the need for of human relations with the Other. By being present to the Other, one reveals oneself to Other, permitting oneself to be responsive while maintaining independence from any prior certainty or preconceived notion. This posture allows the Other to retain his distinctiveness without any thematization or moral violence. By according the Other his uniqueness, distinctiveness, particularities and independence, the subject repositions himself from any violence or thematization. Thus Levinas argued:

“`The nudity of the face is a destitution without any cultural ornament.”70
For Levinas, the Other does not become a stereotype but lives in the presence of the “I” with a sense of respect emerging from the radical alterity of the Other that demands justice which calls for responsibility toward the Other.

From a theological standpoint, Bernard Lonergan has argued against the Western notion of conceptualizing the relationship between the subject and the object. His observation concurs with Levinas’s notion of the “Other” whose presence with the subject is understood as an event in which the unity and agency of the “self” is negated “denuded,” “undress”, and “disarmed”71 the subject in his themes and totalizational perceptions. The Praxis Religious Dialogue frames the significance of both Lonergan and Levinas’s standpoints to remind the Church to create a human community in which the “Other” can exist without violence through thematization and stereotyping.

Lonergan critiques the weakness of enlightenment interpretations of subjectivity, as Saracino explains: “As he tests the limits of rationalism, he transcends the crude and commonsense label of modern and reaches the boundaries of contemporary continental thought.”72 The subject in Lonergan’s view is beyond cognition; he immerses the authenticity of the subject as emerging from a religious experience just as Levinas’s Other emerges from the gaze of the face of the transcendent. The conversion of the subject through religious experience allows him to fall in love with God, and the feeling of compassion inherent in the love relationship with God is extended to the Other. Thus for Lonergan, it is in the affective, that is, the “intuitive and non-conceptualist relationship with the Other that becomes authentically human.”73 Lonergan’s position was to free Catholic Theology from Faculty Psychology to Intentionality Analysis. His reason for this stance was that Catholic theological language had become too stagnant; thus he argued:
Where faculty psychology leans to a priority of intellect over will, intentionality analysis has to conceive questions and answers for deliberation as sublating questions and answers both for reflection and for intelligence. There follows a fuller and happier apprehension of the human person and, in particular, of the human person’s approach to God.\textsuperscript{74}

For Levinas, intentionality has its focus on the explanatory understanding of something, including its distinct particularities and unique difference. Placing this notion in relationship, Lonergan broadens his view to include the affective nature of intentionality because we relate also through feeling for the Other, and we do it willingly.

Thus, for Lonergan, man’s relationship with God and his neighbor rests on his rational, ontological, and affective nature. This interrelationship constitutes the authentic human being. The human being is not static, but a developing being. “The concrete being of man., then, is being in process.”\textsuperscript{75} With this understanding, Lonergan moves away from the positivism and conceptualist view of man and embeds the human being as an ideal subject capable of being in love with God and his neighbor. The foregoing hermeneutics of man and his relations with his fellow human being and the world point us to the inherent fact of man as a being capable of relating or being in relation and possessing the ability to relate in an authentic mode without the having to dissect the Other through stereotyping and thematization. He enters into relations with his emotions, his rationality and his free will. His dialogic nature is driven by his both internal and external intuitions and perceptions. He enters into dialogue because is not an isolated being but intrinsically intertwined with his environment which in turn impacts his existence. His
ontological nature makes him live in the lives of others. It is the nature of man to engage in dialogue. The crisis of historical consciousness that plagued the scholarly field of man, his mind, his intentions, his perceptions of the environment in the enlightenment period must be understood in the context of the research that struggled to understand the nature of man, the workings of his mind and what he is capable of attaining in this world and how he relates to the mystery of his being and his God. His communication with these various worlds has been distilled by scholars to help us come to grasp with his dialogic nature and how he struggles to extend his limits. Dialogue is a communicative act and needs the authentic involvement of parties.

II. The Nature of Dialogue

Dialogue is situated within interpersonal communication, which makes aware of our humanness. In dialogue, we become aware of our differences which facilitate our reflection on what others say to us. It further helps us to interpret what is said to us within our historical understanding through a repositioning of ourselves in the context of the ongoing conversation. We bring ourselves into a conversation and we contribute toward its ongoing development. John Stewart, in *Bridges Not Walls: A Book about Interpersonal Communication* has delineated four essential elements that are significant in relationship and within an interpersonal encounter. He notes that “Interpersonal communication maximizes the humanness of the Persons involved . . . Persons are different objects . . . in four special ways, and it’s impossible to communicate with them as persons unless you keep those differences in mind, namely,

- Each person is a unique, noninterchangeable part of the communicative situations.
• A person is more than just an amalgamation of observable, measurable elements; he or she is always experiencing feelings or emotions.

• Persons are “unreliable” because they are choosers who are free to act, not just react to the condition therein.

• Persons are addressable; they can be talked to not just about and they can respond in kind with mutuality.

In these four elements, Stewart’s points us to a field of understanding or relationship based on communication. He and Carol Logan have discussed some characteristics of interpersonal communication:

When you treat others as interchangeable parts, ignore their feelings, their choices, and their questions, and talk at them, and when they treat you similarly, the communication between you will be more impersonal than interpersonal. On the other hand, when you treat others and are treated by them as unique unmeasurable, choosing, reflective, and addressable, your communication will be . . . more interpersonal.77

The authors remind us of the importance of treating others in relationships the manner we would like them to treat us and, further, that the quality of our relationship influences the way we are treated. This basic assumption underlies some of the contextualization of many scholars in the field (Buber, Levinas, Lonergan, Gadamer, Stewart, Arnett), who remind us that by treating others as persons and not as tools, affirming and confirming their worth, we point to the Kantian
notion of the “golden rule.”

Arnett and Arneson argue that in addition to the “golden rule,” there are also the concrete communicative possibilities in a given historical moment within a relationship. In a dialogic situation where the approach is guided by openness, the authors point out that there is a complementarity. In the same vein, Maurice Friedman contends that confirmation cannot be manufacture in relationship or relied upon as a technique. Confirmation, according to him, must fit the historical moment of the other or it does ring authentic and can backfire. He point out:

All the phoney attempts at confirmation that pervade so much of the healing and helping professions and the human potential movement, not to mention the “faith healers” and the downright quacks, have done a lot to promote existential mistrust in our culture today and with it the loss of faith in words. Often we cannot really accept the other’s attempt to confirm us because we think that he is either selling us a line or is trying out on us the latest therapeutic technique.

Friedman reminds us too that while confirmation is a good thing, it can be superfluous when it is overly done or when used as and art (technique) it can diminish of the dialogic communication with another person. Further, Arnett and Arneson point out that when one communicates with another person out of his own historical formation without any attempt to reach out to the understand and address the historical formation of the other person, a confirmation of narcissism, not “otherness,” is brought into the relationship. In the Buberian tradition, the concepts of
“confirmation, affirmation, and acceptance” are significant notions because they point to the I-Thou relationship, which is grounded in the concrete situation and life-reality of those participating in the dialogue. For Buber, the whole polarity of man are essential to his being because they are mutually dependent and therefore it would be wrong to conceptualize him as good or evil. He is polar. Buber maintains:

What you say may be trusted, I would say this stands in polar relation to what can be least trusted in this man. . . . When I grasp him more broadly and more deeply than before, I see his whole polarity and then I see how the worst in him and the best in him are dependent on one another, attached to one another.81

Buber standpoint departs from the many of the Enlightenment scholars because he perceives the totality of man as constituting his “being-ness. He therefore understands acceptance and confirmation in dialogue as all the potentialities that can be tapped and be allowed to develop. He states: “I discover in you just by my accepting love, I discover in you what you are meant to become.”82 For him, the acceptance and confirmation is directed not only in the present moment but toward the future. . . . It is an acceptance and confirmation based on the hope that “there is a soil, there is an existence.” Again, for Buber, there is a difference between acceptance and confirmation – you accept one as he is and allows him to grow through confirmation.83

The presupposition stance adopted by Buber propels him to argue that in dialogue, each partner become aware of the other and to be aware of the other, means to perceive the dynamic
wholeness of him as a person determined by the spirit; a perception that focuses on the dynamic
centre which stamps his every utterance, action, and attitude with the recognizable sign of
uniqueness. Buber’s view here extends to include accepting and confirming each other even in
weaknesses. Friedman succinctly puts it that we accept and confirm each other in “mutual
revelations of weakness, of humanness, of hope and doubt, of faith and despair, of the very
ground in which each of us is rooted, and of the strengths and foibles of our unique stances, there
can be no revelation of the hidden human image.”

Our acceptance and confirmation does not depend on our certainty of the other but our
presentness, being there and walking with each other across both the smooth paths and the tough
roads of life so as to discover the strengths and weaknesses embedded in our humanness.
Gadamer argued that being human is a learned activity – one in which we must struggle with our
personal limits and then attempt to go beyond them without ignoring historical limits. I argue
that this process of leaning activity with all the struggles that go with it is practical wisdom and
essential for a genuine dialogue. It reveals the polars embedded in the relationship and the
questioning that go along. Gadamer’s hermeneutical approach to dialogue offers insight into the
interpretive nature of dialogue. Levinas moves us away from the philosophical insinuations cast
over the subject through typing and themes and brings us to focus on the compassion and love
that we need to bring into our relationships in order to recapture the responsibility we owe to the
Other, and Lonergan tells us to allow our experience of God’s love be extended into our
relationship wit one another instead of basing our acceptance of the other through a conceptualist
view. The nature of dialogue is complex and especially in the Catholic Church which purports to
proclaim God’s love, the onus is greater and in order not to remain on the plane of theological
formulations that are so much influenced by positivism and conceptualist positions, I offer the
Praxis Religious Dialogue model as a way of entering into a dialogue that is based on who we are as humans who live in within a historical moment that offers an opportunity to direct our attention to infinitesimal horizon of dialogue.

The tradition of the Church which has become a source of power and authority must be read through the lens of “historicality” rather than making it a “corban” (korban). Our relationship within the Church cannot be separated from the Gospel that is preached but must be embedded in the acceptance and confirmation of the Other who calls us to responsibility. The experience of God’s love is an existential and experiential human phenomenon grounded in our relationship with God and therefore not different from our experience of relationship with another human being. Lonergan reminds us that we extend that experience of falling in love with God to the other in whose humanness we see the reflection of our humanity. Kenneth White also reminds us:

> We always understand within a social tradition, rather than solely with individuals, and within a tradition that is embodied in language. We let tradition “speak” to us, for we cannot understand ourselves or others apart from the prejudices and presuppositions tradition has supplied.

Our commitment to proclaim the Good News points us to the direction of acceptance and confirmation based on an interpretive process of guiding each other on a journey of hope in which our historical tradition is immersed in the historical moment to help us leave our prejudices behind. The historicality of the proclamation of the Good News begins as Arnett and Arneson point out, with limit; limits in which we live between the tensions of what we hope to
achieve and the reality in which we are rooted. We question therefore our Christian tradition in
to bring it into the present for meaningful hope.

III. The Praxis Religious Dialogue as a faith-based theory-action Paradigm

Our Christian conversation began before we entered into it. The conversation is historical
and it serves as our tradition that began long ago. We came to join it and hope to contribute to it.
As Burke points out:

From the “unending conversation” that is going on in history
when we are born. In fact, the discussion had already begun
long before. . . . You listen for awhile, until you decide
that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar.
Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense;
another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or
gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally’s
assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late,
you must depart. And you do depart with the discussion still vigorously in
process.86

The tradition in which we are inserted through our baptism is generative because the
Church is capable of responding to new conditions within the historical moment. As the Second
Vatican Council pointed out, the written record is “a dead letter needing constant interpretation
and commentary in succeeding ages.”87 The inherent meaning of the assumptions propelled by
the notion that the written records is useful as long as it is made beneficial to man’s existence through his dialogic engagement with others in the community of believers because it is through the shared-living of the tradition from one generation to another that the community is capable maintaining “a continuous tradition of understanding and explanation, which preserves and re-expresses their meaning, and which applies them, from time to time, to the solving of new problems.” The art of interpretation, a concept that is Greek in content (the god, Hermes), points us to the direction of a recognition based on the fact that we begin our interpretive work of our tradition with the idea that tradition is governed by finite limits and it is an act of human beings who are finite themselves. In fact Gadamer understands that there is evil in a fixed view of history. He notes:

I think [Theodore] Litt is right when he sees the danger of a new dogmatism in the philosophical opposition to history. The desire for a fixed constant criterion ‘that points the way to those called to action’ always has particular force if failures in moral and political judgment have led to evil consequences.

Thus, our human embeddedness in history grants that we are able to reach out to our tradition and bring it into the historical moment so that it can be interpreted in light of present exigencies. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model moves in the direction of an interpretive approach to our Christian narrative, that is, the narrative must bear our “situatedness” or the “historicality” because our daily routine lives propels us to ask questions that emerge from the historical moment in which we live.
Our historical situatedness provides limits to understanding, interpretation, and experience. However, Arnett and Arneson explain that one can admit one’s own historical limitations by admitting those limitations which is points to a demonstration of one’s humility and admittance of readiness to continue searching. The opportunity to question within a given historical moment addresses the issue of approaching other historical moments with humility, because people living in that era may not have had the opportunity to witness the impending questioning with the given historical moment. Thus, central to this work is the notion of a Praxis Religious Dialogue built on informed-faith-based-theory-action. It privileges an interpretive approach to the Church’s tradition embedded in the Magisterium so that it can be the test of different competing voices that are searching for the truth. Finally, it points the Church to Giambattista Vico’s view of sensus communis⁹⁰ that connects common sense to historicality. The notion is broadened to include the ability “to bring the practical and theoretical together, to be guided by what is possible in a given historical moment.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue model embraces a *phronesis*⁹¹ paradigm that situates the Christian community guided by knowledge of the “good life” gained from the polis and still shaped by the particular. Praxis is an appropriate metaphor for this work because it guides our view of dialogue in the Church as it struggles to make sense of competing voices within the community of believers and communities of other faith traditions. Further, Praxis guides the movement from a faith-theory-based on an abstract notion of the Gospel to the interpretive task and application of the theory tested in an action within a given historical moment. I do not contend that Praxis as employed in this work is an antidote to the Church’s struggle in searching for a common sense approach to dialogue, but it offers a way of grappling with the issue of dialogue which until now has appeared to be based on control and at times apparently dead
silence. The dialogue has begun with Vatican II’s call to renewal and to dialogue.

Our approach to dialogue must be done with openness so that the Gospel can be proclaimed to reflect our Christian story embedded in the revelatory event and in part exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 29- 37). It moves away from the notion of truth as eternalized, a notion that characterized the Church of Vatican I when, for instance, Pius XII interpreted truth as knowing no history because history is dynamic and must therefore direct itself by the truth as revealed in Jesus and handed on to the Church through the Holy Spirit. Praxis Religious Dialogue takes a critical approach to the belief that although the Church is the People of God, the limits of the hierarchical authorities are the limits of revelation. In this context, even Vatican smoothed out the rough edges of dividing the Church – the People of God on one side and the hierarchy on another.

Praxis Religious Dialogue offers each member belonging to the People of God the opportunity to celebrate life within the *communion fidelium* as it is vivified by the Spirit. Just as the hierarchy is a significant body of authority, so is the People of God whose *sensus fidei* determines the practical nature of the work of the community. Whether an interaction is between a bishop and priest, bishop and laity, or priest and laity, both have responsibility and obligation to the other. The onus is more defined on the incumbent in power because as Buber notes, “You have necessarily another attitude to the situation than he has. You are able to do something that he is not able. You are not equals and cannot be. You have the great task, self-imposed – a great self-imposed task to supplement this need of his and to do rather more than in the normal situation.” Each member of the community bears a burden in the relationship, but the burden rests more on the shoulders of the one in authority and the inherent power designated by the Church (the People of God) is a power of service and not of stately status.
From the foregoing analysis, the Praxis Religious Dialogue interprets “Dialogue as an existential phenomenon that calls us to acceptance and confirmation based on our historical interpretative process which guides our conversation as we journey in hope. Further, the model privileges the notion of dialogue as embedded in our historical tradition that also points to the historical moment because of the dynamism of tradition that always seeks the historicality of every age in order to help us leave our prejudices behind. The Praxis Religious Model therefore reminds the Church to embrace the historical moment, the “kairos” in order to avail itself to the Other in conversation for Dialogue is not approached with certainty but with openness and compassion toward the Other.
ENDNOTES

1 Vatican II Documents, *Dei Verbum*, nos. 8-10.

2 Vatican II Documents, Introduction to *Dei Verbum*.

3 Ibid.


5 In the Vatican II Documents, the concept of “Communication” is used to imply two people or a group talking, or teaching or preaching or explaining an encyclical or a pastoral letter to the congregation. When the Church uses the term “Dialogue,” it is in reference to the initiation of “Ecumenical Dialogue” which the Second Vatican Council directed the Church to engage to seek cooperation in certain doctrinal beliefs and agreement on certain sacramental practices and biblical understanding. For reference, see the documents on *Inter Mirifica* (On Communication), *Unitatis Redintegratio* (On Ecumenism), and *Nostra Aetate* (On Non-Christians).

6 See Vatican II Documents “Introduction” to *Unitatis Redintegratio* (On Ecumenism), and *Nostra Aetate* (On Non-Christians).

7 See Vatican II Documents, “Introduction” and the document *Inter Mirifica*.


9 Ibid.

10 See Paul VI Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, nos. 109 and 114.


Gadamer’s view of tradition here is concerned with hermeneutical experience which does not take the traditionary text as an expression of another person’s life, but as meaning that is detached from the person who means it. It is therefore wrong to think that what is experienced in tradition is to be taken as the opinion of another person. Real genuine experience is experience of one’s own historicity.
31 Ibid. p. 2.


33 Ibid. p. 358.

34 Ibid. p. 360.


36 Ibid. p. 360.

37 Ibid. p. 360.

38 Ibid. p. 361.

39 Calvin O. Schrag, *Philosophical Papers: Betwixt and Between*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), p. 61-77 and especially chapter 12 where he discusses the notion of Triadic Intentionality the subject “continues to speak, act, work, play, and assume social roles.”


41 See Hegel’s work “Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte (1837)

42 Ibid. Also see Schrag’s *Philosophical Papers: Betwixt and Between*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), p. 61-77.


45 Ibid.


47 Ibid. Also see Schrag’s short presentation of his views in *Philosophical Papers: Betwixt and Between*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), p. 67-68. For an understanding of Husserl’s notion of the


49 *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age*, p. 133.

50 Ibid.

51 The “between” in the phenomenological context, one would assume, corresponds to the a physical distance in relation to the subject and the object, which in Husserl is a part of the process of the activity of the “consciousness” and in Buber is part of the focus of attention through which the subject in relation with and to the “other” is held.

52 *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age*, p. 133-134.

53 *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age*, p. 134.


55 Ibid. see p 124ff. 132, ff, 180-199ff.

56 Ibid.

57 For a complete understanding of the notion of tradition in the context of experience, see, Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 346-368.


62 R. A. Cohen, p. xii.


67 Ibid. p. 150.


73 Saracino, p. 64.


78 *Dialogic Civility*, p. 40.


80 *Dialogic Civility*, p. 41.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 See Mt. 15: 1-7. The Jerusalem Bible explains “Korban” (Qorban) as that which has been consecrated God through vow and therefore assumes a sacred nature which precludes all claims made by anyone. Such a vow was in face a legal fiction involving no sacrifice of ownership; it was no more than a despicable way of escaping the duty of filial piety. Though the rabbis acknowledged its impiety they sustained its validity.


87 Vatican II Documents, Introduction to “Revelation.” (*Dei Verbum*).

88 Ibid.


Chapter 3
Situating Dialogue within the Church

I. The Goal of the Second Vatican Council

Pope John XXIII had been a Pope for nearly ninety days when on January 25, 1959, he made a surprise announcement to convene one of the greatest gathering of cardinals, bishops, priests, and lay people at the Vatican: the Church’s Twenty-First Ecumenical Council. On October 11, 1962, the Council opened after four years of intensive preparation.¹ The Council attempted to remodel the Church in order to allow it to face the challenges of the world through its various forms of pastoral ministry. In his opening address to the Council, Pope John XXIII emphasized *inter alia* that the goal of the Council was not a discussion of one doctrine against another as taught “by the Fathers and ancient theologians,” . . . but from “renewed, serene, and tranquil adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness. . .”² Further, the Pope continued that “the substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a Magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character.”³
It was in this context that the whole purpose of the Council emerged: that is, to thrust the Church into a renewed form of existence and embed it in the historical moment in order to open to it a horizon of possibilities for its missionary activities. It was also the desire of the Council to encourage the Church to engage in dialogue with the world so that it would understand the numerous transformations taking place in its environment. The Council laid emphasis, according to Pottmeyer (1992), on the following principles to distinguish Postconciliar Church from the previous history of the Church:

- An organic connection between the universal Church and the local Church (unity in diversity)
- The cooperation between ordained office holders and lay people (dialogic transaction)
- The theological necessity of both primacy and collegiality (legitimation of diversity)
- Unity within plurality (respect for other cultures).

Hence, the future Church was to be involved in the history of society and especially the concerns and progress of society. The concerns of the principles enunciated were not focused on the protection of the Magisterium but the mode by which the Magisterium could more effectively open the way to inclusion of the faith community and other religious denominations, which this work contextualizes as “Praxis Religious Dialogue” called for by a particular understanding of the narrative of revelation. The focus of the Church also was redirected to helping the faith community to expand its horizons of the narrative of Revelation, which is always unfolding and transforming human lives.
The implication of John XXIII’s view is that the Catholic Church had to be grounded in “dialogic civility” by showing concern for the Other, enhancing the dignity of the human person through mutual respect and cooperation, and making life for all peoples livable both physically and spiritually, because the purpose of the Good News is to invite the Other into a dialogue in order to discover the face of transcendence. Thus, the Pope grounded the Church in historicity and with humility invited the Council Fathers to take into consideration the purpose of the Church’s existence in human society. Myles Horton and Paolo Freire (1990), in *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations About Education and Social Change*, succinctly reformulate the Pope’s message to the Council by arguing that “. . . it is in the social experience of history that we as human beings have created knowledge. It is because of that we continue to recreate the knowledge we created, and create a new knowledge. If knowledge can be overcome, if the knowledge of yesterday necessarily does not make sense today then I need another knowledge. It means that knowledge has historicity. That is knowledge never is static. It’s always in process [of becoming].”

From this perspective, therefore, faith becomes ontological in context and content and it is tied to the notion of the historical moment. For Freire, dialogue seeks to educate people and the teacher (the hierarchy) in order to support each other in a mutual relationship while focusing on co-constituting the community in its learning process in order to forgo the temptation of subjectivity which legitimates the subjective intentionality. In doing all this, the faith community must be guided by the biblical narratives that call them to be each other’s keeper. In this light, Freire (1970/1974) noted:
The movement of inquiry must be directed towards humanization - man’s historical vocation. The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity; therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between oppressors and oppressed. No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so.  

Freire’s understanding of dialogue, situated in the humanization of the Other, interprets for us John XXIII’s view of the Church that the Church does not only live and thrives on knowledge grounded in the past historical moment, but must strive to bring its tradition and history into the current historical moment. By constantly recalling the past as a measure of interpreting the present, the Church hinders progress in potential dialogic encounters both within the Church community and outside its walls. The implicit assumptions of the Pope’s message were that real living requires the meeting of persons in dialogue rather than the legitimation of a special kind of narrative appropriated to a particular group that purports to have no human face. The metaphor of the “medicine of mercy” mentioned by the Pope was to be extended to all people of the world and especially those who are guided by the narrative of revelation. The purpose of the Second Vatican Council was, therefore, to appropriate the message of John XXIII and express the mode and manner in which the Church as a religious community could be brought into the historical moment in order to live with its brothers and sister in a cordial spirit. The view of the Pope also reminded the Council Fathers that the nature of the Church is dialogic, that is, through the spoken and written discourse and action by the Church, it implicates itself as
a subject and speaker and thus its communicative trends must be situated within a praxial space\textsuperscript{11} where members of the community of faith, guided by their pilgrim narrative can open themselves to each other in trust and without fear.

The Pope did not deny the various transformations in the socio-political, religious, and cultural areas that have become sources of challenges to the Church concerning its communicative practice. Rather he challenged the Council Fathers to pursue rigorously different ways of making the proclamation of the Good News accessible to all peoples without hindrance and to depart from the mentality of tenaciously clinging to both its tradition and history as a point of departure for its proclamation of the Good News.\textsuperscript{12}

The philosophies of the past concerning the human person, environment, and relationships have undergone tremendous transformation, and their impact on the Church’s history has colored the view of the Church on the world and on the human person. The Archimedean principles evolving from these philosophies sought to define “being” in terms of metaphysical and epistemological foundations\textsuperscript{13} and these definitions affected the Church in its theological understanding of man and consequently the Church saw itself adopting the very definitions that diminished man by making him solely a being who could only think, leaving out his emotions. It was easier during the preconciliar period to instruct and command rather than to meet the other on the same plane without fear of challenges.

Modern and Postmodern understandings of the human person have helped to advance the search from different angles in pursuing the dynamics of the human person and his relations within his environment. These considerations did not elude the Pope in calling the Council. He expressed his concerns about the direction the Church was going and charged the Council Fathers to seek ways of renewing the Church by giving it a human face. Dialogue seemed to take
a central role in the address by calling the Council ecumenical so that the Church could engage in communication with other faith traditions and with its own members. It may seem strange that the Council called the Church to renewal especially in the area of communication; however, one must recognize the fact that until then, the Church’s communication took a uni-directional mode.

The dawning of the Enlightenment period had shaken the Church because it displaced natural theology with a paradigm of scientifically verifiable knowledge. The hierarchy had “owned” the Church, so to speak, and understood its role as directing the lay faithful regarding matters of faith and life without expecting reciprocal communication, questioning, or dispute. The Church presented its dogmas as absolute truths and as a result, the use of ideological-critical method in exegesis in the latter part of the Middle Ages for instance, in theology was condemned. The hierarchy withdrew all truth from time and space, eternalized it in an abstract way and put it beyond any time or any place.

In the next section, I will examine the research that numerous scholars undertook to throw light on the enlightenment concept of being. This concept of being created a historical crisis and influenced the perceptions of many schools of thought in theology and explains the need for the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue. I will take my cues from Calvin O. Schrag’s work *Philosophical Papers: Betwixt and Between*, in which he traces the development of the perceptions of the “subject” across many philosophical fields.

**II. The Space of Subjectivity**

Our understanding of the worldview of dialogue has been deepened because of research by scholars who, though working from different standpoints, have brought together varied notions of dialogue from across the philosophical terrain. These authors (Martin Buber, 1965;
Emmanuel Levinas, 1989; Martin Heidegger, 1962; Mikhail M. Bakhtin, 1981; Hans-Georg Gadamer, Calvin O. Schrag, 1994; George Cheney, 1991) have led research away from the Archimedean and the Cartesian points of metaphysical environment and the psychology of being. The Archimedean reflections emerged from doubtful cultural beliefs to an indubitable reflexive existence of being that thinks. Descartes had finally ascertained: “I now know that even bodies are not strictly perceived by the senses or the faculty of imagination but by the intellect alone, and that this perception derives not from being touched or seen but from their being understood...” 18 Descartes attempted to come to a grasp of the being’s unique and particular life from within that involves external responses to its surroundings. However, the Cartesian formulations of being turn the concept into a mechanistic, disengaged, and uninvolved being. Further, the formulations create a split within “being” because it is unable to engage the Other in conversation due to a deficiency in the being’s emotional reflexes resulting in the focus of attention being directed to itself without regard for the Other. The subject, in this case, takes an inward posture and exhibits an attitude that Schrag refers to as “objectifying propositional reference.” 19 Within this perspective, the subject is uninvolved in his surroundings, but rather resorts to an empirical state of reference in which he atomizes and identifies human actions as propositions.

However, from the approach of hermeneutical reference, a paradigm which reflects Schrag’s own perspective, the subject understands himself as involved in his surroundings and “discourse as taking something as something within a holistic context of hermeneutical posture.” 20 The hermeneutical reference approach displays and makes manifest configurative wholes with the purpose of understanding human behavioral patterns. This approach, according to Schrag, enables the subject to create a network of goals, intentions and purposes, 21 thus
rejecting the backdrop of atomization and objectification. Schrag terms this process “Triadic Intentionality.”

Schrag’s view in this context of discourse is not only about something but also by someone who is capable of tracking the meanings of that which the discourse is about, so that he can intelligibly articulate the complexities of the configurations proceeding from thought and actions. This state of processes through varied manifestations (discourse about something, by someone and for someone) is what Schrag calls the moment of hermeneutical self-implicature because they display and disclose the hermeneutical reference. Another aspect that Schrag points out is the idea of the interlocutor, discourse as “for someone.” This third aspect of triadic intentionality (discourse is about something, by someone and for the other is the Other, or, as Schrag calls it, the audience who is the potential interpreter of the discourse. This state is also the rhetorical moment of discourse.

III. Movement from Metaphysico-Epistemological field to the space of the Interhuman

Thus, further explorations within the field of linguistics have constructed the Cartesian understanding of *cogito, ego sum* by grounding (*der Grund* - the reason) our conceptions of *being* as not only understood by the intellect alone but also by our world around us. The Cartesian search stopped at the threshold of *being set over and against nature with a view to implement its plan*. It adopted an approach that focuses on what was reflectively and intellectually accessible leaving out the concreteness of the *being*, whose very existence is only definable through language that enables it to interact with others. From this point onwards, linguistics begins to dissect the truth of the Cartesian mental being to discover whether one’s ideas do in fact represent something beyond themselves.
Bakhtin offers insights into the interaction of the “being” with others which is contrary to the Cartesian monologic self-reflexive being. The author argues that the consequence of our responsive activity in our world is what situates and grounds us as beings capable of turning from addressing the other to inviting the other to address us. In other words, according to Bakhtin, no one is an island or a self-contained entity whose activities do not relate to his surroundings; rather we are involved and embedded in relations whether we like it or not.25 It is through this understanding that he separations his notions on “being” from the Cartesian monological model based on a metaphysical view and their maintenance of a dialogical relational view of the being. Martin Buber (1995) also offers a depth to Bakhtin’s argument by situating the subject in existential dialogue through the focusing of the unanticipated events emerging ‘between’ the interactants. Thus, the central notion of his work hinges on the ‘between,’ a concept that differentiates Buber’s work from previous metaphysical conceptions and which places his work in the field of philosophical anthropology. For Buber, “Life is best lived between extremes on the narrow ridge.”26 Buber’s understanding of dialogue takes the direction of a praxial event that happens within a historical moment and guided by an intense understanding of existential life as a complex and uncertain event that demands the total attention of the interactants.27

Levinas, on the other hand, understands human existence as lived not in isolation but within the notion of being responsible for the other: “We are all responsible for everyone else – but I am more responsible than all the Other.” These words, spoken by Alyosha Karamazov in The Brothers Karamazov, is an indication of a line of thought that in the words of Jacques Derrida, “can make us tremble.”28 It challenges every human being in an endless obligation to be there for the Other. It also points to all humans that in order to reap the essence of one’s
existence, one must refuse totalization of not only his very being-ness but the being-ness of the Other in order to form a community of persons who can engage each other in dialogue. For Levinas, this notion demonstrates that one’s ethical existence is embedded in a relation that “precedes and exceeds the egoism and tyranny of ontology”29 an Archimedean underpinning that spread across the philosophical spectrum of the notion of Dasein. Levinas’s notion of the human person and his responsibility toward the Other points to an intrinsic value inherent in the human person and relates him to God whose self disclosure, driven by his extreme humanism, demands much of man. Levinas argues that “Man is called before a form of judgment and justice which recognizes this responsibility, while the rigours of the Law are softened without being suspended by a sense of mercy. Man can do what he must do; he can master the hostile forces of history by helping to bring about a messianic reign, a reign of justice foretold by the prophets. The waiting for the Messiah marks the very duration of time.”30

The philosophical perspectives of Schrag, Buber, Levinas, and Bakhtin’ reinforce the notion of the Praxis Religious Dialogue which seeks to move the Church away from its understanding of dialogue as hanging on a methodical premise instead of privileging compassion and mercy, for even scholars who write from secular motivations point out to us that subjectivity and praxis form the core of philosophy and that we are created for each other and are therefore by virtue of our human existence, implicated in discourse with the universe and with each other.31
IV. The Triadic Intentionality: The ‘Self’ as Implicature in the story event

Schrag offers an insight that is of tremendous significance for the praxis religious dialogic model in his work on “Subjectivity and Praxis at the end of Philosophy.” He articulates his findings with the metaphor of “Triadic Intentionality” in which the subject engaged in a discourse finds himself in the middle as a self-implicature of the hermeneutical reference of the ongoing rhetorical address but not as the primary datum of the discourse as the Cartesians would lead us to understand. The Cartesian tradition accentuated the preconceptual understanding of “Being” on the “I” thus isolating the epistemological subject. Heidegger (1962) in *Being and Time* would reject such preconceptual understanding of “Being” by grounding the “I” both within the metaphysico-epistemological realm in order for the subject to interact with the *res* surrounding him and to define the existence of his being. Schrag’s work is defined not *in toto* but partially within this Heideggerian concept where the “I” in a discourse is moved from the processual stream of self-focus and isolation (Cartesian) into the Heideggerian realm of both *cogito ego sum* and *res cogitans* into *res communicativam praxis*, where subjectivity is engaged in a praxial space where the discursive transactions take place.

Schrag underscores his argument by emphasizing that “there is a co-relational or relational complex of *Dasein* being-in-the-world which constitutes the ontological prius of any analysis and enquiry into the nature of knowledge. *Dasein* is not an epistemological Archimedean point, but rather a being that is intentionally related to the world of pretheoretical preoccupations and concerns. . . . To exist is to find oneself in a world to which one is related in one or several of the manifestations of care – in one’s construction and use of tools (Burke 1965), in one’s undertaking and ordering of projects or in one’s encounter and dealings with other selves (Buber 1967, Levinas 1998, Bakhtin 1981).” His argument sums up his
understanding of discourse in which the subject implicates himself by becoming part of the total relational context. The import of his insight is also grounded in Buber’s article “Hope for This Hour,”37 Levinas’s work on Otherwise Than Being,38 and Bakhtin’s work The Dialogic Imagination.39

The authors agree, working from different perspectives, that in a discourse, the subject’s presence in itself is indicative of what subjectivity is meant to be – implicated in the presence of the Other. Schrag argues, “The ‘who’ of speaking and writing is implicated in the performance of saying, not as a modal inference operative within a logic of classification but through a hermeneutical self-disclosure. The subject is implicated in its discourse in the way that an unfaithful husband implicates himself in his unmonitored conversation.”40 Indeed, in the real participation of disclosure through dialogue, the subject and the other undergo what Schrag calls “a consummated co-constitution,”41 and which Buber terms as “the turning toward the other” (Hinwendung)42 In fact, Buber confirms the consummated co-constitution as not simply physically turning to the other but “in requisite measure with the soul.”43 The Buberian implication is that the subject is not only involved in his physical presence but also implicated in his positional interiority searching for commerce with an external world and the Other in order to develop his own constitution that arises from the content and context of the world around him. The implicature of the subject is thus achieved only with other, and through the acknowledgement of the other’s actual presence in the space of dialogic praxis.

Schrag underscores his view by pointing out that no “speaking subject is an island entire of itself. Every subject is a piece of the continent with other subjects, a part of the main of intersubjectivity.”44 Thus, in the discursive praxis, the spoken word, in its rhetorical hermeneutical posture, provides traces of the subject for the other’s involvement. In fact, Bakhtin
succinctly argues that “there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others and with a consequential effect on the utterances being made.”45 Intersubjectivity is therefore an exercise of communicative praxis; it calls for an involvement in an interactive process and it is textured by the amalgam of discourse and action. The notion of self-implicature of the subject is central to Schrag’s view of discourse because the subject is not removed from the monarchical self into what Ricouer terms as “prerefexive imputation of myself”46 whereby “decision implicates me in the motivation in the act.”47

In the context of the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue, decisions made by the subject implicatively summon him to action to be undertaken. For the Christian, this notion is important for the realization of the summons of the Gospel – “taking up one’s cross” with all its implications in following the Lord and which the letter from James makes clear, “faith without works. . .” (Jm. 5:13). The subject, reflected in this case as the Church, is encouraged to become more pre-reflexive not as a matter of sharing simply theoretical information through encyclicals but becoming as a “self-imputation” through praxis dialogue that opens other experiences that may be challenging to its existence. By becoming self-implicated in the discourse of action, the Church moves away from manifesting itself as a “tortuous self-reflexivity” of the old notion of epistemological subject that characterized it during the preconciliar period and which seems to persist to this day. In the workings of the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue, the epistemological self gives way to an “actional route that follows a detour around the deconstructed site of idealist, epistemologically oriented self-constitution.”48

This reflection is the implicit assumption of the Praxis Religious Dialogue, for the path being offered to the Church, as a subject in this context, is one of intersubjectivity within its own community and it opens up different joint endeavors by the members of the community. The
spirit of Vatican II, especially from the perspective of the new stance as expressed by Paul VI in his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), suggests that moving in the direction of a new model of dialogue might assist the Church in openness to a new historical moment. The Pope contended in his encyclical that God initiated dialogue of salvation by turning to the world in love and making himself accessible through revelation. By disclosing himself, God was appealing to man for the free response in faith. He further argued in the encyclical that through God’s action in Christ, the Church must address the world in the spirit of dialogue but must do so humbly, in a spirit of trust and respect for the sensitivities of those it addresses. Such a Church that preaches the revealed truth must listen before speaking and must be alert to learn to discover the elements of inherent truth in the opinions of others.

In his article, “A Travail of Dialogue,” Dulles maintains that “authentic dialogue is premised on truth and is directed to an increment of truth. Where the conditions are not met, true dialogue cannot occur.” The pursuit of truth, which the Praxis Religious Dialogue paradigm seeks to offer to the Church calls for what Paul VI maintained in his encyclical. The Church as self-implicated subject becomes a cohabitant with other agents, decentred and decentralized in order to break barriers for the discovery of other horizons that may never be present to it except through the texturization of its availability to others within its community and outside its walls. Further, it achieves its dialogic nature through its responses and acknowledgement of the space of others in order to reveal its intentionality.

The proposed project of Schrag to move the subject from a deconstructed sphere of intentionality to a space of decentralization and intersubjectivity within the context of discourse raises questions regarding the place of the Church in dialogue. The Second Vatican Council assured both members of the Church and the world of the situatedness of the Church in the world
in order to implicate it in discourse and action. This argument of the Council spells out the question of an ontological subject – the Church in the world – rather than as it was portrayed by Trent and Vatican I\textsuperscript{51} as a transcendental entity locked behind closed doors. The ontological reality of the Church in the context of dialogue manifests itself as an interpretive-descriptive (to re-coin Schrag’s notion) and not as a constructive ontology. The interpretive-descriptive subject presents itself as a hermeneutic ontological subject whose presence is centered and embedded in the historical and social practices of its members and others in different religious faith traditions rather than seeing itself as a Church whose historical traditions are informed by a metaphysical and epistemological protocols of the neo-scholastics. The Council noted in this framework:

The social life . . . is not something added on to man (art. 25). For this reason, Man’s social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on each other.\textsuperscript{52}

Elsewhere in the same document, the Council made it clear that the Church exists as a visible assembly and experiences the same lot of every human being in his or her earthly journey and therefore needs to be concerned with the events of the world. It noted that the Church’s involvement in the hermeneutical life of people is part of its intrinsic mandate to seek and restore through dialogue. In this context, the Council noted:

This mandate concerns even the most ordinary everyday activities.

For while providing the substance of life for themselves and other families, men and women are performing their activities in a way
which appropriately benefits society. They can justly consider that
by their labor they are unfolding the Creator’s work, consulting the
advantages of their brother men, and contributing by their personal
industry to the realization in history of the divine plan.\textsuperscript{53}

The understanding of human relations demanded by the idea of responsibility underlies
the notion of dialogue as exemplified in John XXIII’s encyclical \textit{Pacem in Terris}.\textsuperscript{54} The call to
responsibility for the Other became the foundation for Vatican II’s deliberations on ecumenical
dialogue with other faith traditions and it also called attention to dialogue within the Church
itself. In the document \textit{Ecclesiam Suam} (1964), Paul VI argued for dialogue in the Church but his
argument was situated within the context of authority and obedience. The Pope noted that God
initiated dialogue of salvation and that by turning to us and the world in love and in Jesus, his
son, he makes himself accessible to us.\textsuperscript{55} The initiation by God puts a responsibility on man to
turn to his fellow man in dialogue. In fact, the Pope went on to note:

\begin{quote}
God Himself took the initiative in the dialogue of salvation.
He hath first loved us. We, therefore, must be the first to ask
for a dialogue with men, without waiting to be summoned
to it by others. The dialogue of salvation sprang from the
goodness and the love of God. God so loved the world as to
give His only begotten Son. Our inducement, therefore, to
enter into this dialogue must be nothing other than a love
which is ardent and sincere.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}
The notion of dialogue as maintained by the Pope focused on four areas: the world, the monotheistic traditions, Christians of other faith traditions, and within the Catholic Church itself. There is a cautionary note in the Pope’s view of dialogue in all the four areas. Strongly defending the Church’s viewpoint on dialogue, the Pope reminded us that genuine dialogue rests on truth and is directed toward the truth. However, after expounding dialogue as biblical and intrinsic to human experience, he cautions those in the Church who would like to dialogue to submit to authority and obedience to the traditions of the Church.57

By premising his understanding of dialogue on cautionary grounds, the Pope offers an understanding of dialogue different from the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue advocated here. The Praxis Religious Dialogue assumes that one approaches dialogue without certainty, else it becomes an informative method which neglects the crisis nature of dialogue and erodes the attitude of responsible participation. In fact, while the Pope recognized the incessant demand for dialogue between the Church and other areas mentioned, he especially mentioned the significance of maintaining the desire to respect other’s freedom and dignity. He argued:

If, in our desire to respect a man's freedom and dignity, his conversion to the true faith is not the immediate object of our dialogue with him, we nevertheless try to help him and to dispose him for a fuller sharing of ideas and convictions. Our dialogue, therefore, presupposes that there exists in us a state of mind which we wish to communicate and to foster in those around us. It is the state of mind which characterizes the man who realizes the seriousness of the apostolic mission and who sees his own salvation as inseparable from the salvation of others. His constant endeavor is to get everyone talking about
the message which it has been given to him to communicate.58

However, the Pope issued a cautionary note on dialogue within the Church itself. He premised his call for dialogue within the Church on the supposition that members of the Church are bound by the word of God and must demonstrate their obedient to the authorities in the Church who were (are) instituted by Christ. The advancement of the concept of dialogue outside the Church cannot be downplayed in any fashion, for the Pope in a lucid manner explained the implicit assumptions of dialogue, that it must be approached with first, clarity of purpose, intelligibility, meekness (as Christ himself was meek), confidence, and finally with “the prudence of a teacher who is most careful to make allowances for the psychological and moral circumstances of his hearer.”59 These significant elements throw light on the value of the Church’s mission. However, for many Catholics, the encyclical stopped short of addressing their own concerns in their encounter with Church authorities because while the Pope argued for an intense engagement in dialogue with the world and other different organizations and denominations, it denied its own members of the right to engage in genuine dialogue,60 with their superiors who interpret the gospel to them. The reason is based on the fact that the revealed truths of the Church are eternalized and therefore unchangeable.61

The significance of the Pope’s stance on the issue of dialogue in the Church would not be shared by many scholars (Buber, Levinas, and Bakhtin) in its entirety because it failed to respect the dignity, freedom, and the psychological circumstances of the *communion fidelium*. The document also fails to embed the story of revelation in its loving and compassionate content which calls participants in dialogue to responsibility for each other. The difference between the Church’s understanding of dialogue and other scholars in the field lies in the Church’s
maintenance of authority in dialogue and seeing dialogue as a method: “Dialogue, therefore, is a recognized method of the apostolate. It is a way of making spiritual contact.”62 After acknowledging that dialogue is a method, the Pope then admits:

However divergent these ways may be, they can often serve to complete each other. They encourage us to think on different lines. They force us to go more deeply into the subject of our investigations and to find better ways of expressing ourselves. It will be a slow process of thought, but it will result in the discovery of elements of truth in the opinion of others and make us want to express our teaching with great fairness. It will be set to our credit that we expound our doctrine in such a way that others can respond to it, if they will, and assimilate it gradually. . .63

The acceptance of dialogue in the Church itself and the unfolding explanations puts the Church in an awkward position because it compromises the nature of revelation with its view of authority as constituted within the content of revelation. These two are separate entities – one unfolding out of love and compassion (revelation) and the other seeking to tell, instruct, and direct (authority). While both are helpful, love and compassion supersedes the other. For Levinas, man’s call to respond to his self disclosure is a complete orientation toward the invitation in freedom and the subsequent unfolding of events is not dictated by one of the partners but it is left to the responses inherent in the conversation. God’s invitation as an invitation of love and compassion is what is exemplified in idea of Jesus’ call to responsibility toward one’s brother exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan which Is placed within the context of responding to God and man (Lk. 10:29ff). In the parable the Samaritan and the
wounded person are both implicated in the story in which the discourse points to the direction of mutual acceptance, compassion and respect.

V. Ambiguity as a Meaningful Signification of the Christian Story

The Christian story evolving out of God self disclosure figures out the inconsistencies inherent in human existence and reveals a poetic ambiguity that makes sense only to the believer who turns to God in freedom. As Arnett and Arneson have argued from a Buberian perspective, “Without ambiguity, the notion of dialogue is vulnerable to a technique mentality, missing the contribution that dialogue provides for a society unduly focused upon rules, regulations, and emerging new technologies,”\textsuperscript{64} especially in our time. God’s intervention into human history, from a philosophical anthropological perspective, was to turn our attention to human life as a communicative event and to manifest the responsibility that each person owes to one another. In Buber’s notion, real communicative living requires taking general ideas and suggestions and applying them to the concrete moment of discourse. These general ideas and suggestions are not clear cut notions but are like an unfolding story that one listens to and interprets within the given historical moment. The Church’s view of the story of God’s disclosure to humanity has several unfolding interpretations and connotation across different cultural systems and sometimes these interpretations not as clear as the Church may like them to be, but that is what a story is meant to be. As Arnett and Arneson point out, “Sometimes the clearer the writing of an idea, the more abstract the result.”\textsuperscript{65} Further, stories and tales do not provide the “how” and the means by which one implements responsibility; rather, historically sensitive implementation is left to the [listener].\textsuperscript{66} For Buber, the sensitive implementation immersed in historicality is more important to the listener than the desire to interpret the story for the listener. Thus, Buber’s understanding
of ambiguity is an invitation for a concrete and particular application in a given historical moment. He does not introduce techniques that provides method for dialogue, but he does points to the conceptual framework that be applied at various times and places as the story may demand. As he notes:

I must say it once again: I have no teaching. I only point to something; I point to reality, I point to something in reality that had not or had too little been seen. I take him who listens to me by the hand and lead him to the window. I open the window and point to what is outside. I have no Teaching, but I carry on a conversation.67

Buber did not frown on ambiguity but understood ambiguity as a necessary intentional ground for guidance to the meaningful sense of the story. As Dulles has pointed out, the Church’s acceptance of dialogue demands approval without reservation.68 However, he notes that the understanding of dialogue by the Church puts heavy demands on those who are willing to engage in dialogue with it, and he points out a comment made by one of the most highly respected ecclesiasts, Cardinal Ratzinger, as declaring: “There are times when dialogue would become a lie and would amount to collaboration with terrorism. . . . In our day, groups that call for dialogue in order to confront the Church with inexorable demands must be met with a firm refusal.”69 Dulles himself in the article argues that “Dialogue is not a panacea. It does not automatically lead to full consensus.”70 These instances reveal the limits of the notion of dialogue in the Church with its eventual erosion of the essential components of dialogue. In the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue, dialogue does not seek consensus and does not rest on methods but seeks within its context transparency, civility, love, compassion, and respect. While those
engaged in dialogue seek to maintain their respective ground, it is also necessary to remind ourselves that each participant enters into dialogue without the anticipation of the end because of the “third” entity, the “between” which directs and opens numerous horizons for the conversation to continue.

The sincerity demanded by the dialogue seems to elude the Church because of the methodical nature with which it pursues dialogue both in ecumenical and with its members in the Church. Dulles notes in his article that “as for dialogue within the Church, it is always in order if the purpose is to understand Church teaching better, to present it more persuasively, and to implement it in a pastorally effective way. . . . He (Paul VI) made it clear that obedience to ecclesiastical authority, rather than independence and criticism, must prevail.” These directive tones point to reluctance on the part of the Church to promote the engagement necessary for dialogue. On the other hand, one would expect that it is the Church that should offer encouragement in the face of adversity by providing a concrete ground for dialogue and calling for courage to attend to the Other who enters into dialogue with Church authorities. Without offering the hope to the discouraged in dialogue, the Church fails to fulfill its mission to open the eyes of the blind and bring liberty to the captive. Buber maintains in this context that it is in the midst of crisis that one stands at the edge of the abyss to offer civilized discourse. He argued in favor of offering hope rather than silencing the opponent:

It is just the depth of the crisis that empowers us to hope. Let us dare to grasp the situation with that great realism that surveys all the definable realities of public life, of which, indeed, public life appears to be composed, but is also aware of what is most real of all, albeit moving secretly in the depths – the latent
healing and salvation in the face of impending ruin. The power of turn that radically changes the situation never reveals itself outside of crisis. This power begins to function when one, gripped by despair, instead of allowing himself to be submerged, calls forth his primal powers and accomplishes with them the turning of his very existence.\textsuperscript{72}

Therefore, in situating dialogue within the Church, if authorities adopt a model of Praxis Religious Dialogue, they will be able to encourage or permit the reality of human existence to prevail in order to hold the hand of the Other in conversation, offering hope along the way so that the reality of the between can be visible and heard in the discourse. God’s self disclosure is still possess some measure of ambiguity to the human mind and the story is still unfolding, immersing itself and reinterpreting itself within the historical moment. It is this dynamic force of God’s revelation that permits the courage to be engaged in Praxis Religious Dialogue, always seeking, always discovering new horizons, and always reaching out in love and compassion to the wounded, the blind and the confused. What Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks to achieve is embedding the Church within the story of the community of believers, the interaction between the hierarchy and the people of God to be gentle, and accorded with respect and dignity. These elements are important for on account of the historical shift within the field of dialogue, new ways of understanding human participation emerged that offer alternative understanding of the Church’s relation’s among its members. Of course, previous formulations were helpful in past historical moments, but the present historical moment calls for a new approach because the Church, by virtue of its existence and its mission, is in the middle of the various activities in the world.
The foregoing analysis reveals a fertile ground for the Church in its attempts to engage its members, Christian denominations, other faith traditions and the world in dialogue. The implications of dialogue are varied and challenging but the Church is well equipped with its message emerging from the revelatory narrative to provide grounds for dialogue in all spheres.
ENDNOTES

1 Vatican II Documents, “Introduction,” p. xi

2 Opening Address to the Council Fathers by Pope John XXIII. See The Documents of Vatican II. W. M. Abbott (ed).

3 Ibid.


5 Vatican II Documents, Lumen Gentium, chapter on “The People of God” and Gaudium et Spes, article 5.

6 See Ronald C. Arnett & Pat Arneson, Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 279-304. The authors call for an ongoing conversation to enrich a life lived meaningfully through other, that is, persons, institutions, places of work, and long-term friendships. It emphasizes the notion that in any dialogic engagement, we cannot expect the Other to be like us because such expectation of the other points to a psychological error of projection (p. 291). The underlying assumptions of the notion expressed by John XXIII in his inaugural address to the Council Fathers is that dialogic praxis calls for a communicative action that is “performed thoughtfully from a knowing narrative structure that offers background guidance for communicative foreground action” (p. 291). Thus, for John XXIII, the Church in our time envisions a movement out of unreflective framework of dialogic engagement situated within certain communicative practices that were unexamined to a reflection on the historicality problematic nature of those unexamined practices in order to connect to the historical moment so that the Church can discover a new communicative praxis, that is, theory-informed-action that is sensitive to the historic needs of the members of the Church and the world. This position adopted by the Pope is what Sissela Bok expressed as “common values” within a communication context in which the emerging information is not simply processed but processed to enhance the respect for the Other.

7 Ibid. “Opening Address by Pope John XXIII. “The Church, according to the Pope, has always opposed errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she
meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnation.”


9 Ibid.


11 “Praxial Space” refers to the context (space) within which praxis takes place. Who speaks or who is speaking? The praxis nature of the question is what is the discourse about and for whom? C. O. Schrag situates this within the context of a “Triad,” that is discourse is about something, by someone and for someone.” See *Philosophical Papers: Betwixt and Between*, (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 1994), p. 196-197.

12 Vatican II Documents: “Opening Address by Pope John XXIII.”


18 R. Descartes. *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from Objections and Replies*. (First published in 1641). Trans. J. Cottingham and with an introduction by B. Williams. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.22. Beginning with *doubt* as his tool, Descartes proceeds to search for something. That he could claim to know beyond reasonable doubt. His reason for this pursuit was that there were too many falsehoods he had accepted in his childhood and therefore decided that “…it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything and start again right at the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last” (p.12).


20 Ibid. p. 196.

21 Ibid. p. 196.

22 Ibid. p. 197


24 Ibid. p. 197.

25 See M. M. Bakhtin’s work: *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. M. Holquist, Ed. Trans. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press). Bakhtin notes that “To be means to communicate… to be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another” p. 287). Also, see V. N. Volosinov. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. by L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).


C. O. Schrag usage of the term encompasses not only the existence and presence of the subject but his world around him and those (the interlocutors) involved in his world. One may argue here that somehow Schrag’s insights are carved from the philosophical foundations of Descartes, Kant, Heidegger and others who have labored and struggled with the concept of “ontico-ontological’ premises of Dasein. However, Schrag takes a different approach and situatedness of the concept by immersing it in discourse: Discourse is about something by someone and for someone. This “Triadic Intentionality,” argues Schrag, “furnishes the proper context for a comprehension of the traces of the subject within the praxial space of discursive transactions” p. 196-197 in Philosophical Papers: Betwixt and Between. (Albany: State University of New York, 1994).


40 Schrag, *Philosophical Papers*, p. 197.


42 Schrag, *Philosophical Papers*, p. 197


45 Ibid.


47 Ibid.


49 Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 1964, no. 75.

50 Ibid. See also article on “The Travails of Dialogue: The Dialogic Turn” by A. Dulles.

52 Vatican Documents, Gaudium et Spes, no. 5. Response to the Document.

53 Ibid. no. 34. See also Pope John XXIII’s encyclical letter Pacem in Terris: AAS 1963), p. 297.

54 John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, nos., 30, 34.

55 Paul VI, Ecclesiam Suam, no. 70.

56 Ibid. nos. 72 and 73.


58 Ibid. nos. 79, 80.

59 Ibid. no. 81.


62 Ibid. no. 81.

63 Ibid. no. 83.


65 Ibid. p. 136.

66 Ibid. p. 137.


69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.

Chapter 4 
Vatican II on Dialogue

I. Interpretive Equivocality as means of Organizing, Sensemaking, and Praxis

Dialogue

II. The Dialogic Nature of the Church

III. The Intent of Vatican II on Dialogue

IV. Vatican II and the Concept of Dialogue

V. The Preconciliar Ecclesiology and the Notion of Dialogue

VI. The Christian Narrative as a Metaphor

I. Interpretive Equivocality as means of Organizing, Sensemaking, and Praxis

Dialogue

The departure from the preconciliar ecclesiastical structure of a one-way-directional
communication model to a dialogic model that inserts the Church into a participatory model of
communication is still to be achieved. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model calls attention to the
complex nature of this form of dialogue which is not only constituted through conversation but
also takes form around a common centre, becoming the philosophical texture of the conversation
that takes place among and within the people of God.

However, at this moment in the Church, the philosophical texturing of the conversation
evolving out of a common centre is not provided by the people of God. The conversation within
the Church centers around the hierarchy and is fashioned as encyclicals, pastoral letters, manuals,
homiletics, religious education, and the celebration of rituals enacted as a perpetuation of Jesus’
presence within the community. The model of dialogue within this ecclesial structure does not
admit consensus among the whole which, according to Karl Weick, is essential in organizing.
Weick’s definition of organizing includes the grounding of agreements concerning what is real and what is illusory which he terms as “consensual validation” (a term coined by Harry Stack Sullivan).\textsuperscript{1} Consensual validation involves significant issues of rules for “building social processes of behaviors and interpretations that can be imposed on the puzzling inputs to these processes.”\textsuperscript{2} Weick explains that “organizing is like a grammar in the sense that it is a systematic account of some rules and conventions by which sets of interlocked behaviors are assembled to form social processes that are intelligible to actors.”\textsuperscript{3} The outcomes of the rules and conventions impact the experiences of the people in the organization because they have to live it out in their day-to-day actions. This model of sensemaking is a way of describing the \textit{communion fidelium}.

Weick’s theory of “organizing” provides a framework for the Church within which the Praxis Religious model can be seen to operate. Within this context we could see in operation of the form of dialogue envisaged by the Second Vatican Council. When the Church reflects the voices and behaviors of the people of God, as Weick further explains, the “shared sense of appropriate procedures and appropriate interpretations, an assemblage of behaviors distributed among two or more people, and a puzzle . . .”\textsuperscript{4} that is constantly being worked out by individuals, groups and the religious community at large describe the social constructions of the people of God through which the Church is able to engage its missionary activity to suit its goals and expected outcomes. A Weickian model would read the Second Vatican Council as recognizing that “the basic raw materials on which organizations operate are informational inputs that are ambiguous, uncertain, equivocal”\textsuperscript{5} and these elements demonstrate how various negotiating groups within an organization or a community endeavor to reach an acceptable agreement on what is taking place. Through a consensual validation process which emerges as a result of their interaction, members in an organization bring to the foreground their shared
interests in the events occurring in their environment, an action which Weick calls “sensemaking.” This process would be foundational to Vatican II’s desire to open the windows of the Church to embrace multivocal approach to dialogue because sensemaking “begins with the perception of some change or difference in the organizational environment.”

Likewise from the perspective of this model, by calling the Church to a process of aggiornamento, the Council implicitly encouraged the Church to recognize “differences” in perception construction as basic to human existence and foundational to the existence of organizations. Neither an individual nor an organization can change independently the subnarrative (the cultural narrative that an individual carries with him) of either an individual or an organization, since both are inextricably intertwined and interdependent (Giddens, 1991). Differences in perception among persons, as well as perceptions by the group, provide the facets of similarity and difference necessary for the existence of the organization and the individual. These facets are significant within the context of the Church where the community of believers tries to live out their faith in conjunction with external embodiments of social and political formations. As both a universal and local Church, the incorporating of multiple identities it embodies by virtue of the multiple sites of embeddedness of its members provides additional texture when engaging in dialogue with other cultures regarding what is central to its identity, distinctive, and enduring. By accepting multiple perceptual constructions of members vis à vis the Church’s own identity, the Church can engage rhetorically in serious dialogue with its members and with others without losing the efficacy of its missionary activity.

The Praxis Religious Dialogic paradigm seeks within these similarities and differences to bridge the chasm that exists between bishops, priests and religious, and the laity by encouraging the Church to intensify its rhetorical enterprise. As Tompkins and Cheney have noted, contemporary organizations have gone back to this Aristotelian enthymeme, the rhetorical
syllogism, which is a deductive building block of persuasion, in order to reach out to its members. The authors note that the rhetorical enterprise works because it draws upon premises already established in the minds of the audience. This view stands contrary to the preconciliar style of communication that offered to the *communio fidelium* doctrinal formulations that were accepted but often not understood completely due to the unquestionable instructions that served as guidelines for member inclusion within the institutional model.

The notion of rhetorical enterprise further affirms the desirability of those in control of the message to receive feedback from the recipients, a feedback which may be different from that of the sender but has the potential to enhance the value of the message. Again, Cheney offers an insight in this regard observing that many contemporary organizations are trying to attach value to messages they send in order to receive back expected outcomes.

However, because organizations are rhetorical and rhetoric is organizational, especially in this twentieth-first century, which is characterized by competing virtue structures, according to MacIntyre, contemporary organizations manage issues (which is the communicative style of the Church) by inculcating values and managing organizational identities just as in the case of individuals who must balance multiple commitments and deal with an increasingly organized society. This environmental complexity calls for feedback from multiple voices in order for the Church to understand and respond to changes in the environment. The diversity of Church membership provides rhetorical insights for a fitting organizational response.

In addition to the functional advantage to the Church provided by openness to voices of a diverse Church membership, openness to members’ voices provides opportunity for those members to participate in a fuller way in Catholic identity. To be a Catholic implies both the individual identity and catholic identity (collective) which means one’s identity as an individual is implicated within a set of collective interests that is symbolic of the shared identity of the
whole. MacKenzie has argued this point noting that “After all, it is through symbolic means-
means common to some group-that individual “uniqueness” is constructed of “sameness.”"\(^{11}\) Cheney explains, “Those who share an interest share an identity; the interest of each requires the
collaboration of all,”\(^{12}\) and MacKenzie further argues that the community of communication, is a
greater “shaper” in definition than a community of interest or contiguity or space.\(^{13}\)

By extension therefore, and following the Praxis Religious Dialogue model, because
members of the Church share a common identity through their baptism and common shared
biblical narratives, they have not only an obligation to obey but the ontological responsibility to
be part of the dialogue that takes place in the Church. Praxis Religious Dialogue thus takes into
consideration the significance of the individual’s shared experience within the larger community
of the People of God. The paradigm also seeks to further advocate the inclusion of the priests,
religious, and the laity in the dialogue both within and outside the Church where ordinary
persons construct their reality concerning faith and daily concerns in order to make sense of both
religious and social beliefs. Taking part in the dialogic process in the Church is not a privilege
but inextricably intertwined with their Christian aspirations for the enhancement of the Church’s
dialogic missionary activity. It is the whole community of the People of God who make sense of
the reality of God’s word through their \textit{sensus fidei}.\(^{14}\)

Prior to Vatican II, the understanding of the Church as a perfect society and a
supernatural institution created passive members who became recipients of dogmas.\(^{15}\) To many
minds, the Church opted for this mode of existence in order to heighten its own identity and
members’ sense of Catholicism.\(^{16}\) However, the intent of Vatican II expressed the Church in a
completely different mode by bringing the Church into the world and at the same defining it as
an institution that intends to establish God’s kingdom in accordance with Christ’s will. Dulles
notes
The term “Church” may be understood either as organization or as community. In the former sense, it is an institution distinct from other “worldly” institutions; it is a sacramental sign and agent of that saving unity of mankind which God intends to establish in Christ. In the second aspect, the Church is that portion of mankind which visible gathered in the Body of Christ and which lives by his spirit. It stands where God wills the whole world to stand.17

Cheney has expressed his reflection on the above definition maintaining that the Church has presented itself with a rhetorical problem of how to be both of this world and beyond it which is enunciated in its theological and organizational identity.

However, both Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes, while reinforcing the mystery nature of the Church, delved at length into the Church’s identity in this world. The document Gaudium et Spes is particularly important, detailing and clarifying the blurred lines of in this world and out of this world. A touchstone in the document emerges when the Council Fathers observed that “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of men of this age, especially those who are poor in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”18 The Council Fathers then explained how the Church must go about in performing tasks embodied in the goals. “To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel.”19
In this light, the Council identified the Church with the world and saw it as an organization, thereby laying the dialogic groundwork for its social action through missionary activities. The Praxis Religious Dialogic paradigm reveals the rhetorical nature of the opening statement of the document as constitutive of the Church as an organization in which members’ interactive processes imply a constant meeting on “a narrow ridge” where their arguments and deliberations culminate in the emergence of interdependence of self and Other hidden in the *between*. While pursuing its goals, the Council was careful to avoid any suspicion of the Church becoming a political community; rather it focused on the desire that the Church cannot be separate from the world because it is incarnated in the world. The dialogic nature of the Church was thus expressed to embody the pursuance of the Church’s missionary activities within a world of complex cultural trends and various competing voices.

In a similar vein, Fr. J. Bryan Hehir explained that “the distinctive contribution of the conciliar text (*Gaudium et Spes*) is that it provides a theological rationale for the entire social ministry of the Church.” Elsewhere, Hehir further clarifies the blurred lines between the Church as an organization and as a religious institution observing that the identity of the Church is embedded in dialogue – dialogue with the state, between religion and science, between Church and academia, and within the Catholic community. He noted:

The question of identity arises from the dialogue to which the Church is called by Vatican II. As the pastoral letter was being prepared [The Challenge of Peace by the U.S. bishops conference] and the successive drafts were published for public scrutiny, four different forms of dialogue became evident.
The observations of Hehir reveal a Church in tension with its identity – a religious identity and an organizational identity– and it also reflects the difficulty in pursuing dialogue in a transparent manner. The Council defined the Church in terms of its activities and goals –“the orientations of *Lumen Gentium* are therefore pastoral, Christocentric, biblical, historical, and eschatological”²³ so that it can engage in transparent dialogue with its publics and try to make sense of the different consensus validations that may emerge.

The significance of sensemaking in an organization cannot be reduced to recognition of mere shared opinions; its framework articulates how people within an organization construct meaning from their experiences and how they generate a context for their response through action. In fact, Weick notes that enactment is an essential element of sensemaking because anytime members of a hierarchy (the management) of organizations enact the environment, they “construct, rearrange, single out, and demolish many objective features of their surroundings . . . they unrandomize variables, insert vestiges of orderliness, and literally create their own constraints.”²⁴ However, one can argue further as an addition to the notion of managerial enactment by taking note of the fact that it is the people within the organization who shape the enactment systems.²⁵ It does not entirely rest on the management, though their roles may prescribe this function. The same can be said of the Church that the enactment (*anamnesis* which is rendered in the Greek language as *remembrance*) of dialogic systems does not rest on the hierarchy but on the whole community of believers – the people of God - whose daily construction of reality embraces their faith and their social life outside the Church. It is this approach of consensual validation with its subsequent environments that calls for a departure from the monologic tradition of dialogue as obtained in the preconciliar Church and still persists in the Church forty years since the Second Vatican Council.
The monologic tradition of dialogue in the preconciliar Church tended to lean heavily on managerial enactment rather than the involvement of the community. The ecclesial environment is a changing one, full of dynamism, which the praxis religious dialogic model encourages in the Church. As Dunn has argued:

Environmental changes often transform earlier adaptive specializations into cruel traps. As a changing environment passes beyond the range of a gene pool narrowed and made less versatile through specialization, it often forces the extinction of whole species. Just as in species formation those individual organisms fail to survive whose genetic range is inadequate to match the requirements of a changing environment, a species that generates a narrower genetic range (genetic pool of the population) through specialization may, when faced with environmental change, fail to support a dynamic adaptation and thus bring about extinction of the biotype.26

Dunn’s observation applies to the Church in the process of the aggiornamento during which the Council encouraged it to embark and divest itself from too much emphasis on specialization, which can hinder the transformative process. Thus, the Council’s intent to insert the Church in the world of multiple cultures was to encourage it to embrace the various transformations of multivocal dialogic processes that were taking place outside the Church. As Dunn points out,
organisms with a narrow range of gene development fail to respond to the genetic developmental process and eventually lose their capacity for survival. The adaptability of organisms to changing environments points to the synergic factor of survivability resulting from the evolutionary process.

II. The Dialogic Nature of the Church

The desire of the Council to bring the Church closer to the world and permit it to experience the joys and griefs of people also furthers metaphorically the dialogic nature of the Church, which is to be responsive to the different transformational dynamics that take place outside its walls. For the Council, the concept of the communio fidelium implies that the People of God constitute the Church and not simply the hierarchy, and it is within the communio fidelium that the sensus fidelium becomes active and operates. The sensus fidelium is what propels the nurturing, liberating, and sets in motion the missionary activity of the Church which calls for a participatory involvement of the all the people in the community.27

The dialogic nature of the Church is also exemplified in its missionary activity as the Church encounters different social environments, for it is within these encounters that the intrinsic nature of the Church is revealed when it accepts its responsibility to make itself available to the other. Thus, the Council was clear in when it noted that by its very nature, the Church is dialogic because the founder, Jesus Christ, commissioned it to nurture, liberate, confirm, and enhance the dignity and growth of the human person through its missionary activities (Ad Gentes, 2). Again, in the document Lumen Gentium, the Council asserted, “The conditions of this age lend special urgency to the Church’s task of bringing all men to full union with Christ, since mankind today is joined together more closely than ever before by social, technical, and cultural bonds,”28 which lends credence to the unique role of the Church’s
presence in the world to dialogue with different cultures that it encounters. In attempting to dialogue with other cultures, the Church fulfills its primary function, that is, to “initiate activities on be half of all men . . . designed to for the needy, such as the works of mercy and similar undertakings. . . toward unity, a process of wholesome socialization and of association in civic and economic realms.”

Given the definition of the Church as pastoral, Christocentric, biblical, historical, and eschatological, the elements permeating its nature make it all the more important for the Church to play its role as an instrument of dialogue by allowing various negotiating groups within it to reach an acceptable agreement on issues that are happening in it as a community. These decisions, after all, affect their very lives and their religious hopes. It is essential therefore that in dialoguing with the world, the Church as a “People of God” be encouraged to grapple with the grammar of the Church that sustains their eventual experience as people who are organized and whose shared experience as it emerges from their biblical story propels their dialogic nature. The shared experience of the people of God is inherent in their mutual interpersonal communicative interactions which are driven by their faith that is nurtured through their biblical narrative.

The communicative interaction creates for them an information environment, because when dialogue is allowed to emerge from and around the people of God to develop and become a common centre, it becomes a source of interpretation of an equivocal information environment which in turn furthers the progress of dialogue. This notion lies deep beneath the Church’s very nature (expressed in the story of the Good Samaritan) and has been expounded in many of the Church’s documents going back to the time of Leo XIII (Rerum Novarum), Pius XII Mystici Corporis, John XXIII (Pacem in Terris), and Paul VI (Progressio Populorum & Evangelii Nuntiandi). In all these works, the various Popes stressed the necessity of the Church to engage
in different spheres of the world in order to participate in the various social structures that affect the lives of people.

The paradigm of Praxis Religious Dialogue thus takes as its starting point the very dialogic engagement that the Council announces to the world, that is, that the Church is constituted through conversation because of its organizational structure, and the very story it proclaims sustains a common centre – the proclamation of the Gospel- which gives the Church some measure of stability in its organizational structure. The common centre created through shared experiences emanating from the biblical narratives further ensures a community that is replenished with reality that is immediate, sincere, just, and transparent and which calls for a genuine dialogue between community members. The praxis religious dialogic model encourages the Church called to nurture, liberate, and dialogue to endeavor to fulfill the aspirations of the Second Vatican Council by reinforcing the task of rebirth of a liberated community and which can engage in genuine dialogue among the various members of the levels of hierarchy existing in the Church in order to develop a real life between members of the believing community and further sustain a genuine bond of pristine communitarian interaction based on common belief.

Buber has argued for the creation of a common centre among community members by noting that a community requires “a free space . . . and an unchallenged validity of [its] will within the limits of its natural duties. . .” The free space and the unchallenged validity needed for the nurturing of the organizing models within the community becomes more imperative in the field of dialogue where the crisis nature of conversation, that is the unfolding of the sphere of the conversation, is driven by the liberating experience of the interactants that emerges from their consensual validation. The free space and unchallenged enactment of the consensual validation also underscores the oxymoronic content of dialogue – the recognition of the importance of the story that propels the dialogue and the freedom for other unfolding events to emerge.
Thus, in comparing the postconciliar Church to the preconciliar Church, Pottmeyer emphasized that dialogue is a new concept in the Church. It is not found in the preconciliar ecclesiology because it encourages a new framework whereby the local Church maintains an organic connection with the universal Church.\(^{35}\) Paul A. Soukoup also points out that by choosing the model of dialogue as a communication process within the Church, one chooses a model of a Church or local community that is “small enough to facilitate a face-to-face communication they seek.”\(^{36}\) The paradigm of the Praxis Religious Dialogue underscores this notion of facilitation of the face-to-face dialogic encounter and expands the idea to include the embeddedness of mutual esteem, reverence, and harmony, through the full recognition of diversity. It further recognizes the importance of the common center which is the story around which the dialogue emerges, that is, the Christian story. In fact, the Council did not hesitate to lay emphasis on this notion through its definition of the Church and its mission, a mission that is encapsulated in the Church’s dialogic nature which is embodied in organizing, sensemaking, and the different rhetorical situations in which the Church operates.

For the Church, organizing, sensemaking, and the rhetorical situation are not mutually exclusive but are dependent on each other. Through the Church’s various enactments that flow from organizing activities, members make sense out of their daily lives and relate them to their faith through activities of daily living that comprise the rhetorical situations in which they find themselves. The three dialogic elements also point to the nature of ecclesial dialogue which the praxis religious dialogic model seeks to introduce, that is, within the organizing of different modes of activities that members of the believing community seeks to make sense of, there is always the “between” which offers a common center by grounding the each partner in the dialogue in an ontological sphere. This cooperative organizing reminds us of our humanness and helps us to meet others in the “between.”
The praxis nature of the “between” lies in what Arnett and Arneson call “a communicative life, which points to a relational rather than an individualistic or collectivistic view of communicative life,”37 revealing the interdependence of self and Other so that members of the believing community can realize their full potential as Christians invited to recognize the fact that life is a call to participation in the life of each other. Further, organizing, sensemaking, and the different rhetorical situations that are encountered in different cultures makes it imperative for the Church to embrace the notion of the “between” as a “phenomenological space available in dialogue through invitation, and not a demand”38 to share in the common story of God’s life revealed to each member in the gospels, that “together life is to be lived well, for us, not just for the collective and for a few a group of people.”39 These notions express a particular dialogic understanding of the intent of the Second Vatican Council when it observed that the Church is “pastoral, Christocentric, biblical, historical, and eschatological.”40 A further expression notes that “Because the Church is human, it exists in time, and is subject to the forces of history. But because of its divine element, it presses forward, full of optimism, toward a goal beyond history.”41 These different elements mentioned by the Council as a reflection of the meaning, nature, and goal of the Church are all dialogic in content, and they form the basis of the Councils documents.

The new conception of the Church as dialogic in nature, according to Vatican II, derives its authority and understanding from the biblical narratives, especially the New Testament, which offers ample evidence for the social life of the Church. The narratives also present us with a community whose story focuses on the presence of the Kingdom of God in the community and further serves as a ground for dialogue among Christians since the foundation of the Church. (See Hauerwas, 1981, McIntyre, 1977, *Lumen Gentium*, introduction).42 Story sharing as a form of communication in the oral tradition of ancient times is still with us and very potent especially
in the religious communities. Our conversation with each another in a given historical moment opens to us a new horizon of possibilities to the extent that new ideas emerge to propel the conversation endlessly. Kenneth Burke (1957), for instance, observed that “we enter the conversation after it has already started; we try to get the hang of it; we leave it, just as we are catching the drift of it; after us, it goes on.”43 (See also Gadamer, 1982: Truth and Method, p. 330ff; Rorty, 1979: Philosophy and the mirror of nature, p.31ff; Heidegger, 1949: Existence and Being, p. 278.) Such is the enduring nature of the biblical narratives, which guides the story of the faith community in the Church of which bishops, priests/religious, and lay people share a common identity (see also Hauerwas, 1981). Burke’s understanding of “story” becomes even more significant for the Church because the Second Vatican Council defined the Church within the context of the Christian story. For instance, the Council envisaged a Church that “moves into the history of mankind” (Lumen Gentium, 9) so that it can participate in the story of all peoples. Thus, the Council envisioned a Church that is a “loving mother of all, spreading everywhere the fullness of Christian charity” (Lumen Gentium, intro.).

The Council also emphasized that the second reason for the Church’s cardinal importance lies in its truly pastoral tone and ecumenical spirit.44 Here, in contrast to the polemical tempers of Vatican I, we are presented with a vision of a Church that enlivens the prospects of effective ecumenical dialogue: “the Church aware of her mission under God and therefore capable of self criticism; the Church in dialogue with the world and therefore capable of historical development; the Church in which all are called to holiness and therefore to Christian witness and service” (Lumen Gentium, intro.). In order to accomplish its mission, the Council pointed the Church to the significance of dialogue in accordance with John XXIII’s vision of a Church oriented toward an ecclesiology that would renew the Church and be driven by the notion of serving as the “mother of all,” to spread everywhere the fullness of Christian charity.45
III. The Intent of Vatican II on Dialogue

In the document *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council defined the Church not only as the People of God but also as *communio fidelium* (the communion of believers) to denote the communal nature of the believers. This definition became the underlying vision of the Council for its work on the concept of dialogue for the Church and also served as the guiding principle, informing the model of communication for the Church and its missionary activity. Thus, in defining the Church, the Council wrote, *inter alia*, the following:

> The Church stands forth as a sign of that brotherliness which allows dialogue and invigorates it. Such a mission requires in the first place that we foster within the Church herself mutual esteem, reverence, and harmony, through the full recognition of lawful diversity. Thus all those who compose the one People of God, both pastors and the general faithful can engage in dialogue with ever-abounding fruitfulness. For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything that divides them. Hence, let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful, and charity in everything.⁴⁶

For the first time, the word *dialogue* in its richness and embracing all the different attributes of the “between” was introduced as a demonstration of the Council’s seriousness in inviting the Church to embrace a more open style of communication. The concept also has become a point of
departure from the preconciliar ecclesiology, which understood dialogue as “technical,”47 that is prompted only by the need of objective understanding through the gathering and dissemination of information. This model of dialogue characterizes the preconciliar Church that based its missionary activities on key concepts such as authority, jurisdiction, and obedience.

IV. Vatican II and the Concept of Dialogue

The concept of dialogue, which the Second Vatican Council introduced in the Church, offered a variety of issues that focused in the main on the Church’s structure, collegiality (the sharing of power between the Pope and the College of bishops), and relationship between bishops, priests, the laity, and other religions. These areas constitute, to a large extent, not only the physical image of the Church but also the very nature that calls on the Church to fulfill its mission in the world. Elsewhere in this work, I have touched on the structure of the Church but for the purpose of clarity, the structure of the Church needs further explanation.

From an organizational perspective, the Church is a transnational bureaucratic organization structurally organized to reflect its goals and purpose.48 In fact, Cheney defines the Church as “a multinational mass communication organization,” which has over the years been trying to demonstrate Donald Bryant’s dual function of rhetoric: “adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas.”49 The inherent assumption therefore is that the Church has tried to “sell” its ideas to different cultures and has succeeded in gaining adherence to its ideas by working together in an organized fashion and through this organized system has achieved its common goal. The Church has succeeded because it has strived to maintain a unified system of consistent adherence to its doctrinal teaching by practicing a system of discipline for those members who are unwilling to cooperate fully within the defined boundaries of the organization’s system and practices. The Church believes that the success or failure of an individual’s efforts within the
community of believers affects the whole and therefore observes preferentially the Pauline vision of a community. St. Paul, in a metaphorical fashion, enunciates the significance of each member in the Church, noting:

For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts – all the parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body – so it is with Christ. We were baptised into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink. And indeed the body consists not of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, ‘I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the body,’ it does not belong to the body any less for that. Or if the ear were to say, ‘I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body,’ that would not stop its belonging to the body. If the whole body were just an eye, how would there be any hearing? If the whole body were hearing, how would there be any smelling? . . . As it is, the art are many but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you.’ And nor can the head say to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

In other words, each of the parts of the overall system is to work together, else the larger system will fail. St. Paul’s enunciation describes, within an organization context, an open system that encourages multiplicity of interactions among members of a community, which, in this case is the ecclesia, the Church. Each member of the Church, by virtue of his baptism, is called upon to contribute multiplicity of abilities, toward the resources, and customs that are brought to bear on
the mission of the Church, in order for the Church to assimilate other external influences. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model therefore underscores the significance of cultural identity in the Church, that is, the particular character of the ecclesial body communication system that emerges within the group through their shared historical experiences. This identity emerges not only from the revelatory narrative but also from the Church’s external environment. The core of the cultural identity of members defines not only their fundamental beliefs as Catholics but also as citizens of a society where their socio-economic, political, and cultural affiliations and assimilations influence their response to other cultural core symbols. Therefore the people of God within the Catholic Church are not only defined by their religious shared experiences but also their historical, social, political and economic enactments of their communication within other external contexts. Collier points out that one’s “identity is defined as an enactment of cultural communication,” and that “Each individual, then, has a range of cultures to which she or he belongs. . . . All cultures that are created are influenced by a host of social, psychological, and environmental factors as well as institutions and context.” The point made here is important because in any given open organization, the different cultural identification process brought to bear on the organizational environment enriches the culture of the organization.

Of course, some organizations benefit from being closed to outside influence to maintain protection from other cultural identifications so that it may maintain a certain level of purity for its members in order to strengthen the existing norms for similarity in attitudes, beliefs, and values for its members. While those organizations assume self sufficiency, the danger of a closed system is myopic vision of leaders and members and potential ignorance of events in their surroundings. The more open system an organization maintains, the more the members are open to new interactions and influences both from within and outside. When the Vatican II called on the Church to adopt a dialogic pattern of communication, it was calling on it to open its
doors both to the members within the Church and outside it in order to broaden its cultural horizon. In fact, in preparing and accepting the document, *Lumen Gentium*, the Council was re-emphasizing the *communion* aspect of the Church, a community that is distinct in its interactions among members and outside its own walls.

Further, the Council was calling on the Church to open itself to dialogue in a participatory form because of its distinct nature as *communion*. Frances F. Plude observes, “Indeed, the very process of developing *Lumen gentium* is an example of a participatory forum,”55 and further, Dulles contends that “the successive drafts of the Constitution, compared with one another, strikingly reveal the tremendous development in self-understanding of the Church which resulted from the dialogue within the Council.”56 The significant element of dialogue that emerged in the considerations of the Council is its participatory nature, which also includes, according to Plude, the notion of a creative view of the laity and their roles and the principle of bishops’ collegiality. In fact, this view of a participatory vision sets the Council apart from the earlier heavy emphasis on papal power and authority. In the view of the Council, each member was to accept responsibility as a community member called to participate in the Church’s life and mission by virtue of sacramental entry into the community of believers. In this regard, Walter Kasper has noted the following point:

  Stimulated by the Council, bodies of common responsibility have come into being on all level of the Church’s life: parish councils, diocesan councils, diocesan synods, Episcopal synods, lay interest, and the preparedness of lay people to take a share of responsibility, is perhaps the most valuable and most important contribution of the post-conciliar period.57
The intention of the Council in calling for shared responsibility within the Church was far from the notion of “liberal democracy” as some may conceive it. Rather, the Council was redirecting the Church to its early history and the various dynamics that have helped the Church to define its nature to accommodate different cultures in its evangelization tasks.⁵⁸ Karl Rahner thus notes

. . .many structures and institutions may be built into the Church which give the people of the Church a more active role than that which they have previously had in the life of the Church itself. In other words . . . these new structures and institutions may signify ‘democratic’ rights within the Church. In fact many changes in this direction have in practice already been achieved within the Church, even though we may hold the opinion that still more changes of the same kind will have to take place in the future.⁵⁹

Edward Schillebeeckx, on the other hand, asserts that:

The co-responsibility of all believers for the Church . . . essentially includes the participation of all believers in decision relating to Church government (however this may be organized in practice). Vatican II also gave at least some institutional encouragement towards making this universal participation possible: the Roman synods, the national councils, the Episcopal conferences, the council of priests, the diocesan and parish councils of lay believers and the frameworks of many organizations.⁶⁰
While the invitation to participatory responsibility by the Council was seen by some as the right thing to do, others emphasized the tensions inherent in the invitation and Schillebeeckx has noted that it is important to rather focus on the “interplay of official teaching authority and the teaching authority of believers and their theologians”\textsuperscript{61} and of course accept the fact those tensions are necessary for the development of the Church. It is therefore in this vein that Kasper emphasizes the notion the people of God as “the organic and structured whole of the Church, the people gathered round their bishop, and attached to their shepherd, as Cyprian put it.”\textsuperscript{62}

Plude has noted that the difficulty for the Church in implementing and practicing the concept of participation rises from the communication patterns in the Church and proposes the need to develop and build a theory of subsidiarity, that is, an institutionalization of subsidiarity which must be developed from among the people of God so that the integration of authority and co-responsibility can be facilitated properly.\textsuperscript{63} Therefore, the Council emphasized the necessity of establishing the various councils from the diocesan level, that is, the local Church, where the local ordinary moves among his people. Joseph Komonchak thus notes that “the reasons for the shift to the local Church include the revalidation of the bishop’s role; the importance of regional Episcopal collegiality; ecumenical reflection on the differences compatible with unity; challenges of inculturation; . . . and the need for genuine community in a world of increased anonymity and bureaucracy . . .”\textsuperscript{64}

It is also worthy of mention that the Council’s notion of the ecclesiology of \textit{communion} actually embodied the understanding of interdependence as constitutive of open communication or interaction. Within the field of organizational communication, interaction or the interactivity of communication which emerged in the system theory emphasized the importance of communication flows so as to facilitate the exchange of information. Everett M. Rogers has
noted in this regard that any organization system which is an open one maintains some degree of structure, with the structure differentiated from the environment by a boundary. The boundary, in this case, is the nature of the communication flow. Rogers notes

A system is a set of units that has some degree of structure and that is differentiated from the environment by a boundary. The system’s boundary is defined by communication flows . . . any system that does not input matter, energy, and information from its environment will soon run down and eventually cease to exist. . . an open system continuously exchanges information with its environment. 65

The Second Vatican Council was aware of the ramifications of its ecclesiology of communion, that is, the turbulent nature of the environment within which the Church operates; however, as Patrick Granfield points out in his research of ecclesial cybernetics focusing on slavery, ecumenism, birth control and celibacy, the call to aggiornamento by the Council demanded institutional conditions necessary for an ecclesial communication and responsive to decision-making. Granfield lists, among other things, small communities fostering religious commitment, the principle of pluralism, the greater local autonomy and flexibility, credible study commissions, and broad participation in the selection of leadership. 66 The outcomes of the research point us again to a participatory community which engages in interactive communication with one another.

The Council’s focus was also propelled by the notion of the biblical story which becomes the story of the believer rather than as a treasure hidden away to be brought out when needed.
Some scholars have noted that the problems resulting from the position of the preconciliar Church as sheltering of the biblical message in the hands of a few arose because of the Church’s strict adherence to dogmas. The participatory community which flows out of the Council’s vision of dialogue within and outside the Church should not be confused with secular political democracy, which maintains an end as justification for the means. A genuine participatory community respects the role of authority while facilitating dialogue. In an organization, a sensitive leader is aware that the free flow of communication facilitates informational sharing, individual affirmation, and promotes respect for diverse opinion. Granfield’s view parallels the notion of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model as it seeks to encourage the Church to enhance a participatory dialogue between members and the hierarchy on significant issues that affect their daily lives. Somehow, the Second Vatican Council attempted to move the Church towards this democratic and participatory model but stopped short of doing so.

Thus, Vatican II situated the Church in dialogue to foster the sharing of the biblical narrative that serves as the daily story of the community of believers. By pointing the Church to a participatory community, the Council also was laying emphasis on shifting the focus of attention from Rome to the local Churches (communion ecclesiarum). In fact, Pottmeyer distinguishes the characteristics of the new Church in renewal from the preconciliar Church by noting that the Church envisaged by Vatican II is different in its structure and theological formulations from the preconciliar Church. Pottmeyer thus lays out his notion of the participatory Church, namely, an organic connection between the universal Church and the locales, the cooperation between ordained office holders and lay people, the theological necessity of both primacy and collegiality, and unity within plurality. The implications of these characteristics are driven by a sense of genuine dialogue, about which Paul A. Soukup points out: “Those who choose this model of dialogue as defining the communication process usually
choose a model of the Church or local community that is small enough to facilitate the face-to-face communication they seek.”

By locating the participatory Church in the local setting, the Council pointed the Church to the direction of a dialogic encounter with members in the faith community and also other faith traditions in order that it may share in their day to day experience which is ought to be guided by their historical, cultural, and religious traditions. The faith community in this context embraces the local bishop, the priests/religious, and the laity while requiring each member in the community to respond to one another with mutual respect and in a dialogic manner. Again, as a distinct characteristic from the preconciliar Church, the Council pointed out that the role of the bishop is one of priestly character inherent in the sacramental consecration rather than deriving from the powers conferred by his appointment to a particular diocese. The fruitful nature of the episcopacy is realized through the bishop’s communicative interactivity with the members of the Church. The more the communication processes are open between the bishop, priests and religious and the faith community, the more there will be trust, acceptance, understanding, and collegiality within the local Church which eventually can influence the universal Church.

As in many organizations, the transition from a closed, bureaucratic system to an open system (participatory) of communication has met challenges. The Church has never been a stranger to some of these evolutionary challenges in its historical, structural, political, and doctrinal patterns from its beginnings as an open community in Jerusalem to the period when it became an immutable centralized religious institution and at the dawn of the opening of Vatican II Council. These changes have taken place not because the Church willingly made the move but because the historical, political and cultural transformations that were taking place in the secular world out there demanded changes in the Church. If changes in the world in the past have generated change, perhaps change is needed again. Andrew M. Greeley, in an article “The
Second Vatican Council-Occurrence of Event: Towards a Social Historical Reconsideration,” notes that, for instance “. . . the disaster of World War II and the surprising rebirth of Europe following the war, created an atmosphere in which many Catholics felt that some modifications in the Church’s various stances might be appropriate.”

The perspectives shared by the Council on the nature of the Church emerged from long historical events in the Church which affected the secular world at large and therefore the Church as well. For example, the French revolution began on July 14, 1789 and gradually turned into a massive revolution that would change Europe. The storming of the Bastille in Paris was to become a major cultural event in the history of Europe and Europe would be different in its social, political, and religious structures. The events that led to the French Revolution have parallels in concepts and context in the Church. In the twentieth century, three elements, the centralization of power in the Vatican, the post-Tridentine understanding of sin, and the unchangeableness of the Church, led to the convening of the Second Vatican Council, which offered new possibilities for change.

Greeley has raised several arguments regarding some notable structural changes in the Church during and after the Council’s deliberations among which four are pertinent to this work. First, the Liturgy: the priest said the Mass facing the congregation and the language was partially in English and in Latin, an indication to the world that if English could be used to celebrate the Mass, then the Church could change. All this happened on Septuagesima Sunday 1965.

Second, on Ecumenism: The Council admitted that Protestant denominations were indeed Churches and that Catholics should strive for mutual understanding with them in friendly dialogue. The heretics, schismatics, Jews, and infidels down the street were now suddenly separated brothers and sisters. Apparently overnight, Catholicism was willing to change.

Third, the idea of abstaining from meat on Friday was considered to be outmoded. Greeley argues that
this change resulted from a decision of the American bishops. The immutable had mutated. However, the centralization of authority was not yet in jeopardy. These changes did not in themselves mean that ordinary priests or lay persons could make their own decisions about the conditions on which they would be Catholic. Yet implicit in the newly discovered mutability in the Church was the underlying assumption that if something ought to be changed and it is believed that it would change, eventually, then it was right to already anticipate such decisions and allow change on one’s own authority. The gradual drift in this direction in the late 1980s put the centralized authority structure in grave jeopardy.  

Fourth, the question of Birth Control has been one issue that confronted many Catholics and according to Greeley, this issue tells the story of how an attempt to preserve the authority structure of the Church in fact weakened and eventually came close to destroying it. Greeley notes that this hair splitting issue was to be addressed by the Council Fathers, but Pope Paul VI, not trusting his fellow bishops, removed it from the Council’s agenda and later constituted a commission to discuss the issue and report to him. The consequence of the report later became a well known knowledge – a change was needed in the Church.  

Humanae Vitae of 1968 resulted in the phrase, “follow your conscience.” Greeley maintains that this development seemed to have touched the very nerve of the authority structure in the Church. In this regard, William Sewell observes, “Social processes are inherently contingent, discontinuous, and open-ended and thus reject the historical models of Weber, Durkheim, Marx, Comte, and all the others who find inexorable trends in human events.”  

Sewell’s argument reinforces Greeley’s observation that in certain curial circles, the argument was that priests and laity could not make the decisions for themselves concerning the outcome of the encyclical if they had to remain good Catholics, but in fact they could remain good Catholics.
Of course, Sewell argues against social laws which make his argument a passive academic endeavor; however, his account of behavior patterns in social setting makes sense from the perspective of the theory of contingency. He notes that “adequate eventful accounts of social process will look more like well-made stories or narratives than like laws of physics,” using what Robert Merton would term “middle-range” theories to account for contingent phenomena in determining why contingent events have such important and sometimes momentous impact on the structures of human existence. Sewell further maintains that patterns of relationships tend to be reproduced even when actors engaging in the relations are unaware of the patterns or do not desire their reproduction. Any established and reinforced behavior patterns tend to be stable and durable but they can also change because of the theory of contingency, that is, either because of external forces or internal inconsistencies within the structures themselves.

The reaction to the issue of birth control in the Church was interpreted by many Catholics as the result of what happens when a historical event shatters a behavior pattern and the resources that support it. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, different groups of American Catholics, according to Greeley, changed its convictions about the legitimacy of birth control as well as about the right of the Church to apply rules for sexual behavior. Vatican II should therefore be seen and understood in this light: the Council was not just a series of documents but set forth a chain of events consisting of phenomena that transformed the behavior patterns of Catholics, shifting the direction of influence toward a more personalistic understanding of faith and life. Finally, it was realized that after all, there is a pluralism of voices in the Church and it was demonstrated by the overwhelming votes by bishops during the Council’s work.

In short, by opening the doors and windows of the Church and inviting it to be in dialogue with its members and the secular world, the Council departed in large measure from the preconciliar Church and endeavored to establish a participatory Church in order to open the
communication channels which are embodied in the communication dynamics of the nature of the Church. Consonant with the tenets of the Council’s goals, it noted in the document *Gaudium et Spes*: “Let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful, and charity in everything” (no. 92). The cooperation between ordained office holders and the laity came about through the series of events that changed the face of the Church and gave the believing community a sense of mutual respect through their communicative process. The local Church became the central location of the universal Church for it gave the local bishop and the local community a sense of responsibility toward their own Church in which they were born through baptism, married through the sacrament of marriage and received their Christian burial rites. In other words, the council expected that the Church in Rome would accord every respect to the local Churches especially in the implementation of their pastoral activities either within the Church or with other faith traditions.

Concerning the universal Church and the relevance of dialogue, Pottmeyer notes that there are two areas to examine: intra Church dialogue and interreligious dialogue. First, he notes that the Church is understood as an organic entity that exists to promote the necessary connection between the universal and local Churches. Second, it exits to foster cooperation between priests/religious and the laypeople. Third, by its very structure, the Church theologically admits by necessity both primacy and collegiality between the Pope and the bishops, and fourth, the Church admits unity within plurality. These four elements of dialogue call for a deeper dialogic encounter between bishops, priests, religious, the laity, other religious faiths (i.e. other Christian religions, Eastern religions, and Islam), and the secular world in a profound manner with the expectation that such an encounter would open channels of cooperation for the growth of the faith of the universal and local Churches. (See also. Vat. II: *Gaudium et Spes*, 36 & 37; A. Flannery 1965: *Vatican II: The Church Constitution*, p.118-122.) The Council’s vision emerged
from the historical events of the world, especially our modern history, and it is within this context that the Council envisaged the Church as a force for dialogue among its own members, other faith traditions, and the world as a whole and moved away from the notion of centralized control which makes dialogue difficult, if not impossible, in the light of developments in the advancement of theoretical understanding of communication processes.

Ricardo Antoncich at a conference of theologians and communication scholars held in Rome in 1989, contended that theology (as a reflection about faith of the Church) should enter into dialogue with other forms of thought that rationally explain the life of the human being in the world. He also maintained that methodologically, the contribution of communication to ecclesiology does not refer exclusively to the analysis of how the Church lives its internal or external communication; rather it refers to the total contribution that communication sciences offer to the understanding of the human person, the world, and history. In the same context, Pottmeyer argued that the communion-communication model is a necessary constituent of the Church’s nature, her structures and relations and must perceive its meaning for the world from the point of theological and anthropological views. In this vein, Pottmeyer argued that the three corresponding communication dimensions, namely, communication within the Church (communio fidelium, communion ecclesiarum), extra-ecclesial communication (Church as sacrament of the Kingdom within the unity of mankind), and the self-communication of God (history of salvation) must divulge the Church’s role as a sign or witness of the Gospel. Pottmeyer’s assertion reinforces Bernard Harîng’s view when he noted that “A teaching Church that is not above all a learning, listening Church, is not on the wavelength of divine communication.” He goes on to demonstrate the importance for the Church to listen to and appreciate the presence of pluralism within its ranks. He writes:
Pluralism is not at all anarchy of idea and a structureless society. Democracy needs mutual and respect and agreement on basic values. But tolerance does not imply neutrality of thought . . . . a legitimate pluralism is never a threat but rather an indispensable condition for catholicity in truth and truth in catholicity . . . .

As one of the outstanding “signs of the times,” pluralism invites a courageous and generous ecumenical spirit and action…. The full recognition of pluralism and methods of dialogue, the common search for truth, and reciprocal communication not only do not threaten the consistency and unity of a united Christianity but can greatly help to strengthen and deepen them.88

Haring points the Church toward a struggle to develop a dialogic style that is participatory for all members in a trustful manner. In seeking to develop a healthy style of dialogue in the Church, Robert White employs the analogy of the public sphere, noting that

Descriptively, the public sphere refers to that aspect of social interaction, cultural institutions, and collective decision-making that affects all people in the society and engages the interests of all people in the national body . . . a nation may be said to exist insofar as it has a core of social interaction that is truly common and public.89
Here again, there is an emphasis placed on departing from a mass mediated context to what 
White refers to as the way that different groups construct discourse of meaning which 
underscores the significance of community in public culture and participative contexts. My own 
perspective and conviction is the adoption of Praxis Religious Dialogue based on community 
interactivity in which different voices find acceptance and respect, confirmation and 
appreciation, which is the foundation of this work and the content of the model I propose. While 
there has been some measure of cooperation in some of these areas, the vision of the Council has 
not yet been fully fulfilled as expected.

The expectation of the Council is to fulfill the existential nature of the Church, By its 
very nature, the Church is dialogic because the founder, Jesus Christ, commissioned it to nurture, 
liberate, confirm, and enhance the dignity and growth of the human person through its 
missionary activities (Ad Gentes, 2), and through dialogue with other cultures. Dialogue, as the 
Council envisioned for the Church, is therefore not alien to the nature of the Church but 
intrinsically and mutually bound to its very life. Unfortunately, in the span of forty years, the 
work of the Council is slowly been shelved either because the challenges facing the Church in 
the implementation of the Council’s work have been seen as insurmountable or because of 
concern for relinquishing authority. It is in view of this return to a preconciliar style of dialogue 
that it will be encouraging for the Church to adopt a phronesis of faith exemplified in the faith-
theory-faith-praxis model which I designate in this work as a Praxis Religious Dialogue model. 
This model offers a new view of dialogue for the Church in a new historical moment. I turn now 
to an examination of “dialogue” from a preconciliar view in order to provide context for this new 
model.
V. Preconciliar Ecclesiology and the Notion of Dialogue

The tradition and history of the preconciliar Church attest to an image of a Church that consistently reflected on itself as immutable in its traditions and thus found it inappropriate to embrace any communicative interactivity. Pottmeyer argues that the word “dialogue” as a description of communication within the Church is new and that it is not found in preconciliar ecclesiology whose key concepts were “jurisdiction” and “obedience.” Thus, he assigns the following priorities as constitutive characteristics of the Church before Vatican II noting first, the priority of the universal Church over the local Church, which he terms as a “universalist ecclesiology. Second, that the priority of the ordained office holder was placed over the congregation and the charisms, which he calls “clericalism.” Third, that the priority of the monarchical Church took precedence over the collegial structure of office, which he defines as centralism, and fourth, that the priority of unity was above plurality, which he terms as “uniformity,” – a one way communication “from above to below which corresponds to the hierarchical system of strict superiority and subordination.” Pottmeyer asserts that the difficulty for the Church in embracing fully the chain of historical events that opened the doors and windows of the Church for renewal during and after the Council is due to the challenging transition from a style of authority that was based on a “patriarchal and authoritarian” style of rule to an authority exercised in the form of dialogue.

Further, the challenges serve as difficulties and reasons for the tendency to return to one-way communication. The priorities set forth by Pottmeyer are indicative of a Church that was institutional in nature and that also claimed the visibility of the Church. Abbott B. C. Butler, on the eve of Vatican II, wrote:

...according to Roman Catholics the Church is essentially
a single concrete historical society, having a constitution,
a set of rules, a governing body, and a set of actual members
who accept this constitution and these rules as binding on them . . . \textsuperscript{93}

The notion of the preconciliar Church as a society defined the nature of the Church as a
formal, structured form of government which leads to the notion of an institutional Church.
Avery Dulles has argued that it would be wrong to attribute the idea of institutionalism to the
preconciliar Church. For the Church of Christ to operate in the world, some forms of
organizational features are necessary for the performance of the activities entrusted to it. Dulles
prefers to depart from the notion of institutionalism because he considers it a deformation of the
true nature of the Church. Further, Dulles notes that the institutionalist development of the
Church actually worked its way into the structures of the Church in the late Middle Ages and the
Counter Reformation period, when theologians and canonists, responding to attacks on the
papacy and hierarchy, accented precisely those features that the adversaries were denying.\textsuperscript{94}
Yves Congar thus remarked that the Roman Catholic ecclesiology of the preconciliar Church had
the tendency to regard the Church:

as machinery of hierarchical mediation of the powers and
primacy of the Roman see, in a word, “hierarchicology.”\textsuperscript{95}

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the institutional Church adopted fully the
image of the Church as a perfect society and declared in the schema of the Dogmatic
Constitution prepared for Vatican I that the “Church has all the marks of a true Society”\textsuperscript{96} and
that was how Christ defined it, giving it its existence and form of existence and its constitution.
The declaration further asserted that the Church was not part not member of any other society and that it is so perfect in itself that it is distinct from all human societies and stands far above them. The implications of the definition of the Church were that the powers and functions of the Church were divided into three, namely a teaching Church, a sanctifying Church, and a governing Church.\(^97\) These three functions characterized the Church as a hierarchical institution that conceives of authority as the primary foundation upon which the Church thrived, for again in the Dogmatic Constitution of Vatican I, the Church declared that “. . . the Church of Christ is not a community of equals in which all the faithful have the same rights. It is a society of unequals, . . because there is in the Church the power from God whereby to some it is given to sanctify, teach, and govern, and to others not.”\(^98\)

The image presented of the preconciliar Church is not considered in any terms as a democratic institution or, Dulles argues, a representative society but an institution in which all the powers were concentrated in the hands of the monarchs or the ruling class that perpetuates itself “by cooption.”\(^99\) From this understanding of the preconciliar Church, Bishop De Smedt, at the preliminary schema sessions, did not hesitate to characterize the Church as embodying “clericalism, juridicism, and triumphalism,”\(^100\) the implication being that the power to rule is from the Pope, to the bishops, and then to the priests, who are to ensure that the demands of the Pope in the form of doctrinal formulations, rule and regulations, and punishments are properly obeyed by the faithful who play only a passive role in the Church.\(^101\) Another phase of the image of the Church presented by the preconciliar Church was the notion that since the Church in its historical traditions are immutable, it attached great significance to the establishment of ecclesial offices and the institution of sacraments that still persist in the Church.\(^102\)

In fact, the Council of Trent asserted in its declaration that the seven sacraments and the hierarchy comprising the Pope, bishops, priests and ministers were instituted by Christ\(^103\) and in
the same breath, the Council affirmed that the dogmas formulated were part of the original deposit of faith.\textsuperscript{104} Dulles has explained that in order for the Church to clarify how it developed the ecclesial institutional theories of clericalism, juridicism, and governance, especially concerning the institution of the offices, beliefs, and rites, theologians were asked to study the original sources using the regressive method.\textsuperscript{105} Theology then was made to be a defender of the magisterial teachings of the Church and not as a critical instrument of appraisal of the Church’s teachings.

One cannot completely dismiss the instrumentality of the regressive theory because it was meant to foster unity in the Church and guard against anything that would stand contrary to the benefits bestowed on the beneficiaries of the Church.\textsuperscript{106} Thus, Robert Bellarmine would clarify later by arguing that “the Church members are those who profess the approved doctrines, communicate in the legitimate sacraments, and who subject themselves to the duly appointed pastors.”\textsuperscript{107} And later, Pius XII would emphasize this strong adherence to the doctrinal teachings of the Church in his encyclical \textit{Mysticii Corporis} that “Only those are really to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith and who have not unhappily withdrawn from the Body unity or who for grave faults have been excluded by legitimate authority.”\textsuperscript{108} By embodying this notion of membership in its systemic structure, the Church made it clear to its members that they could be granted protection from evil because it possessed the fountain of eternal life, and they could be protected from wandering into schism and false beliefs. The Church saw itself in this fashion as a mother chicken that spreads its wings over its chicks to protect them from the predators and, as Dulles succinctly puts it, they could be ferried in “the boat of Peter, which carries the faithful to the farther shore of heaven, provided they remain on board.”\textsuperscript{109}
The structure of the preconciliar Church had its strong points. The institutional Church of the preconciliar times strongly supported its missionary activities by directly going into unchartered territories to save souls by incorporating members in the institution. It measured its efforts statistically on baptisms (especially infant baptisms), confirmations, marriages, priestly ordinations, funerals, and burials. Dulles argues that in this highly institutionalized Church found in the Roman Catholicism from about 1550 to 1950, three main chief assets were maintained.

First, the strong affirmation by the Church that its doctrinal, sacramental, and governmental structures were founded on divine revelation. In this view, strict adherence to the laws of the Church was to be maintained by its members and any errancy was punished under the pain of death or in some cases through a severe embarrassment by official dictates. Second, by insisting strongly on the continuity with Christian origins, the Church maintained a strong link with an esteemed religious past and an unwavering present time. Third, through its insistence on the institutional model, the preconciliar Church was able to establish a strong sense of ecclesial corporate identity of its members. Members had a high sense of institutional loyalty and maintained a higher degree of obedience to the Church officials and the doctrinal teachings. Catholic identity became an envious value in many religious traditions.110

Even though the institutional aspects of the Church helped to maintain a vital ecclesial presence in the world, the institutional theory had its negative effects on the Church in the world. According to Dulles, the case against the institutional elements can be summarized as first, the theory has a comparatively meager basis in Scripture and in early Church tradition.111 The Church as an institution can only claim support from a few New Testament texts, but even these texts must be interpreted in a particular prescribed way. Nowhere in the Scriptures is the Church mentioned as a single tightly knit society, for even Paul’s own model of the Church is conceived as communitarian and mystical in nature. Second, Dulles argues that the institutional model has
some negative impact on Christian lifestyle in both personal and corporate views. The model tends to emphasize obedience more than other virtues, and thus reduces the laity to a state of passivity, as Bishop De Smedt pointed out during the preparatory stages of the Council’s deliberations.

Third, Dulles maintains that the institutional theory raises barriers to fruitful and creative theology for it restricts theology to defending the magisterial teachings of the Church, which reduces theology to an apologetic exercise. Fourth, the institutional ecclesiology placed too much emphasis on the notion of *nulla salus extra ecclesia* (no salvation outside the Church), a notion which repelled many devoted Christians from the Catholic Church because many found it unimaginable that non-Roman Catholics would be damned by a loving God. Finally, it is argued that the institutional ecclesiology does not foster dialogue, a practice that would seem helpful in an age of ecumenism, and it detracts from the intrinsic nature of the Church as dialogic in character because of the salvation history it preaches. One metaphor for the Church, given this highly structured ecclesial organizational grid, is a military barracks that instructs its members concerning what to believe and what not to believe. It could be considered an environment where members were broken down through a process of “deindividuation” and formed and fashioned according to the beliefs that would shape their vision of the world and the afterlife.

Thus, the departure from the Preconciliar Church to a Church of renewal was to bring the Postconciliar Church closer to the members of the Church and invite other religions to share in the fraternal communion exemplified in the Pauline ecclesiological model, a prophetic Church, organic, communitarian, and mystical in nature (1 Cor.:12: 27ff). For Vatican II, therefore, the renewed Church was to be a participatory Church which placed emphasis on the local Church rather than the universal. The local Church would be in dialogue with members both within and outside it and relate to the universal Church. The bishop becomes a member of the college of
bishops with the Pope as the head of the college. In this context, Vatican II noted that the Church will henceforth be a Church that will serve as a sign of brotherliness in order to allow dialogue and invigorate it. To be able to foster the necessary dialogue within the Church, it is required that the Church foster mutual esteem, reverence, and harmony, through the full recognition of lawful diversity to encourage both pastors and the general faithful to engage in dialogue with abounding fruitfulness.\textsuperscript{116}

\section*{VI. The Christian Narrative as a Metaphor}

The story emerging from the Christian narrative serves as a metaphor\textsuperscript{117} that invokes for a deeper understanding and connection with the new notion of dialogue envisaged by the Second Vatican Council which also opens new doors to other metaphors, namely, the identity of the Church (\textit{Lumen Gentium} 1), the Church as a community (\textit{Lumen Gentium} 9), interreligious dialogue (\textit{Ad Gentes, Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate}), and the Church in the modern world. These metaphors are all embedded in the historical moment (\textit{Gaudium et Spes}), and they point the Church to a participatory dialogue in order to usher the Church into a new era with a different vision for its missionary activity.

The identity of the Church is defined in terms of its proclamation of the history of salvation, which is communicative \textit{sui generis}. As an institution with a particular mission, the Church is charged to offer freedom to the human person, but it shares attributes with other institutions that perform similar tasks. In this regard, some members face difficulties concerning their identity relating to their religious experiences in the Church and their social responsibilities. The conflict of identity is further exacerbated in upholding their allegiance, that is, whether their allegiance is first to their Church or to their social community. Unfortunately, this kind of confused identity poses problems for the hierarchy when an individual questions his loyalty to
the Church at any point in time. The question that many Catholics ask in times of tension and conflictual issues in society is whether their decision will lead them to go heaven or hell. For many Catholics, there has never been a chance for them to relate to their Christian story as enunciated in the Gospels; rather, their immediate attention is focused on the doctrinal teachings of the Church which at times conflict with their social shared experiences. For example, in 2004, the issue of gay marriage in the United States became a very contentious issue among Christians. For many Christians, the tension was whether a gay person can remain a Christian and especially in the Catholic Church for that matter, receive Holy Communion. Another issue during the 2004 presidential election was the refusal of Holy Communion to supporters of abortion rights. While some parishes granted permission to some abortion supporters to receive Holy Communion, other parishes refused to do the same. This kind of differentiation perspective reveals the implicit and inherent political domains within an organizational culture and which subsequently can prevent a genuine dialogue.118

Further, the difficulty with the maintenance of identity in the Church also emerges as more attention is paid to the identity of solidarity among bishops to the detriment of dialogue with community members in the Church. In 1982, in an address to the bishops of Nicaragua, John Paul II emphasized the significance of the “principle of unity,”119 maintaining that such unity could be applied to the different levels of the communities spread out throughout the world. Then in 1983, addressing the U. S. bishops, the Pope maintained that “the bishop is . . . called to be a sign of Catholic solidarity in the local Church, which is the miniature reflection of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, which really and truly does subsist in the local Church.”120 Further, in 1984, the Pope addressed the Swiss bishops and noted that “Collegiality in the strict sense is more that your collaboration among yourselves. It unites all the bishops with each other
around the successor of Peter to teach the doctrine of the faith, to put a common discipline into practice and to meet the needs and provide for the progress of the universal Church.”

The difficulty with these various assertions by the Pope is that there is surely an identity crisis emanating from where one places allegiance, whether to the Church first or to one’s country, community or social group. This tension has been addressed by Eisenberg, framing it as an “ambiguity” which is theorized under the “fragmentation” perspective. He notes that when an issue is ambiguously framed, it can be manipulated by interested groups, that is, either the management or by the disempowered interest groups. The Praxis Religious Dialogue therefore suggests that it is in the Church’s own interest to strive for inclusion of all the different subgroups that may interpret issues in a different light in order to establish dialogic process that may reveal new grounds for the Church to experience unity in diversity. Vatican II in fact places more emphasis on the local Church in its pastoral activities than the universal Church. In fact, many global organizations now recognize this problem and places more emphasis on allowing divisional heads to have more autonomy and independence in dialoguing with their members so as to emphasize the shared value in the organizational story. Cheney acknowledges in this regard that even other denominational congregations that stress local control have difficulties when it comes to the issue of who speaks for whom.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue paradigm seeks therefore to encourage the Church to be open to dialogue with other dissenting subgroups within the Christian community rather than setting canonical barriers for the lay people that would prohibit their participation in such dialogue. In fact, Cheney offer three reasons why many people of today are not comfortable with certain pronouncements of the Church. He notes first that the emphasis on its global reach is detrimental to its success; second, the insistence on its transcendence across time is problematic, and third, the emphasis on its espousal of “moral truths” is contested. From the perspective of
the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue, the difficulty which Vatican II envisaged regarding the dialectical tension existing between the Church as a divine institution and an organization is how these tensions impede the dialogic nature of the Church. In view of this reason, the Council defined the Church in terms of pastoral, biblical, Christocentric, historical, and eschatological Church and then inserted it within the context of witness, ministry, and fellowship in order to allow it to perform its functions in the world. In doing so, the Council hoped to remove the tensions that existed in the preconciliar Church between a Church that was a perfect society and at the same a divinely ordained institution in which authority of the hierarchy was unquestionably sustained through its doctrinal pronouncements.

In retrospect, it is arguable that the Council opened the Church to the notion of dialogue in its various forms because it departed from the notion of a one-way, top-down informational process and grounded the Church in the existential interpretive tasks that require knowing, feeling, and at times carving new paths to respond to the call by the Other. The grounding of the Church in the historical moment by the Council also granted to the whole community of the people of God the opportunity to look ahead with hope in the sharing of the Christian story, which is embedded in the story of the Good Samaritan who understood the narrative of revelation as a call to responsibility toward the Other who calls the subject to the idea of “I am my brother’s keeper” to reveal the existential concrete nature of the narrative of revelation.
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid. p. 144.

3 Ibid. p. 144.

4 Ibid. p. 144.

5 Ibid. p. 145.


7 Phillip K. Tompkins, George Cheney, and Elaine V. B. Tompkins, “Permanence and Change in the Roman Catholic Church: Communication, Coalition, Conscience” (Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Louisville, KY Nov. 1982).


10 Ibid. p. 9.


14 For a comprehensive understanding of how the faithful can construct and make sense of the Word of God through their shared experiences, see Orlando Espin, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997. Some scholars note that Espin is
influenced by Peter Berger and Antonio Gramsci in his theories about social constructions. However, Espin argues from his witness of the experiences of the Latino religious communities – their suffering and their hope in the Christian message.


16 Ibid.


18 Vatican II Documents, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1. See also the introduction to the document by Fr. Donald R. Campion for the concerns of the Council Fathers in bringing the Church face to face with the world.

19 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 4.


22 Ibid. p. 85-86.


27 Both *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* in different ways articulate the significance of the community the Council termed as The People of God. The reference focus on all the members of the
Church from the hierarchy to the laity. However, within the community the Council stratifies the different levels of the Church – the hierarchy, the priests and religious, and the laity.


29 Ibid. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 42.


31 Ibid.


38 Ibid., p. 132.


41 Ibid. p. 11

42 Stanley Hauerwas. *A Community of Character: toward a constructive Christian social ethic*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 37. Hauerwas relies on A. McIntyre’s compelling development of his position in *After Virtue* in which McIntyre shows the significance of the story from which our narratives take form and shape and guides human endeavors.


45 The Documents of Vatican II, W.M. Abbott (Ed.), Lumen Gentium, intro.


47 Arnett & Arneson, Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 144. M. Buber demonstrates three different types of dialogue, genuine, technical, and monologic. The first takes the Other from where he is to establish a living mutual relation between himself and the Other; the second is only prompted by objective understanding, and the third, which is deceitful in appearance, happens when the partners in conversation each speak with himself in a very strange and circuitous ways while imagining that they have understood each other.


49 Ibid. p. 15.

50 St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, 12: 12-17, 20-21


52 Ibid. p. 39.


54 Ibid. p. 23, 102.

55 Frances F. Plude, “Interactive Communications in the Church.” The article first appeared in Patrick Grandfield (ed.) “The Church and Communication.” (Sheed and Ward, 1994). Plude is currently an associate professor of communication at Notre Dame College, Cleveland, OH and is co-author of Communication Ethics and Global Change (Longman Press). She has also contributed chapters to
numerous works. Recently, she met with the communications ministers of all 13 European Community nations.


58 Ibid.


61 Ibid. p. 233.

62 W. Kasper. Theology and Church, p. 162.


67 See E. Schillebeeckx’s chapter 4 on “Towards a Democratic rule of the Church” in The Church.


69 See Dulles introduction to the document Lumen Gentium.


72 See *The Documents of Vatican II*, W.M. Abbott (ed.), *Lumen Gentium* “Introduction”.


76 A. Greeley, “The Second Vatican Council- Occurrence or Event? (Toward a Social Historical Reconsideration) Retrieved August 3, 2004 from http://www.agreeley.com/articles/vatican2.htm Greeley argues in the article quoted that the shattering of structures in the Catholic Church immediately after the Council was not because of the Council’s documents but that the Council’s decisions were understood as constituting a momentous historical event of enormous importance for the Church by many members of the Church and outside the Church.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.


83 The ‘universal Church’ refers to the nature of the Church as transcending cultural, political, economic and all social systems and the ‘local Church’ refers to the individual Churches in different dioceses throughout the world.. See *Vatican II Documents*, L.G. 42.


B. Harîng, p. 158-196.


Ibid.

Ibid.


The quotation and its subsequent paraphrase are taken from the “First draft of the Constitution on the Church in *Collectio Lacensis* (Freiburg: Herder, 1890), Vol. 7, p. 567-578.

Ibid. p. 29.


Ibid. p. 31.


Ibid.

See Dulles, see chapter on “Church as Institution.”

Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 32nd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), nos. 1601 & 1775, 3058. (Henceforth to be abbreviated *DS*).

*DS*, 3421.
The Regressive Method used the latest teaching of the Magisterium as indicative of what must have been present from the beginning, since the Church at this period disclaimed any power of innovation in its teaching of revelation. By using the Magisterium as its source, the Church avoided any disbelief and critical exegesis of its teaching. The Church could claim authority of teaching from the Magisterium.


Dulles, p. 33.

Ibid, p. 35.


Dulles, p.35-36.

Ibid.

Ibid, p. 36-38.


*The Documents of Vatican II*, W.M. Abbott (ed.), *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 92.

The word “Metaphor” is used here in the context of the revelatory event. When the story of Revelation is being lived by an individual, metaphorically it is action laden and connects the individual’s experience with the collective experience. However, in the collective sense, the revelatory event frames for the community the narrative vision. A metaphor carries, points to, and in this context, it points to the narrative that several metaphors inherent in the revelatory event.
P. Frost, L. Moore, M. Louis, C. Lundberg, & J. Martin, *Reframing organizational culture*, (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991). These authors analyze the perspectives on “Differentiation” as demonstrating inconsistencies within cultures and that these inconsistencies point to the limitations. Also Joanne Martin (1992) argues that there is also the perspective on cultural “integration” characterized as highlighting orientation to consensus, relation among divergent manifestations, and orientation to ambiguity.


125 G. Cheney. p. 118.

126 Ibid. p. 18.
Chapter 5
Models of Dialogue and the Church

I. Different Traditions of Dialogue
   a) The Humanistic Tradition
   b) The Ethnomethological Tradition of Dialogue
   c) The “Dialogism” Tradition of Dialogue
   d) The Hermeneutical and Textual Analytic Tradition of Dialogue

II. Dialogue and the Church

III. The Self in Community

IV. Confirmation and Disconfirmation in Dialogue

V. The Search for Genuine Dialogue

Background

In 1993, Klaus Krippendorff argued against “message-driven” explanation of communication, especially for the field of dialogue. Since then, numerous communication theories relevant to dialogue have emerged, including the theory of language and mind (Rommetveit, 1992), Gadamer’s notion of the “word” (λογός) and “work” (ἐργον) and ‘historicality’ (Gadamer, 1960, 1989, 1986), and the idea of Dialogism (Bakhtin, 1986). These and subsequent theories further helped to develop a turn toward the praxis nature of dialogue. Buber, who has influenced the field of dialogue through his reflection on the nature of the human person and his understanding of the Other, has underscored the significance of human relationships in communities, an understanding that Buber terms “Interhuman.”¹ His work placed dialogue at the center of human interaction in which the Thou brings closer to the subject the historical consciousness of the moment. Increasing numbers of communication scholars cite
Buber, Gadamer, Bakhtin, and other authoritative voices in the field as sources to extend current work on dialogue. Their efforts have shed light on the concept of dialogue not only as an exchange of insights, perceptions, and ideas but also as a process of defining who we are in our interactive process. David Berlo (1960) helped to free us from the understanding that dialogue as a communicative action is unchanging by conceptualizing dialogue as a process, an active process that flows among persons, context and topic. Dean Barnlund (1970) also recognized that communication is a complex process that comprises cross-linking sociocultural and psychological influences, illumining interaction with demonstrable and hidden meaning.

Generally, in our day to day interactive communication, dialogue is assumed to be simply back and forth conversation that people engage in. However, this vernacular understanding misses the nuance of philosophical approaches to dialogue from whence the term in common usage sprang. Important to dialogue are the emerging processes which direct the encounter and embeds each other in the dialogic environment creating a common focus with diverse perspectives. Buber’s use of the term “common” which he borrows from Heracleitus, explains some of the dynamic processes that have emerged in interpersonal communication. “The Common” becomes a sustaining ground for communicators to interact even amid dialogic crisis, and it enables them, as Buber will further argue “to grasp and confirm as a spiritual reality their togetherness” [the conversationalists] which exemplifies the authenticity of the mutuality of human beings.

Dialogue thus is not simply a mere speech or a mere interaction between people but rather the dynamics permeating the dialogic encounter that demonstrates a qualitative encounter of people who are serious to meet each other on a narrow ridge. It is the between, which Buber claims, that defines the willingness of the participants in the conversation and their orientation
toward one another in a given historical moment. The historicality of the given moment driven
by the emergence of new ideas may also give the conversation a completely different nuance and
may result in bringing the dialogists closer together. Subsequently, it is plausible to assume that
in dialogic encounters, people are directed to particular processes and the quality of their
interaction is also transformed while the interaction gradually unfolds new chapters with new
perspectives.

Consequently, it is supposed that in dialogue, there is no certainty but surprises and
uncertainties because of the nature of the emergent processes of discovery in dialogic discourse.
The different forms of dialogic traditions that have emerged over the years have enlightened
scholars about the intricacies of the concept of dialogue, many scholars taking their bearing from
the work of Martin Buber, a philosophical anthropologist who has given us a deeper
understanding of the implications of dialogue.

According to Buber (1947/1965a), there are three different kinds of dialogue –
monologue, technical and genuine dialogue. He does not minimize any of these three forms of
dialogue but situates each within its own field of interaction. For Buber, genuine dialogue
consists in each participant directing the conversation toward the other by respecting the
“between,” or the unfolding event that happens in the space of interaction when the two persons
engage in human meeting, in the historical moment in an attempt to establish a relation with that
person. Technical dialogue focuses on one party claiming the ground of the conversation in order
to seek objective understanding. And there is monologue, which Buber considers as disguising
itself as dialogue, in which participants engaged in conversation direct the focus of attention to
themselves in an egocentric and hence unintelligible manner instead of listening to each other.
Yet, each of the participants engaged in a monologic encounter deceive themselves, believing
that they have engaged in a fruitful conversation (Buber, 1947/1965a). Since Buber’s influence on the field of dialogue, there have been other different traditions that have helped to deepen our understanding of the field. This chapter therefore will look at six of those traditions because they offer some insights to the Praxis Religious Dialogic paradigm.

I. Different Traditions of Dialogue

a. The Humanistic Tradition of Dialogue

Buber’s conceptions, according to other scholars (see Anderson, 1992, Arnett, 1981, 1986, 1989; Johannsen, 1971, Stewart, 1978) emerge from the foundations of humanistic approach to dialogue which conceptualizes dialogue as ‘a form of human meeting or relationship.’ The meeting of people to tease out their joys and grief subsequently culminates in a process that does not rest on the certainty of the ideas they bring to the conversation, but rather emerges as the conversation proceeds and takes them in a direction which is neither calibrated nor planned ahead. The process forges a communicative relationship in pursuance of an ongoing conversation. For Buber, therefore, the notion of dialogue is understood through terms like “unity of contraries,” “the between,” (of people) and the “narrow ridge” and is driven by a view of dialogue as a transactive process that concerns the “self” knowing the “Other” in contrast to the view that communication is a one-way directional process – a monologic process that seeks to control the recipient. According to Anderson, Arnett, and Cissna (1994), the work of Matson and Montagu, which emerges from the Buberian tradition, probably represents the earliest systematic view attempting to ground dialogue within communication or relationship. In this kind of communication, Buber notes that “there is genuine dialogue – no matter whether spoken or silent – where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present
and particular beings and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them.”

The context described here by Buber is different from mere transmission of messages without the expectation of genuine feedback. Matson and Montagu thus note that “dialogue is not so much a ‘phenomenological report of things as they are’ but a ‘task to be achieved.’” Here again, Buber moves away from the Cartesian monadic concept of the human person which focuses on the “I” (the subject) instead of the “Other.” The traditions of dialogue are thus understood from both the humanistic and scientific approaches, namely dialogue as human meeting or relationship, dialogue as a complex transactive process of human conversation (Markova & Foppa, 1990), dialogue as a cultural form of human knowing (M. Bakhtin, 1990/1984), and lastly, dialogue as a philosophy of textual understanding and interpretation (Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1982). I will explain briefly the implications of the various traditions by the authors.

Matson and Montagu viewed dialogue as a process of development of the “self,” knowing the “other,” and the formation of human relations in contrast to the monologic type that focuses on control of the dialogic situation based on a lineal transmission-focused process. With this perspective, the authors remove dialogue from a phenomenological standpoint of simply giving reports to a state of human interaction. It also implies multiple points of views to play with and off of one another which ties in with the ethnomethodological notion of dialogue.

b. The Ethnomethological Tradition of Dialogue

A second dialogic tradition described by the authors is the notion of the ethnomethodological dialogue. According to Markova and Foppa, dialogue is defined as “face-
to-face interaction between two or more persons using a system of signs.”

They therefore describe dialogue as “a result of interaction that take place within “a temporal-and spatial immediacy, between two or more participants who face each other and who are intentionally conscious of, and orientated towards, each other in an act of communication.” Markova and Foppa understand dialogue in terms of conversation by focusing on the micro level details of conversation that pinpoints to the way in which the turn-taking is arranged, and how breached conversational etiquette is repaired. However, it can be argued that the micro level details can divert the focus of the conversation. An important notion that can contribute to this tradition is to place the focus of the dialogue on the crisis that emerges from the conversation and which is driven by the interests of the participants and their respect for each other. The various conversational elements which the authors point out do not play a major role in ordinary human encounters except when controlled in an experimental environment.

c. The “Dialogism” Tradition of Dialogue (The Everyday Conversation)

The third dialogic tradition is represented by Bakhtin and other contemporary scholars like T. Todorov (1984), E. A. Schultz (1990), M. Holquist (1990), and T. Maranhao (1990). The term “dialogism” characterizes Bakhtin’s view and was first applied by Holquist in his translation of Bakhtin’s work. In the Bakhtinian tradition, dialogism embodies the cacophony of a conversational reverbrational process that takes into consideration the indeterminate nature of conversation. His application of the term connotes an attempt to differentiate himself from the Hegelian-Marxian dialectics of overly simplistic conception of contradiction which smothers lived experience and rests basically on a monologic strand in the single consciousness of synthesis that evolves from the struggle of thesis against antithesis. He uses the term dialogue
in several interrelated senses – everyday dialogue, actual dialogue, and real life dialogue — to refer to the everyday conversation in which two people speak with one another on different topics freely and without compulsion for whatever length of time. Bakhtin calls this kind of everyday conversation “the simplest and most classic form of speech communication.”

However, Bakhtin notes that dialogue can also be understood in the context of less immediate encounters, for instance, published papers by a number of authors on a particular topic. In this sphere of dialogue, one is not only dealing with physical encounter but with the incorporation of one’s utterance in another’s view expressed in writing or speech. He summarizes his view on this impersonal encounter by stating that “in any utterance there is a link in the chain of speech communication, which cannot be broken off from the preceding links because the utterance is also related to subsequent links in the chain of speech communication.”

Within this criticism of the Hegelian-Marxian notion of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, Bakhtin notes that it would be wrong to conceive of dialectics as a single continuum with a determinate character because ordinarily, in everyday conversation, participants do not engage in a formal format by stating their thesis, antithesis, and then their conclusion. Instead, the centripetal and centrifugal elements that permeate through the conversational utterances are “always constituted in the immediate context, thereby affording the voices concrete complexity and fluidity.” Bakhtin’s argument here connects well with what Buber has characterized as the crisis of the “between” in which participants engage each other in conversation in the historical moment without certainty of the outcome but endeavoring to engage their dialogic interaction in a mutual and respectful manner to come to new understandings.
In this perspective, therefore, one cannot reduce social life to mere simple single binary opposition because interaction is a cacophony of dialogic voices as they are constituted in concrete contexts. Thus, dialogic contradictions are not binary in process but multivocal in nature. Bakhtin’s notion of the multivocal dialogue raised the notion of the Hegelian-Marxian dialectics to a higher plane in the field of dialogue which invokes the concept of functional opposition.\textsuperscript{21} In a similar fashion, Praxis Religious Dialogue does not presuppose a systematic, evolutionary process toward a higher order of development. This model assumes the perpetual and immediate ongoing process of dialogue involving centripetal-centrifugal forces, rejecting all teleological elements and replacing them with dynamic processes for ongoing development of the life of the believing community in all its multivocality. The goal of the model is to help the community experience and share their Christian story without impediments. The ongoing process of the sharing of the Christian story is aided by the complex cross-linkage of the perspectives of the members in trying to understand and “praxialize” the content of their shared story. It also opens to them numerous horizons of significance as they attempt to situate their story within the historical moment.

d. The Hermeneutical and Textual Analytic Tradition of Dialogue

Hans Georg Gadamer approaches dialogue from hermeneutical and textual analysis. For him and other scholars primarily from European background, dialogue permeates through the relationship and the questioning we bring to a text. We engage in dialogue with a text in the hope of finding answers to our questions and by so doing, adopt a different position. Thus, Stewart (1986) and Warnke (1987) noted that Gadamer’s central work, \textit{Truth and Method}, is “an attempt to resuscitate a dialogic conception of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{22} Gadamer’s understanding evolves from a
linguistic characterization of “understanding” (verstehen), which cuts across the ordinary view of the English notion of “understand.” For Gadamer, knowledge is a process that develops through questioning from different positions that presumes a historical positioning and an immersion in a particular tradition. The closest relation to this process of understanding is dialogic conversation. Thus, Warnke notes:

Just as the conclusion of a genuine conversation is not the sole property of either one of the dialogue-partners, the outcome of Verstehen (to understand) is neither our own property, the result of the dominance of our prejudice, or the property of the tradition, the result of its dominance. Instead, just as in conversation, the result is a unity or argument that goes beyond the original position of the various participants; indeed, the consensus that emerges in understanding represents a new view and hence a new stage of the tradition.23

II. Dialogue and the Church

The different traditions presented by the various authors reveal the depth of the meaning of dialogue not as simply a uni-directional continuum but a process that helps us to understand our world, ourselves, and others. This process is foundational to the Buberian tradition out of which emerged the various interpretations. The Praxis Religious Dialogue paradigm also takes as its point of departure the complexities involved in dialogue and strives to relate to the various
traditions. It focuses on both the anthropologic and the transcendental dimensions of dialogue in which the world of the “I” as a subject renounces its subjectivity in favor of the world of the Other in order to become the accusative “me” in the dialogic process. This understanding is the Christian story which guides the lives of the community of believers.

Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett have presented some characterizations of dialogue\textsuperscript{18} which encompass a broader synthesis of dialogue’s basic characteristics. The authors offer an integrative presentation of dialogic features that most distinguish their standpoint from other types of communication. They articulate the features of dialogue to develop their analysis, so I will briefly present their views.

1. \textit{Immediacy of presence}. The immediacy of presence suggests both the “here” and “now” (\textit{hic et nunc}). Partners in conversation ought to recognize that the present is a gift and that it is neither past nor future. The “here” connotes the embeddedness of the partners in the space of the “now.” Dialogue therefore presumes that the partners create their here and now space and dabble in the process that is not scripted nor rehearsed conversations. Furthermore, if the partners are well versed in their discipline, it can contribute to the richness of the interaction.

2. \textit{Emergent unanticipated consequences}. Dialogue is a “sorting out” process in which partners cannot determine or predict the outcome. It is a process that depends on the dynamics of improvisation and thus independent of the will of the partners. There is a “between” (Buber 1965), a “presence,” that is involved and which contributes towards the
ongoing process. The emergence of unanticipated consequences provide the ambiguity that is essential to the dialogic process because it eliminates communicative technique that is prevalent in a technical dialogue

3. *Recognition of “strange otherness.”* When partners refuse to assume that they know fully well the thoughts, intentions, views, and behaviors of the other, dialogue emerges because in dialogue each partner must be allowed “to be” in order to become fully involved in the ongoing conversation so as to share their emerging perspectives without fear or timidity. There are times that these perspectives come out as strange shocking views that can startle other partners. However, such perspectival flexibility from partners must be seen as the part of crisis of dialogue in which the unexpected always contributes toward the storyline.

4. *Collaborative orientation.* Just as in conflict resolution situations, partners hold on to their positions, so also in dialogue partners approach each other with a sense of maintaining their positions as well as caring for the position and views of the other. The conversation can be heated to a point of upsetting each other, however the focus on the future of the other, the maintenance of the relationship, and the joint project of sense-making characterizing the ongoing conversation takes precedence over a primary concern of winning or losing. In dialogue, one may pursue his position in the hope of broadening the direction of the conversation but not with the intention of winning.

5. *Vulnerability.* In dialogue, one must be prepared to take risks by bearing
the soul to the scrutiny of the other and opening oneself to the ideas of the other in order to be prepared for a change. The unseen presence in dialogue drives each partner to encounter the other and to emerge from the conversation as different persons. The “ego” and the “protected ideas” give way to a “metanoia” (a complete orientation of the mind), while maintaining a sense of one’s position and care for the other.

6. *Mutual implication.* In dialogue, partners listen and respond through interpretation to the other. In this fashion, each partner not only discovers the other and his message but defines his “self” as well. Dialogue in this context becomes a process of interdependence, each partner constructing a new world through the a web of metaphorical significance constituting that person's own standpoint and discovering of new horizons through insights generated in the “between” of dialogue.

7. *Temporal flow.* Dialogue is immersed in historicity, and thus it has a past, present, and future and therefore presumes continuity.

8. Participants in dialogue therefore engage in a process that reveals the past and fills the present with a wide and deep experience of the participants. In this sphere of historicity, dialogue becomes a process in which no minute segment can be isolated, separated, or disregarded. In other words, dialogue cannot be “parsed.”

9. *Genuineness and authenticity.* The ground of dialogue is a presumption of honesty, and authenticity. The ground is devoid of a monadic, self-consciously strategic, fantasized, or deceptive position. Buber argued for “being,” for “presence,” rather than “seeming.” In Friedman’s words: “The person dominated
by being gives himself to the Other spontaneously without thinking about the image of himself awakened in the beholder. The seeming person, in contrast, is primarily concerned with what the Other thinks of him, and produces a look calculated to make himself appear “spontaneous,” “sincere,” or whatever he thinks will win the other’s approval.” 24

Dialogue, according to Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett, emerges as an issue regarding the quality of relationship between or among people. It reflects the attitudes that participants bring to an encounter, the way they share their intentions, act toward each other and how they perceive the consequences of their interaction. What is at stake here is not so much what participants talk about during their encounter but the ethical ground from which and by which they continue the conversation in their conversation. The ethical issues are significant in the encounter because they are driven by not what I can get out of the encounter but how much I can offer through listening, responding, sharing of insights and above all giving the care that the other participants need. Further, the ethical issues are propelled by a sense of respect and dignity that emerge from the way participants receive and share their insights.

The preceding material offers a way to conceptualize dialogue for the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue. Praxis Religious Dialogue is driven by a sense of respect for and the dignity of the human person whose opinions and insights are punctuated with social, cultural, traditional and religious beliefs. Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks to move away from a sense of “self” that assumes a transcendent posture to a position of service. The paradigm sees the “self” as a social construction entity that only exists in so far as there is a community to help it define itself. In this fashion, the self needs what Mead (1934) termed as “significant others” – from our parents to a
larger community in society to a religious community. Praxis Religious Dialogic paradigm rejects the Cartesian notion of the monadic “I” and the individual conception of the self as the superior “I.” In the religious community, the self annihilates itself in order to become the “me” which stands as the accusative in order for the other to “be.” Friedman has argued in this fashion by noting that “we become ourselves with one another,” (partnership in existence) and he paradoxically states that “we only know ourselves when we know ourselves in responding to others.”

Friedman’s notion articulates the essence of community and the notion of community is significant in the Praxis Religious Dialogue because it encourages sincere concern for the other. It affirms what Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the theologian martyred by the third Reich, contended in Life Together, that it is possible to use a community solely to promote a single individual or group’s own good and growth, ignoring the interdependent importance of community. Within the Church, there is a seeming commitment to equate community with a warm psychological feeling of “all is well” as long as one holds fast to the doctrinal teachings without questioning.

Buber and Bonhoeffer remind us of the importance of each member in the community committing himself to the common task of becoming his brother’s keeper. Buber especially reminds us when he described his view of community as not based on feelings shared between persons but rather the willingness to participate in a common story which for the Christian is the biblical narrative. Buber underscores his tenacious position of the Interhuman when he notes that in any genuine encounter, there is a common story to remind us of our capacity for both good and evil and therefore we may not always be able to forget and forgive, but as we bring ourselves to grapple with the situation that both good and evil walk in the hearts of all people, we can, with genuine empathy, identify with others mistakes.
biblical story of forgiving one’s brother seventy-seven times (Mt.18: 21-22). The task the Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks to encourage and accomplish is to remind the Church that through genuine dialogue, we tame the beast in each of us in order to open doors of dialogue among ourselves and our brothers of other faith traditions without a standpoint of being sole possessors of the truth because true dialogue is always a reminder of feebleness in the presence of the Other whose presence beckons us to submission.

In the same context, Paolo Freire reminds us that unless a story is supported by actions, it remains dead, and a story becomes worthy of participation when people live what is spoken. Words without the congruence of praxis only invite lives of lies and deception, not a community or dialogue between people. He thus argues that community is nourished by characters willing to tell a story that they attempt to live, simultaneously inviting others to continue to shape the story and the practical life of the community. The Praxis Religious Dialogue invites the Church to understand the call to renewal as a call to reopen its Christian story, providing the means to acknowledge the blunders of each other as part of an ongoing grace bestowed to the Church for the transformation of the members of the community, which we call sensus fidelium, and which leads the community to working for “our good and the good of all the Church.”

III. The Self in Community

The self cannot define itself in isolation, but in community, and a religious community is such that it must orient itself toward the fulfillment of the self through a religious experience that nurtures it to become itself by dying to the “self.” Abraham Kaplan has notes in this vein

When people are in communion, when they are in this narrow sense
really communicating with one another, the content of what is being communicated does not exit prior to and independently of that particular context. There is no message, except in a post-hoc reconstruction, which is fixed and complete beforehand. If I am really talking with you, I have nothing to say, what I say arises as you and I genuinely relate to one another. I do not know beforehand who I will be, because I am open to you just as you are open to me. This, I think, is what makes growth possible among human beings, and why it seems to me impossible really to teach unless you are learning; why you cannot really talk unless you are listening. You are listening not only to the other, you are listening to yourself. Indeed, in a fundamental sense – I would say in quite a literal sense – self and other are now so intertwined that we need new conceptual frameworks, new categories to describe what is happening.\(^{32}\)

The self thus grows out of communitarian experience and defines itself through its interaction with other community members. As Kaplan puts it in the quotation above, we don’t know who we are and what we will become until we are involved in interpersonal relationships. Unfortunately, in some instances, we set out to accomplish a goal or at times to engage in “image control” or “impression management,”\(^{33}\) a scenario that permeates in some cases the interactive communicative processes in the Church whereby the image control takes precedence over listening, responding, caring, and nurturing. By and large, Praxis Religious Dialogic calls for an
ongoing openness, presence, and listening to the Other in order to include the Other in the conversation. The model also encourages a conversation from which the “self” and the “other” are mutually intertwined in the dialogic process in order that they can pursue the virtues inscribed in the Christian story and allow them on a journey that seeks to generate an irrevocable life change.

Further, the model departs from the Rogerian notion of centering life on the self which, according to Rogers, defines the teleological interpretation of life of the individual. Carl Rogers’s work makes the “self” the center of making sense of one’s life. His interpretive focus of life is centered on the final interpreter, the individual. Rogers explains that the process of “nonjudgmental reflection,”34 letting another person hear his own words, culminates in that person’s making sense of events independently. Howard Kirschenbaum in On Becoming Carl Rogers has argued:

Roger’s theory was also a “self theory,” the self being one very important part of a person’s phenomenal field. Here he followed a recent tradition in psychology, a relatively new school of thought, which regarded the self as the “organizing and creative and adaptive cope of personality” which was most influential in determining a person’s behavior. For Rogers the self was “the organized, consistent conceptual gestalt” composed of perceptions of the characteristics of the “I” or “me” and the perceptions of the relations of the “I” or “me” to others and to various aspects of life, together with the values attached to their perceptions.35
Inherent in Rogers’s notion is also the idea of freedom and change based on trustworthiness found in loving relationships.\textsuperscript{36}

For him, the “self” is not a set of a priori values, but a movement away from being \textit{The Organizing Man} whose sole purpose in life is to obey the commands and expectations of the others, to please others, and to be willing to follow directions of others. “To be what he is, this is the path of life which he appears to value most highly, when he is free to move in any direction. It is not simply an intellectual value choice but seems to be the best description of the gripping, tentative, uncertain behaviors by which he moves exploringly toward what he wants to be.”\textsuperscript{37}

Roger’s intention, at least it can be assumed, was to depart from the failing institutional behaviors of compulsion and commands and listen to the self. Rogers view pointed to a self concerned with the other but within certain limits which is sensitive to the other. He points us to a direction of the good innate in the human person which is driven by the wisdom of the organism.\textsuperscript{38} He argues that a good self seeks connection, relationship – not a domination of another – and pointed out that if one can get a patient to reach down into his depths, he will discover a nature that is social constructive, and unqualifiedly good.\textsuperscript{39} At the foundation of Rogers’ work is that within a good interpersonal relationship, is inherently a relationship-centered communication which can be passed on to others.

Rogers’s emphasis on the goodness inherent in the human being removes the limits that is usually placed on the “self” of others and points us to the direction of dialogic model in which the attitude of caring, nurturing, and listening becomes essential components in relationships. It also energizes people in community to know that sharing in one’s cultural stories should in no way place limits or constraints on them but should foster a greater participation in advancing the
story through their own self-propelled construction of reality. The Praxis Religious Dialogue paradigm invites the Church in consonance with the Second Vatican Council’s call to aggiornamento to allow individual Christian to become part of the Christian construction of reality embedded in the Christian story exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan which places no limits on the wounded but opens a horizon of possibilities for the participants in the story to engage each other in dialogue through mutual acceptance and listening. This viewpoint is essential to developing the Christian narrative to embrace freedom of the mind and of the self in a more genuine and responsible manner. Without this orientation, the Christian story remains unyielding and inflexible to members of the believing community. The result could be selective adherence to parts of the narrative structure while ignoring others due to a sense of disconnection from lack of participative engagement in the complete story.

The Church over the years has internalized in its narrative and functional structure some inflexibility that places constraints on the developments of freedom of members in constructing their religious social reality, especially in the area of dialogue, because it refused to place the Christian story within the historical moment. The historical traditions which the Church embodied in its structures helped to maintain a parochial and individualistic view of the human person and his surroundings that led to the concern for one’s self so different from the expansion given to it by Rogers. In fact, Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett have noted that the value of individualism and its interactional extension, conversational narcissism, has tended to create what Edward Sampson has considered “self-contained individualism,” which sees only sharp, dichotomized boundaries between self and what is not-self, and locating control within and over other persons while excluding others from the conceived region called the “self.” This kind of a 16th - 19th century individualism that prevails mainly in the western developed nations has
influenced the Church in its conceptions of the “other” and especially its structure. Sampson offers another side of the self-contained self, which is “ensembled individualism,” characterized by (a) a more fluid boundaries between self and other; (b) thinking of control as residing in a field of forces that includes but extends beyond the self; and (c) including other persons within the self. Sampson’s view of “ensembled individualism” is considered in relation to Noddings’s work on caring. Sampson notes:

She offered a perspective on helping others based on a definition of self-in-relation . . . Who I am is defined in and through my relations with others; I am completed through these relations and do not exist apart from them. . . . When self is defined in relation, inclusive of others in its very definition, there is no fully separate self whose interests do not of necessity include others.

When the self is situated within a larger purview, it moves away from the concept of individualism as argued from the Cartesian understanding of the human person and it embodies within itself an ethic of reaching out to the other.

While the Praxis Religious Dialogue does not neglect the “self-contained individualism" concept, it concerns itself with the way individualism has penetrated through the relational plane in the Church and which propelled Vatican II to recapture the possibilities of dialogue in relationship and community (communio fidelium). The self-contained individualism has developed into a culture of religious narcissism which describes the ways Christians act toward
each other even in ordinary discussion of religious and secular topics. One can cite several instances about how a single doctrinal pronouncement can split the believing community into several different groups that struggle to construct meaningful view of such pronouncement. For instance, the Church’s stance on abortion has created such an enormous split within the Church to the point that members have constructed different views acceptable to them in their various cultures. In the United States, there are two viewpoints, the pro lifers and the pro choicers. One can be a “pro life” adherent regarding the unborn and support capital punishment, which requires death for certain adults, and still receive Holy communion, while a “pro choice” adherent who requests the issue to be left to the concerned families can be denied Holy Communion. In this example, the standpoint of the Church seems to extend to an unborn child but stops short of the victim whose goes to the gas chamber because he/she is found guilty by law to die.

While I do not want to get deeper into this complex issue, it is important to note that the issue is a dialogic issue and must be understood as pertaining to the human person whose very existence within a particular culture (in this instance in a democratic culture that seeks to emphasize the freedom of the human person) implies the ability to engage in a religious dialogue in order to pursue an endless conversation on the issue. It implies that issues do not have simple answers but involve deep texture and multiple standpoints that, when engaged seriously by the Church, may open doors of understanding and enrich the Church’s own standpoint. As Rogers articulated, “Communication needs a human face.” His call to “self” that places no limitations on the other breaks the confines of narrative systems that fail to reach out to the Other. Rogers’s call also points the Church in the direction of allowing its members to be responders and contributors in the ecclesial dialogue that affects their very lives rather than being simply “yes” believers whose sole importance is receiving without offering dialogic feedback.
Christopher Lasch, arguing from a psychodynamic and economic view, has argued that narcissism results from “a way of life that is dying – the culture of competitive individualism,” and in its normal forms, “appears realistically to represent the best way of coping with the tensions and anxieties of modern life, and the prevailing social conditions therefore tend to bring out narcissistic traits that are present, in varying degrees, in everyone.” Lasch’s view is further explicated by Vangelisti et al. when they identified four ways in which narcissistic tendencies are displayed in conversation. They note:

(a) an inflated self-importance that results in a self-absorption and self-admiration that others often consider arrogant and that denies a need for other people;
(b) exploitation of others is sought through strategies of deceit or manipulation
(c) exhibitionism that makes oneself the constant center of attention; and
(d) impersonal relationships result from the tendencies to avoid intimate contact and to protect personal space.

Vangelisti et al. argue that these narcissistic tendencies affect dialogue because a skillful conversationalist can manipulate the relationship to the point that it turns the conversation upside down and ruins the dialogic relationship. Further, a conversational narcissist avoids “support responses” that assist the face of the other and adopts “shift responses” which Charles Derber describes as intent to shift the attention of the conversation to oneself. In most cases, shift responses underutilize the topic of the conversation thus making the conversation entirely irrelevant to the other partner. Jurgen Ruesch calls this kind of passive conversation action a “tangential response,” that is, when one responds to the insignificant aspect of what the other is saying in the conversation and moves it away from the other to focus on himself.
Cissna and Sieburg both have observed that these kinds of passive tangential shift-responses patterns are called disconfirming and more specifically disqualifying. These observations have been further explained by Lasch pointing out that conversational narcissism is used in many bureaucratic institutions where emphasis is placed on the manipulation of interpersonal relations and discourages the formation of deep personal attachment.

Thus, Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks to encourage the Church to come to terms with its nature as a nurturing, liberating, and compassionate Church that seeks to satisfy human need because dialogue is a vital component of the biblical communication process. Whenever there is a narcissistic agreement to whatever a superior may say or demand, dialogue suffers a derailment and thus destroys any healthy relationship that could be built and developed. A narcissistic agreement also ends up as a “technique,” a “standard method” that can be learned and used as a recipe for admiration and acceptance. A situation of this nature becomes what the biblical writers have often called a type of hypocrisy. Invariably, such behavioral patterns tend to become repetitive, which Kaplan terms the “law of the instrument,” a notion that permeates through various religions that calls for assent to all doctrinal formulations without dialogue. Technique is a good skill to have but does not assist dialogue, which proceeds without certainty of the outcome, though from definite positions. It has the capacity to erode the respect we owe to each other.

In Bridges Not Walls, John Stewart contrasts utilitarian and ontological ways of thinking about interpersonal communication. If interpersonal communication is considered an instrumental or as a set of techniques, Stewart suggests, we are likely to ask what we can do with it, what rules govern its use, and how we can measure our success in accomplishing certain outcomes. However, if interpersonal communication is viewed ontologically, then we are likely
to be led in looking at a relationship between self and other that is created in and through communication. Buber and Friedman call this the *between* (1965a), Bakhtin calls it *answerability* (1984), Levinas (1989) terms it the *trace* or the *presence*, and Lonergan (1968) calls it a *letting go of oneself to fall in love*, and this is what Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks to advance in the in the Church. As a community of believers with a common hope guided by a common biblical narrative, our sense of dialogue cannot permit a dialogue driven by any type of utilitarianism. Rather, our sense of dialogic community ought to come from an ontological foundation which is also the goal of the proclamation of the Gospel – to bring wholeness to the other through our mutual interaction based on a genuine motivation to live the gospel. This notion brings into play the significance of the idea of confirmation and disconfirmation in dialogue.

**IV. Confirmation and Disconfirmation in Dialogue**

In dialogue, there is always a middle ground created by virtue of the partners’ encounter of each other. The middle ground has been defined by Buber as the *between* and is called by Levinas the *face*. For Buber, the *between* is the unseen third entity in the discourse that requires the partners to be engaged in the dialogue. According to Loraine Halfen Zephyr (1982), the third entity is like a “spiritual child” that is produced by the self and other, and, like a physical child, it depends on its parents yet is separated from them and their efforts to control it. Dialogue is richer still than this description. The *between* constitutes a dialogic place in a way that it transcends the understanding of being seen as a spiritual child. The *between* embraces a place in the dialogue and constitutes spiritual essence that drives the dialogue. Levinas, in a metaphysical sense, refers to this third entity as the *face*, that is, an “absolute experience” that is not a disclosure “but revelation.” He then notes that the face (presence) is “a living presence; it is expression, . . . the
face speaks . . . and the life of expression consists in undoing the form in which the existent, exposed as a theme, is thereby dissimulated.\textsuperscript{59}

Thus, the third entity, the \textit{between} within any dialogic encounter, constitutes the driving force in the dialogic process. Buber, in this regard, noted that “a society may be termed human in the measure to which its members confirm one another” and “actual humanity exists only where this capacity unfolds.”\textsuperscript{60} Buber’s notion is driven by a sense of ontological meaning that calls forth the individual to define his being in the depth of his life and the life of the other. Confirmation, therefore, calls for a real sacrifice in recognizing the Other as Other.

However, there is another side of confirmation. Cissna and Sieburg (1981) argue that confirmation involves a process through which people are “endorsed” by others, that is, they are recognized and acknowledged either for their heroic endeavors, or simply for their positive attitude towards a situation.\textsuperscript{61} Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett have argued that there are other specific ways of confirming a person, which can be through relationship or situation.\textsuperscript{62} Overall, confirmation recognizes the other’s existence, and “acknowledges a relationship of affiliation with the other, expresses awareness of the worth or significance of the other, and accepts or endorses the validity of the other’s experience. On the other side of the plane is also disconfirmation, which Friedman asserts as an impairment of one’s basic trust that can result in psychopathology.\textsuperscript{63}

The notion of Friedman concerning disconfirmation is a further development in the work of Buber on confirmation. According to Friedman, there are situations in which someone does something with an expectation of being confirmed by another in a relationship either in a family setting or in a relationship between master-servant, a superior and a subordinate. Such behaviors are viewed as having “strings attached.” In these situations, as a person develops the self to
conform to the demand of the other in an expectation for a return, the likelihood of dialogue pales in the relationship into simply a superior-subordinate relationship. The intrinsic value of dialogue vanishes and information becomes a uni-directional process. Another view of disconfirmation is when one receives confirmation from another for the performance of a behavior or role. This situation will be different from when confirmation is recognized and responded to in a deeper level. According to Friedman, there is always a tension between the behavior performed with an expectation for something and that which is recognized and responded to in a sincere manner. Friedman called this tension “social role” and “personal calling.”

In the performance of our social roles, we always focus on how we are perceived by others, and on account of this awareness, we are either cautious or overcautious. The tension existing within these roles has always been difficult to define. Buber offers an explanation of this kind of behavior, noting that “. . . one proceeds from what one really is, the other from what one wishes to seem. In general, the two are found mixed together.” Buber explains further that the difference between a performativity of something simply for the enlargement of one’s image, appearance, look or glance, is termed as “seeming,” whereas in the other, one performs something from his being, without being influenced by any thought of the idea of his personhood, and without an expectation of approbation from the other. This kind of attitude is a “genuine seeming” in the interhuman encounter. The opposite conjures falsity and lie because something is performed with an expectation of something that only rests on existence itself. Buber asserts that “There are times when a man, to satisfy some stale conceit, forfeits the great chance of a true happening between I and Thou.” Friedman calls environment of genuineness and falsity “the essential problematic of the sphere of the between.” As Buber and Friedman
explain, the realm of seeming is marked by how one wants to appear to the other, “producing a look calculated to win the other’s approval, while in the genuine realm, one gives one’s self spontaneously to the other and without straining for some particular appearance.” Seeming originates, according to Friedman, in our need to be confirmed and in our “desire to be confirmed falsely rather than not to be confirmed at all.”

The authors agree that this kind of pseudoconfirmation in which we confirm or are confirmed as a fiction does not contribute to genuine dialogue or to the development of self and of other as unique human beings. Despite these risks, as Laing argues, the “ideal possibility is often realized,” because human beings have the capacity to nurture healthy relationships. Thus, confirmation is essential to dialogue but it must be exercised with care and must emanate from a genuine, healthy ground.

V. The Search for Genuine Dialogue

The search for genuine dialogue in the Church begins with acceptance and care coupled with nurturing of the other within the larger community of believers. There is, of course, a recognition of the essential problematic nature of the sphere of the “between” among bishops, priests/religious, and the laity. This problem is likely to be prevalent among bishops, their priests, and religious who, by nature of their positions, may vie for positions through the realm of “seeming” which proceeds from an appearance that is invariably calculated to win approval. The explanation by Buber, Friedman, and other scholars demonstrates the potential for a severe deficit of genuineness in the Church based on false appearances maintained in order to be confirmed by a superior.
The recent pedophilia crisis in the Church may be indicative of a Church that is slowly drifting away from the opportunity offered by Vatican II to engage the genuine task of meeting the other “in the extremes on the narrow ridge” so as to discover the *between* that is foundational to a genuine dialogue. In a recent article by Tom Roberts that appeared in the *National Catholic Reporter*, the author revealed that the abuse of children by priests and bishops was reported by a Dominican priest, Fr. Thomas Doyle to the hierarchy of the Church in the United States but his report was received with the cold shoulder until the crisis became a national concern. Doyle has noted

In 1999, some 15 years after he had first learned of the growing crisis and two years before the scandal exploded anew in Boston, Doyle wrote in The Irish Times, as quoted in Vows of Silence, "Priests express their embarrassment to appear in public dressed in clerical garb. The Pope is “personally and profoundly” afflicted and worries that the acts of the abusers will taint all men of the cloth. The truth is that most people could care less about their pain and embarrassment.... Something is wrong and that wrong can’t be sandpapered away by emotional expressions of personal hurt or self-righteous expressions of rage at the abusers. It is precisely this clerical narcissism that produced the crisis in the first place.” Clerical narcissism might be the best phrase for describing the career of Maciel, who swore to secrecy those he allegedly abused and who frightened young doubters in his ranks with the mantra, “Lost vocation, sure damnation.”
The pedophilia crisis in the Church is indicative of the constant secrecy that is assumed to prevail in the corridors of the Church. The article emphasizes that “. . . that no matter how many new reports and norms are issued, no matter how many episcopal apologies are stacked up amid the wreckage of the crisis, the only real way out of the current mess is to institute bold new mechanisms for establishing transparency and for holding Church leadership accountable.”

Praxis Religious Dialogue calls for transparency in any dialogic setting in order to embrace the challenges of the between that negates the seeming which runs the risk of being embraced by superiors who are charged with overseeing others. The paradigm strives for a discovery of the presence of the other that goes beyond the existence itself because that is what the Gospel implies that the Church: “Simon, Simon! Look, Satan has got his wish to sift you all like wheat; but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail, and once you have recovered, you in turn must strengthen [confirm] your brothers” (Lk. 22: 32). The Praxis Religious Dialogic model encourages the Church to communicate the Gospel by dialoguing with members and members of other faith traditions as what they are and not what they seem to be. A genuine Praxis Religious Dialogue does not depend on allowing oneself to go before the other but allows the other a share in the being of what the Church is, which in the Catholic sense, is seen in the superiors and in their communication. This kind of communication is necessary for the development of the interhuman which is foundational to the nature of the Church because we are called to be “of one mind and heart” (Acts 2: 13). A Praxis Religious Dialogue approach further recognizes the crisis inherent in the between of all believers. However, by freeing members from unreflective application and utilization of the canonical laws, the Church would be pursuing the aggiornamento process set in motion by the Second Vatican Council. As Buber points out to us “If a presupposition of human life in primeval times is given in man’s walking
upright, the fulfillment of human life can only come through the soul’s walking upright, through the great uprightness which is not tempted by any seeming because it has conquered all semblance.”

Further, dialogue presupposes openness in the encounter which admits the historicality of the dialogic process while avoiding the seeming that permeates the Church’s view of diplomacy. By refusing to dialogue with members in the Church on crucial issues, the Church forfeits its role as “mother of all” and takes on what Buber describes as a “falsity and lie.” By remaining silent and closed, the Church may deny a fundamental aspect of human existence. Buber underscores the “seeming” posture of the Church in “shutting the door” to members who would like to dialogue with authorities in his suggestion that such behavior would amount only to the satisfaction of some stale conceit and “forfeits the great chance of a true happening between I and Thou.”

The different traditions of dialogue are therefore necessary for any genuine and transparent dialogue as they call for partners in dialogue to approach each other with both dependent and independent mind while regarding each other as he or she is. The traditions further help to point the Church to the direction of accepting its unique position in the world and the need to be human in its position toward members and the world because it is in being human that we understand the human person in his strengths and weakness. The humanistic, ethnomethological, dialogism based, and the hermeneutical approaches to dialogue are indicative of the complexity of dialogue. Each call for an awareness of the essential difference of each person in conversation with another and the initiative to accept the other in his uniqueness so that the engagement of dialogue becomes transparent. Each understands engagement in dialogue to begin with humility in order to accept the other as the person he is and not what the other wants
him to be. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model therefore invites the Church to accept dialogue from a genuine conviction of its value and strive to process it in a way that denounces opposition to other views.

Further, the Praxis Religious Dialogue approach encourages the Church to dialogue out of sincere conviction by affirming the other in conversation even in times when it is difficult to face him. As Buber argues: “I confirm him who is opposed to me as him who is over against me. I confirm him as a creature and as a creation. . . .but if I thus give to the other who confronts me his legitimate standing as a man with whom I am ready to enter into dialogue, then I may trust him and suppose him to be also ready to deal with me as his partner.”74 The Praxis Religious Dialogue model thus calls on the Church to fulfill the vision of the Second Vatican Council in its call to dialogue with the *communio fidelium* and other faith traditions by being ready to face the crisis of the between presented to it as the unseen presence in order to enter into a deep religious experience of conversion so that the Church can continue in its struggle to fall in love with God and be able to fulfill the message entrusted to it with humility because it bears the sufferings of the people it serves. “Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing . . .” (Is. 53: 4ff).
ENDNOTES


5 Ibid.


8 Ibid. p. 116.

9 Ibid. p. 19.


18 Ibid. p. 147.

19 Ibid. p. 147.


21 Ibid. p. 147-148


28 See. M. Buber, “Genuine Dialogue and the Possibilities of Peace.” A speech given in Germany in 1953, less than a decade after the Holocaust and World War II.
29 See Buber’s speech on the Holocaust.


See his other works on *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on transforming education* with I. Shor. (Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1987).

31 Ibid.


46. Ibid. p. 50.


48. C. Derber, *The pursuit of attention: Power and individualism in everyday life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 5-10. Derber’s work depicts what takes place everyday in ordinary conversation where participants often engage in narcissistic behavior by constantly shifting the attention and focus of the conversation to themselves in order to thrust some form of ego into the conversation.


53. Ibid. p. 19.


58 Ibid. p. 66

59 Ibid. p. 66.


64 Ibid. p. 51-62.


66 Ibid. p. 66-67.


http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1141/is_14_40/ai/113338218

71 Ibid.


74 Ibid. p. 70.
Chapter 6

Implications of the Typology of Dialogue for the Church

I. The Metaphor of the “Between”
   a) The “Between and the Presence of the Other
   b) Dialogue as a Challenge for the Church in its Missionary Activities

II. The Significance of Dialogization for the Church
   a) Modality of Dialogue in the Church
   b) The Preconciliar Church’s Vision of the Church
   c) The Nature of the Church as Dialogic
   d) The Significance of the Biblical Narratives as Hermeneutics of Dialogue

III. Praxis Religious Dialogue as Essential to the Missionary Activities of the Church and the Value of the Praxis Religious Dialogue

In this chapter, I intend to share some of the perspectives of other scholars (Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Calvin O. Schrag, and John Stewart) whose scholarly work have contributed toward the understanding in the field of dialogue. Buber’s notion of the “between,” Levinas’ conception of responsibility, and Gadamer’s view of interpretive hermeneutics facilitate the assumptions underlying the Praxis Religious Dialogue, which seeks to encourage the Church to abundantly expound the notion of dialogue as enunciated by the Second Vatican Council in its deliberations.
I. The Metaphor of the “Between”

The metaphor of the *between* can be interpreted as the locale within which the relationship that calls for both “self” and “other” takes place. Authors have interpreted the concept of the *between* from different perspectives (Buber & Friedman, 1965; Zephyr, 1982; Stewart, 1990). Buber and Friedman, however, ground the concept in relationships through which participants share their existential being with one another. The concept of the *between* becomes meaningful primarily from one’s own personal view of the world and the historicality in which one encounters the world. The ontological understanding of the between is therefore situated within an *encounter* where one person turns to another being as another. Buber explains the concept of the between:

The fundamental fact of human existence is neither the individual as such nor the aggregate as such. Each, considered by itself, is a mighty abstraction. . . . the fundamental fact of human existence is . . . rooted in one being turning to another as another, as this particular other being, in order to communicate with it in a sphere which is common to them but which reaches out beyond the special sphere of each. I call this sphere, which is established with the existence of man as man but which is conceptually still uncomprehended, sphere of the “between.” . . . This is where the genuine third alternative must begin.¹
Buber interprets the concept of the “between” a third entity that is that is not situated within the relations but as it is customary understood but rather between the partners.

The “between,” according to Buber, does not exist between the partners as an auxiliary, an instrument constructed to aid the conversation but as the bearer of takes place between them. Further, the metaphor of the “between” exists always and it is “re-constructed in accordance with men’s meetings with one another, hence what is experience has been annexed naturally to the continuous elements, the soul and its world. His understanding of the horizon of the concept evolves from his experience of an embedded individualism of Western culture that seeks to understand the human person as an aggregate of parts that can be dealt with in compartmentalized categories. Buber moves away from this notion and seeks an ontological ground that defines the human person as a being whose existence is not holistic unless he encounters and experiences the Other. Underscoring Buber’s ontological understanding of the “between” are the following implications. First, the “between” is ontological which as human beings, enables us to congregate and intermingle with others in order to experience our humanness. Second, the “between” implies the third entity or (a tripartite metaphor) that is driven by a communicative life immersed in relations which is interdependent not only on self but also on others. This notion spells out the fact that life is a communicative event and can only be recognized in this way because it is a call to participation. Third, the “between” is a phenomenological space that is available in dialogue through an invitation and not something that is demanded. Last, the “between” implies also that life is a story that is to be lived not as individuals but as a community of beings whose existence is not inscribed solely in dependency but also in interdependence.
The metaphor of the “between” therefore becomes a significant concept for Buber in human relationships. It is an intangible element whose very presence is tied to the ground on which relationships take place. Buber analogizes the concept of the “between” arguing that man usually sets at a distance the things that he uses and by so doing allows their independence. Yet, man uses those things and let them function for him as they bear his imprint. The principle that Buber enunciates here is that man has the capacity and the desire to enter into personal relations with things and has the ability to imprint his character on them – to use them and even to possess them with a purpose of letting them become different by imparting to them his imprint.

However, in society, man sets himself at a distance from other men in order to make them independent, allowing them to move freely in their environment so that he can enter into relationship with them. As he notes, “Man exists anthropologically not in his isolation, but in the completeness of the relation between man and man; what humanity is can be properly grasped only in vital reciprocity.” According to Buber, the wish of man living in independence is twofold: namely to be confirmed as what he is, even as what he can become, by men, and second, the innate capacity in man to confirm his fellow man. If there are difficulties in confirming one another, it is simply because man has not tapped from the deep recesses of this innate capacity of confirmation and it only points to man’s weakness. The essence of confirmation attains its significance only when a man asserts it with devotion while focusing on assisting the other in “becoming” man, “he receives him as his partner, and that means that he confirms this other being, so far as it is for him to confirm.” In “becoming” an object or a man attains an independence that makes the object or the man autonomous in either its region or in his environment. Thus Buber argues:
Art is neither the impression of natural objectivity nor the expression of spiritual subjectivity, but it is the work and witness of the relation between the substantia [substance] humana and the substantia rerum [things]; it is the realm of “the between” that has become a form.\textsuperscript{13}

Buber’s understanding of the “between” is established in the relationship that is constituted through man’s relations with other men or other inanimate objects. The capacity to relate to things is ingrained in man giving him the ability to reduce things to his own functional gain and empowering those things to bear his purpose. Kenneth Burke has argued in similar fashion but with a slight twist in emphasis that “man is a symbol using specie,”\textsuperscript{14} capable of naming things and using them for his purpose. He notes that man constructs symbolic models to be used as a way to communicate and the structural model becomes a medium for him to function by relating to others or things through communication. In this functional process, man dramatizes his motives through the structure of his dramatic act which, according to Burke, is composed of five terms, namely, the Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose. He argues

In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the act (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what kind of person (agent) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (agency), and the purpose.\textsuperscript{15}
For Burke, these dramatic acts bring order in human relationships through his four basic motives that arise from human communication – Guilt, Redemption, Hierarchy, and Victimage – and these four motives serve as keys to the general grand design of all human motivation because they supplement and modify men’s purely natural or biological inclinations. Thus, for Buber, the whole notion of the *between* is grounded in our desire to allow others to be independent through our association with them and through such relationships immerse ourselves in a process of confirming them. The confirmation does not mean approval but by accepting him as my partner in genuine dialogue, I have in this way affirmed him as a person.

### a. The “Between” and the Presence of the Other

Man’s relationship in the sphere of the ‘between’ attains its finality in what Buber calls “making present” (expressed in German as *vergegenwärtigung*, “present” or ”presence”). Buber uses it in the literal sense of “making present” in an event. The concept of “making present” transcends the idea of phenomenon for it connotes the idea of being able to hold something directly before one’s soul and making it a reality within a historical moment. This presence also means that one has the capacity to “imagine” – imagining to oneself what another man is in a particular given moment through the senses of feeling, wishing, perceiving, thinking. Buber explains the imagination as that of the character of an act of the will added to one’s imagination of the other’s act of will and so on.

Emerging from an anthropological school of thought, Buber situates the act of making present in the ontological reality of relationship in which other people are no more considered or imagined as detached content or component of the environment but as others in their self-being.
just as I am. The fullness of the other is made present to me only in so far as the other person is
allowed to become a self with me not in the psychological sense but in the real ontological sense
and further letting the other know that I do allow him to be his through the acknowledgement of
his presence. Buber expresses the innermost being of a person is not fulfilled in living for
himself but “in relation between the one and the other, between men, that is, preeminently in the
mutuality of the making present – in the making present of another self and in the knowledge
that one is made present in his own self by the other – together with the mutuality of acceptance,
of affirmation and confirmation.”

In this context, it is clear that human beings wish to be confirmed in their being by
another man and wishes also to have a presence in the being of another. This conception of
human being is what we are made to be ontologically, and that is what the story of the Good
Samaritan teaches – that even in our abysmal state of being, we need confirmation that comes
out of compassion in order ‘to be’ so that one may fulfill one’s full existence as men Buber
acknowledges this essential dimension of our existence, asserting:

Sent forth from the natural domain of species into the
hazard of the solitary category, surrounded by the air
of a chaos that came into being with him, secretly and
bashful he watches for a “Yes” that allows him to be and
can come to him only from one human person to another.
It is from one man to another that the heavenly bread of
self-being is passed.
Thus, Buber’s view of dialogue is the giving of attention to what emerges “between” participants in conversation. Buber’s paradigm of dialogue focuses on life and the practical details of everyday activities in which participants engage in human crisis and interactions, sorting out their pain and seeking mutual support (1966). Further, if genuine dialogue is to happen, there is a demand that everyone gets involve and bring himself to it willingly. His philosophy of communication is the crisis that gives us the power to hope – the late healing and salvation in the face of impending catastrophe. It is the power of turning that changes the situation and which never reveals itself outside of crisis. It is through the dialectics of human interaction that Buber places dialogue:

And yet this must be said again and again, it is just the depth of the crisis that empowers us to hope. Let us dare to grasp the situation with that great realism that surveys all the definable realities of public life, of which, indeed, public life appears to be composed, but is also aware of what is most real of all, albeit moving secretly in the depths – the late healing and salvation in the face of impending ruin. 22

The challenge of dialogue for Buber is situated in the confrontation of the crisis and finding solutions rather than pretending that there is no such crisis. His understanding of dialogue is therefore contrary to the notion of narcissistic living in our postmodern times where the notion of narcissism seems to be adored through emotivism. Buber calls for openness to the
other in the conversation and draws our attention to the “between” where the focus of attention between persons guides the conversation rather than being focused on oneself. The model of Praxis Religious Dialogue, which is both ontological in the sense of taking the human person in his historical moment and transcendental, that is, looking beyond the other presence in respect, challenges the Church to be more open to the challenges from without and allow itself to be challenged in the face of crisis by becoming part of the ensuing conversation rather than dealing with crisis through a technical dialogic manner or in the form of mostly silence. Buber calls this kind of pretension “seeming” which is tied to the notion of forced appearances. For Buber, the contrary to this notion of seeming is “being” which is tied to dialogue. Buber writes:

Therefore, as we begin to recognize the crisis of man as the crisis of what is between man and man, we must free the concept of uprightness from the thin moralistic tones which cling to it and let it take its tone from the concept of bodily uprightness. If a presupposition of human life in primeval times is given in man’s walking upright, the fulfillment of human life can only come through the soul’s walking upright, through the uprightness which is not tempted by any seeming because it has conquered all semblance.

The notion of being is for him tied to authenticity where participants are willing to be in conversation with each other in the historical moment and prepared to allow three types of dialogue – dialogue, technical dialogue, and monologue -- to emerge properly.
Further, Buber argues that dialogue involves the complexity of the “being,” emanating from the complex process of the ensuing conversation and not through the gathering and dissemination of information for the other. For Buber, the presence of the Other in the conversation is tied to the notion of authenticity (Buber 1965/1966, Arnett & Arneson 1999), which immediately removes the focus of attention from ‘me’ to the significance of the communication within the historical moment. Maurice Friedman (1955/1976)25 who has thrown light on Buber’s writings shows how Buber departed from Husserl’s phenomenological method of consciousness to an evolution of existential dialogue. Friedman notes that at a point in Buber’s youth, he had tried to force his will on objects to compel them to do what he wanted. Every time he tried to do that, the object refused through the “dumb force” of its being. According to Friedman, it was through this brutish and irreducible impact of otherness that separated Buber from Husserl. In “I and Thou,” Buber himself argued “A subject that annuls the object to rise above it annuls its own actuality.”26 His argument points us to the direction of a philosophical anthropology that deals with existential events rather than phenomenological events. The new direction offered by Buber on dialogue thrusts dialogue into the realm of the concrete and the particular. Dialogue requires the “between” in the given historical moment of the persons engaged in dialogue. Implicitly, it becomes the ground for the emerging events that propels the conversation. Hitherto, the vision of the Second Vatican Council had not been well expounded to embody the “between” which reconstructs the meeting of “people in dialogue” in the Church. The Church still operates within the preconciliar classical dialogic model of teaching, instructing, explaining and informing which does not enhance cooperation and transparency with the *communio fidelium.*
The Praxis Religious Dialogue therefore encourages the Church to live out its biblical story by working toward the emergence of the “between” as a third entity within its dialogic engagement. By privileging the “between” in dialogue, the Church will accept other competing voices with different stories as it works to engage the crisis in a given historical moment. The implications of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model also invite the Church to accept its weaknesses as a pilgrim Church and enter into a dialogue not with certainty guided by canonical formulations but by the biblical story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-36) whose very nature is personified in the Church – loving without boundaries. The arguments raised by the different authors on dialogue point the Church to this: that dialogue takes place in a space where the subjects embed themselves in the evolving crisis events within the historical moment and not separated from them.

b. Dialogue as a Challenge for the Church in its Missionary Activities

The Church’s technical posture in its dialogic encounter with the faith community is likened to Husserl’s interpretation of Being in which the subject becomes the center of the relations with his community or society and whose intentions are limited to its space. Thus, the Husserlian conceptualizations of intentionality – will and knowledge – focus on the subject whose world is objectified, an objectification that is contrary to the vision of most scholars in the field of dialogue (Buber, 2002, Levinas, 1989; Schrag, 1994).

These authors have argued in favor of embedding the subject within his world and defining his experiences in the historical moment. Schrag’s (1994) articulation of discourse offers us an overview of the ongoing analysis: “Discourse and action are about something by someone, and for someone” in which the communicative praxis displays a referential moment,
a moment of self-implicature, and a rhetorical moment. John Stewart (1995) disagrees with this notion because of its commitment to the referential “about-something-dimension” of communicative praxis because it generates a problematic tension in Schrag’s work. The notion of phenomenon, according to Stewart points to language as an “articulate contact” in which the subject looks for meanings through their representational objects and gestures. He understands language as socially and contextually dependent and an unceasing creative activity governed by the individual psychology. While Schrag calls for a conversation immersed in a dialogic event, Stewart points to the use of language as an individual activity.

One would position the Church’s preconciliar and apparently continuing mode of communication within Stewart’s framework, which directs the focus of attention on the subject or the agency of “I.” instead of the Other. Contrary to this notion, Schrag rejects the definitions of communication that reduce the communicative praxis to codes and place emphasis on the manner of the transmission of the message and the background against which the tightly woven professional and everyday life concerning morals is situated. The subject thus is intrinsically connected to the historical moment and to the narrative that is being played out within the discourse. This is the notion that underlies Buber and the other authors’ work, which calls for a communitarian experience.

II. The Significance of Dialogization for the Church

a. Modality of Dialogue in the Church

Over the years, the Church has assumed both technical and monologic form of communication especially with the faith community and the public and it does it through encyclicals, pastoral letters, homiletics, and through its ritual ceremonies. While this form of
communication cannot entirely be rejected, it must be connected to the notion of historicality as Aristotle has argued – the ability to bring together the theoretical and the practical. Stewart thus observes taking a cue from Hans-Georg Gadamer’s work on *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1987) and Paul Ricoeur, that in any given dialogue, the openness to listening, understanding the complexities of the linguistics and the awareness of the osmosis of the horizons emanating from the dialogue is significant to a broader appreciation of the communication. Kenneth W. White also maintains: “We always understand within a social tradition, rather than solely with individuals, and within a tradition that is embodied in language. We let tradition speak to us, for we cannot understand ourselves or others apart from the prejudices and presuppositions tradition has supplied.”

While the Church understands itself as being intrinsically connected to its tradition that carries dialogic prejudices and historically conditioned forms of discourse, there has been very little attempt to embrace the new trends of research in the context of dialogue. Gadamer suggests that it is through our historical prejudices that we are capable of new knowledge and change which emboldens us to gain insight into our life’s moments. Our “conditionedness and limitedness” challenges us to ground our being in our life’s events. Thus, the Church can use its reliance on tradition to enhance its attempts to accept the new scholarship in the field of dialogue because our life’s event becomes meaningful when it is situated within the metaphor of a praxis dialogue embedded in a historical moment. However, as Arnett and Arneson have maintained, when a given communicative practice no longer serves a purpose within a given historical moment, it becomes unreflective and problematic and those involved in such a practice move to a dysfunctional stage where the communication no longer serves the historical needs of the given moment. Thus, the dialogic prejudices and historically conditioned forms of discourse
practiced by the Church only hinders its efforts to open itself to embrace others who wish to enter into dialogue with the Church.

Schrag, has pointed in this contextual framework that when our dialogue is grounded in praxis, we focus on the “why” in reference to our limited nature and the “how” to explain our practice with a guiding narrative. In fact, Baxter and Montgomery remind us that praxis always involves people in action who are engaged in a genuine social life within a historical moment in which their actions are practically concretized and where they know their choices.36 Thus, Arnett and Arneson summarize for us that praxis is “the act of real people in real life who are constantly making real choices that have concrete and importance for their own lives and the lives of those around them.”37 However, this notion is not the case in the Church where discourse is situated within the notion of instruction, teaching and explaining.

b. The Preconciliar Church’s Vision of the Church

The Council of Trent (1870), which gave the Church enormous jurisdiction over its members and its secular relations, understood the Church not as a pilgrim Church in need of constant baptism but as an earthly society, possessing all the models of a human social, political, and cultural structures, wielding enormous power and authority over its members, and communicating with them from an authoritative voice.38 Many authors have argued against the adoption of this socio-technical dialogic – communication through the gathering and dissemination of information - because it stands contrary to its biblical image. Hermann J. Pottmeyer (1992) has pointed out that the word dialogue as a description of communication within the Church is new. He argues that the concept is not found in preconciliar ecclesiology
whose key words were “jurisdiction” and “obedience.” He characterizes the preconciliar notion of ecclesiological dialogue in the following terms:

- The priority of the universal Church over the local Church (a universalist view of the Church)
- The priority of the ordained office holder over the congregation and the charisms (clericalism)
- The priority of the monarchical over the collegial structure of office (centralism)
- The priority of unity over plurality (uniformity)
- One-way communication from above to below corresponding to the hierarchical system of strict superiority and subordination.  

The view of dialogue based on the above ecclesiological principles removed the hierarchy from the *communio fidelium* and set them apart from the day-to-day interactions of the members of the Church and the world at large. The Praxis Religious Dialogue conceives of this separateness as short-handedness in the communication of the Gospel which, in its entirety, is a narrative embedded within a historical moment that epiphanizes the face of the Other. There are some inconsistencies inherent in the Church’s inability to dialogue with its faith community. First, the secularization of the structures has metamorphosed the face of the Church into a secular institution rather than a religious one; second, the inadmissibility of dialogue between authority and the members prevents participation by all; third, the unquestionable nature of rules concerning doctrines of faith prevents openness to participative dialogue, and fourth, the negative formal sanctions for those who may stray because of dissent generates a “culture of silence,” effectively preventing future attempts at participation. These four reasons have impeded
the Church’s several attempts in shaping its institutional perceptions on Praxis Religious Dialogue and I hope to address the issue.

Carol J. Jablonski (1979) has argued in her dissertational work that one of the major impediments in the Church’s attempts to change its rhetorical genres is the abiding presence of the ceremonial context of the Mass which is central to the Church and highly recommended by the early Church Fathers. She also argues that it is useful to listen to Fredric Jameson’s contention that the past has an abiding presence in some rhetorical discourses.40 However, within the context of ceremonial and ritualistic structure, the Mass is an “anamnesis,” an ever-present enactment of a memorial that is embedded in historicity. Additionally, the doctrinal nature of this ceremonial and ritualistic event indeed does not negate the reconstructions of the Church’s liturgical and institutional rhetoric but should reinforce them by immersing them in the present where the subject is decentered and decentralized.41

In fact, before the Second Vatican Council, the hierarchy of the Church placed an emphasis on the Church as “a single unified perfect society” (Dulles 1978) rather than as a community of believers sharing one historical narrative embedded in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (Eph. 4:5ff). Avery Dulles has argued in favor of the Church retaining, in some measure, some limits of a structure of an organization in order for the Church to be effective in the world.42 However, the most important type of effectivity is not inherent in the secularization of the structures but in the Praxis Religious Dialogue directed towards the Church’s mode of communication and its missionary activities. Action, rather than structure, should be primary. Dulles’s argument reinforces a pre-Vatican II Church because the Second Vatican Council defined the Church in analogies, rather than giving it an efficient definition. In analogical explications, the Council compared the Church to some biblical notions such as “a tract of land
to be cultivated,” (1 Cor. 3: 9) “the edifice of God,” (1 Cor. 3: 9) and “that Jerusalem which is above, is also called “our Mother” (Gal. 4: 26; Apc. 12:17). The Council understood the danger in giving an efficient defining to the Church as prevailed in the anti-Protestant period of polemics which laid emphasis on the institutional and juridical aspects of the Church.\textsuperscript{43} In the document, \textit{Lumen Gentium} (Light of all nations), the major definition given to the Church is situated in its pastoral nature, that is, as a selfless servant whose very life embodies the axis of the vertical and the horizontal - both divine and human. Dulles’s definition of the Church points to the Church that existed in the medieval era through the Renaissance period but not as envisaged by the founder, Jesus, the Christ.

By embodying some measure of secular organizational structures, the Church becomes just like any other secular institution, and it stands in greater danger of losing its efficacious presence. The adoption of some models of secular structures– mainly a formal, bureaucratic organizational structure– has placed an enormous burden on the life of the Church in attempting to reach out in a deliberative manner to its members because bureaucratic structure tends to consolidate power in the hands of those at the top. Raymie E. McKerrow (1989) in an article “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” has noted, premising his argument on Michel Foucault’s treatment of power relations in \textit{(Power/Knowledge, 1980)}, that power and knowledge insinuate themselves in the way the social group handles the knowledge imparted to it, and that the neglect of deliberation by the social group allows power to be accentuated in the hands of those who impart the knowledge.\textsuperscript{44} Indeed, the Second Vatican Council was convened to counter this very problem, and to demystify the notion of the \textit{sensus hierarchicus} (authority of the hierarchy), which was often non-deliberative in character, into a \textit{sensus communis} (authority of the community).
c. **The Nature of the Church as Dialogic**

In light of the Church’s understanding of dialogue as technical, some authors who have reflected on the subject from different perspectives have come to consider the Church’s position as paternalistic and hierarchical and not as invitational where those involved in the dialogue extend mutual appreciation and respect to each other’s voice (Levinas 1998, Schrag 1986, Bakhtin 1981).45 Further, given the anthropological and philosophical nature of commitment of the biblical narratives over which the Church asserts authoritative interpretive power, one would assume that the Church would be open to a dialogic civility in its pursuit of dialogue. By its very nature, the Church is *dialogic* because the founder commissioned it to nurture, liberate, confirm, and enhance the dignity of the human person and sent it to undertake its missionary activities (*Ad Gentes* 2)46 through dialogue with other cultures. It can perform this task, however, only when it assumes the dialogic position. It was for this reason that the Second Vatican Council, basing its argument on the biblical narratives, readily admitted that “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, and has been called to communicate the kindness and the love of God” (*Ad Gentes* 2).

d. **The Significance of the Biblical Narratives as Hermeneutics of Dialogue**

In dealing with phenomenology, Buber inserted the subject within a historical situation where the subject is tied to the interpretation of his experiences and that of the community. Thus, for Buber, the connectedness of the subject to his community within a given historical moment is a call to the significance of interpersonal relations embedded in intentionality to create awareness of the other. This notion is central to Buber work.47 In fact, the Second Vatican Council pointed the Church to the same direction when it offered the Church a new way of focusing on the
significance of the biblical narratives in both the Old Testament and the New Testament where the stories are contextually dialogic and are embedded within an interstitial space of discourse and action\textsuperscript{48} (James 5: 13 – faith embedded in action). This understanding departed from the previous notion of uni-directional or monologic communication.

The biblical narratives are dialogic and are grounded in the notion of the narrow ridge in which the subject is implicated within the hermeneutical space of the communication praxis. The subject in the biblical context is decentered and decentralized in for example, the parable of the Good Samaritan where the story unfolds and culminates in “I am my brother’s keeper” to bear the inscriptions of a community embedded in a faith story that is selfless and ready to undergo a radical transformation and the odyssey of self and social formation. The biblical narratives are therefore a narrative of life of dialogue embedded in a historical moment and constantly offering a possibility of transformational horizons where monologue has no place. In fact, the theological understanding of dialogue allows a wide range of perspectives on the dialogic nature of the biblical narratives because the vision of the Church is a community of brothers and sisters whose understanding of the biblical discourse is about something, by someone, for the Other.\textsuperscript{49}

III. Praxis Religious Dialogue as Essential to the Church’s Missionary Activity and the Value of Praxis Religious Dialogue

Given this communicative praxis of the nature of the Church, the approach to its missionary activity must focus on grounding itself in Praxis Religious Dialogue because the message based on the biblical narratives is directed to foreground the Church’s definition as a “mother” who listens to her children (the faith community) and enters into conversation with them. Additionally, the outcome of such missionary activity is to enhance the communicative
praxis of the faith community by engaging it in a Praxis Religious Dialogue in order for the community to address the “generalized other” (Benhabib 1992) so that the individual can meet and address the “concrete other.” The two notions equally not only affirm the humanity of the members of the faith-community in dialogue but also confirm their human individuality. The notions also enhance the decentering and decentralization of the subject involved in the conversation. What forms the *sitz im lebem* of the communicative praxis– the dialectic inherent in the communicative praxis of the generalized other– flows from a genuine response given to the concrete other, which in turn establishes the concrete moment for the narrative of dialogic civility (Arnett & Arneson 1999).

This communicative praxis also involves the moment of crisis, the tension involved in the dialogic process, a notion that Buber terms as “between extremes on the narrow ridge.” This concept seems to have eluded the Church in its communicative practices over the centuries because it has practiced communication from a hierarchical stance by looking at the Other not as an equal member in the religious conversation but as solely a listener whose participation consists in receipt of the message. Buber points out that the “complexity of life is lived out in the confusion of contradictions and not in the certainty of “yes” and “no,” and he conceives this notion within the concepts of the “between”, unity of contraries,” and the “narrow ridge.” For Buber, it is within the complexities of “a unity of contraries” that a genuine dialogue takes place. It is therefore not out of place to pose the question, “Why should the Church adopt a dialogic model in its missionary activity? One answer may be that a dialogic model offers a more appropriate “methodology” for its communicative activities. An analogy from communication scholarship offers a way to understand the need for the shift. The Praxis Religious Dialogue therefore reminds the Church to avail itself to the uncertainties inherent in genuine dialogue in
order to discover the new horizons of possibilities that can enrich its relations and facilitate its missionary activities around the world.

The Church’s technical dialogic model is likened to a research methodology that simply uses analytic orientations through statistical method to judge its research outcomes. George Cheney (2000) has observed in the field of experimental research that such a method removes the research away from the subjects. This approach poses a serious problem when no feedback loops are employed to reconnect the research findings with original sources of data. The faith community is the original source of data whose life stories embedded in the biblical narratives give meaning to the missionary activities of the Church. Ronald C. Arnett in *Technicians of Goodness* has pointed out that where the significance of narrative life of Dialogue is minimized and disregarded, one cannot speak of a dialogue but a monologue. He argues:

"Dialogue requires one to know the ground on which one stands and argues for, while affirming the other’s right to do the same. There is a philosophical commitment to a dialogic oxymoron – recognition of the importance of the story and awareness of the limits of any given story."

The import of the argument cautions the Church to enter into a dialogue not with certainty but with a cautious conviction that the “narrative life of dialogue” which underlies the biblical narratives invites others to participate in the complexity of the dialogue, with each being cognizant of the historical moment. In this vein, Schrag (1986) in *Communication Praxis and the*
Space of Subjectivity argues that when we move from theory based conversation to an informed action in the historical moment we are engaged in a praxis activity.

The underlying spirit of this philosophical underpinning emerges from Aristotle’s notion of phronesis, a theory-informed practice. In other words, when theory is informed by action within a given historical moment it becomes wisdom. Thus, Praxis Religious Dialogue points toward theory-informed-faith-action dialogue within which different interpretations and understandings of the potential possibilities of the biblical narratives are given broader perspectives and opportunities to direct and actively enhance the actions of the faith community to engage in dialogue in the given historical moment without fear of losing ground.

The concept of “phronesis” becomes paramount in the proclamation of the gospel as the Church seeks to make converts and orient people’s lives toward the Lord. It was in view of this significant responsibility inherent in the Church’s mission that the Second Vatican Council called the Church to aggiornamento in every sphere of the Church’s life.
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid.

3 See C. Schrag, *Philosophical Papers: Betwixt and Between*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994). The chapter on “The Life-World and Its Historical Horizon” depicts the philosophical problem of the man and his experience in the “life-world” which emanates from the different perspectives on “being,” “consciousness,” and “subjectivity” by different Enlightenment scholars like (Hegel, Marx, Dilthey, Husserl and Heidegger, and others. Their works are mostly offshoot of the Cartesian foundational thesis of “ergo, cogito ego sum”.


7 Ibid. p. 209.


The terms, Guilt, Redemption, Hierarchy, and Victimage are used in a footnote to the first page of the Appendix, “On Human Behavior Considered ‘Dramatistically.’” These four motives, I presume in Burke’s view is an attempt to demonstrate what should be the overall terms in naming our relationships with and developments of things and human beings. In the short analysis, Burke’s motive in delineating these four motives are indicative of his attempt to show that human beings do establish relationships between themselves - organic and inorganic objects and by doing so arrange things in order of their preference. This notion leads him to deal with the concept of hierarchy but from the perspective of the mystery of love which should underlie any established relationship of hierarchy in order to transcend the separateness of social order. This notion is also what Buber is pursuing in his treatment of the between. (See A Grammar of Motives).

See M. Buber, The Martin Buber Reader, p. 211.

Ibid. p. 212.

Ibid. p. 212.

Ibid. p. 212.

Ibid. p. 212.


Ibid. p. 124.
24 Ibid. p. 66.


30 Ibid.


32 Ibid.


34 *Truth and Method*, 1960, p. 59.


37 *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age*, 1999  p.293.


40 Carol J. Jablonski. “Institutional Rhetoric and Radical Change: The Case of the Contemporary Roman
Catholic Church in America.” A theses submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, August 1979, p. 144.

41 Jablonski, p. 144.


43 See *The Documents of Vatican II*, “Lumen Gentium,” no, 6 and the Introduction to “Lumen Gentium.”


45 See Emmanuel Levinas’s works: Time and the Other, Interpreting Otherwise than Heidegger, Totality and Infinity, Otherwise that Being, Outside the Subject.


52 Ibid.


54 Ronald C. Arnett in ‘Technicians of Goodness: Ignoring the Narrative Life of Dialogue” proposes a practical model for dialogic engagement toward mutual understanding and respect. See *Responsible


Chapter 7
The Convening of the Second Vatican Council

I. The Concept of “Church”
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VIII. Relevance of the Praxis Religious Dialogue to Church
I. The Concept of “Church”

According to Edward Schillibeeckx, the English word “Church” denotes from the Greek word, *kyriake*, which means “belonging to the Lord.” He notes that the Greek and Latin term *ekklesia* all have different origins. Schillibeeckx argues that the New Testament term “ekklesia,” which connotatively meant “the gathered community which calls itself Church,” is connected with the Jewish Deuteronomic view (Deut. 23:2-9).¹ The Deuteronomic view grants permission to the worshipper to enter “the Lord’s community” which in Hebrew is rendered “qehal YHWH” and in Greek as *tou theou*.² Schillibeeckx argues that the Jewish Christians preferred to use the word “ekklesia” rather than synagogue in order to distinguish themselves from the Jewish worshippers who did not believe in the message of Jesus. Importantly, Schillibeeckx also examines the secular Greek state where the word “ekklesia” denoted the assembly of free (male) citizens of a polis or city-state for the purpose of elections or deliberation on important matters. Thus, Schillibeeckx notes that the adoption of the word “ekklesia” by a community of believers in the message of Jesus referred to a particular group of people who gathered together in an assembly to worship. Hence, it not surprising that there are New Testament references to “the Church in Rome” or “the Corinthian Church.”³

However, an interesting development of the concept seemed to have occurred as the new assembly of worshippers of Jesus expanded to include other nations like the Greeks and the Romans. Schillibeeckx points out that the expression *he kat’oikon ekklesia* (house community) was an indication of the early Christians’ consciousness of the Church as being pastoral in view of the gathering taking place in homes, like the community that met in the house of Aquila and Prisca in Ephesus (Cor. 16:19). There is also ample evidence that by adding the word *oikos*
(“house”) to the concept of *ecclesia* the early first Christians identified themselves as a free organization within Judaism. They gradually stopped going into the synagogue.

Schillibeeckx has further argued that in Jerusalem, the relations between the Jews who spoke Hebrew (Aramaic) and the Jewish Christians who spoke Greek were nothing short of sour because the Greek speaking Jews preferred to interpret the Jewish law in a more liberal sense and were also critical of the Jewish cult in the temple. The situation worsened after the Jews killed the young Greek Christian Stephen. It became dangerous for Hellenist Jewish Christians to remain in Jerusalem, so they fled to Antioch, where, according to Schillibeeckx, the practice of Christianity was livelier. It is further argued by Schillibeeckx that it was the Christians in Antioch that brought the Christian message to the Gentiles. With time, the Christian communities increased in number and the estrangement widened but orthodox Christians did not obliterate the Jewish faith expressed in Mt. 23: 37-40, which implicitly accepts the Old Testament as the book of promises.

In the second century A.D., Christianity and Christian theology emerged with integrated the Hellenistic view of the world and humankind and completely severed itself from the Jewish practice in Diaspora. The success of Christianity, according to Banks, was due to its dialogue with pagan religions and philosophy more than its Jewish origins. The question that is pertinent to this work and which has been pursued by many exegetes is whether Jesus founded a Church during his time. The question is crucial on account of the numerous interpretation of the concept “Church” over the centuries. Schillibeeckx has strongly argued that Jesus did not intend to found a Church and additionally, that the early Christians endeavored to abide by the Jewish religious confession.
However, Schillibeeckx emphasizes that to assume that the Christian Church is not the result of Jesus’ life’s work would be a limitation of the view of what the historical exigencies of the Jesus event embraced. What Jesus conceived was both a message of the presence of God’s Kingdom and at the same time eschatological, which presupposes that “there is an essential link between the coming of the kingdom of God which he proclaimed . . . and the consequent faith conviction of his followers that the mission of Jesus has a definitive, eschatological and universal significance, which necessitates a continuation of Jesus’ earthly mission by his disciples beyond the limited time of his earthly life.” Schillibeeckx thus concludes that since becoming a disciple of Jesus is an essential element of his message, the “Church” historically is also essentially discipleship of Jesus, that is, following in the footsteps of Jesus to convert as many people as possible into the community that witnesses to Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God and his own career of *kinosis*. Thus, to claim that the “Church” as it is presently structured was founded by Jesus is to do injustice to the meaning of the Church and to deny the foundational meaning of the message of Jesus and to history. At best, what is essentially significant is that the historical Jesus stands as the beginning of the historical Church, which points to his intention that the message would be spread far and wide. Schillibeeckx concludes that by extension, the origin of the Church was not as simple but very complicated. In effect, “the Church is not the kingdom of God, but it bears the work of God, who establishes in Jesus, through the Spirit his eschatological people and it also bears symbolic witness to the kingdom through its word and sacrament, and in its praxis effectively anticipates that kingdom.” The tasks in this symbolic witness exemplified through the work of the Spirit and the *anamnesis* are to raise people up for the eschatology and establish communication processes among the believers with the purpose of serving all peoples in solidarity. In light of this development, the history of the Church through the Medieval to the
nineteenth century cast some shadows of perplexity in one’s mind because of the feudal structures which the Church adopted and which, from this perspective, are contrary to the foundations of the Church.

a. Historical Developments Prior to Vatican II

The issue of human rights has emerged slowly over the history of the Church as a vital concern. Prior to the convening of Vatican II, the action of stronger nation states subjugating weaker nations by colonization was a common practice. In an article entitled “Laying the Foundations: from Rerum Novarum to the Second Vatican Council,” Michael Walsh makes reference to the Spanish conquest discussed by the Spanish Dominican Francesco de Vitoria, a professor of theology at the University of Salamanca in his works De Indis and the De Iure Belli Hispanorum in Barbaros concerning the right of Spain to rule over the Indian inhabitants and argues that Spain might have had the right to rule over the natives if only it was for the benefit of the Indians rather than for the sole benefit of the Spaniards. De Vitoria’s assertion does not stand alone in the historical annals of the sixteenth century period in question about the Church. According to Walsh, theologians prior to and during the subsequent centuries would be discussing the social problem of tyrannous nations flouting the rule of law and appropriating social and international law to themselves to overrun and dominate other weaker nations. History recounts the application of “unbridled capitalism” to deny the poor worker of his human dignity and at the same time the emergence of “totalitarian communism so rigid that workers were reduced to mere tools for the state.”

The work of theologians and some of the papal encyclicals slowly paved the way for an equitable and adequate distribution of resources, which also later would become known as the social teachings of the Church. Adoption of these works as Church positions took place through
their philosophical framing as a response to the challenges of the time. According to Paul Vallely, the Catholic social teachings offer understanding of the prevailing historical period and appeal to Catholics and non-Catholics alike.\textsuperscript{11} Walsh has also emphasized that right from the beginnings of the Church, the early Christian writers concerned themselves with the morality of ownership of property and money and produced some insights on the relations between Church and state. Likewise, the Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages discussed important questions such as economics and equitable price and fair wage while remaining strong on the question of usury.\textsuperscript{12}

By the end of the nineteenth century, Walsh further notes, the challenges of social-economic morality became insurmountable for Church leaders in view of the massive wealth that the Industrial Revolution was creating for rulers and owners in Europe. The deplorable condition of the ordinary working person and the significant impact on the children of these workers not only manifested itself in the affluent lifestyles of the mighty and the rich but showed itself in the exploitative nature of capitalism. Resistance to the Church in its attempts to educate society on theological and social matters stemmed from perceptions of the Church’s own failure to embody what it proclaimed.

In “The Smith History Lecture: The First Vatican Council,” Edward Eldon Young Hales has argued that while the Church concerned itself with morality of the people, its own hierarchy appropriated to itself an unbounded authority that no human being could question. He contends that Pius IX, in his \textit{Syllabus of Errors} document, along with the encyclical, \textit{Quanta Cura}, appropriated to himself a position of authority that forbade dispute by emperors or kings.\textsuperscript{13} In the document, the Pope denounced, among other things, “errors” including liberal capitalism, freedom of religion, absolute rationalism, naturalism, pantheism, and socialism.\textsuperscript{14} Error number
eighty summed up his intentions, arguing that it was an error to think that “the Roman pontiff can and ought to reconcile and harmonize himself with progress, with liberalism, and with modern civilization.” If there was ever any resistance to the Church during the periods from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, it was the result of the dichotomy that existed between the Church of God and the city of God, an Augustinian concept that has had a great influence on Christian thinking even to our day, a dichotomy that emerges in this papal statement.

Around the sixteenth century, the controversy surrounding the Church has attained an insurmountable proportion. The Ultramontane Party which sought to build the power contrary to the Liberal Party in France and Germany argued that the papal rule was despotic and tyrannous and proposed a decentralized papal authority. According to these countries, the centralization of power in papal hands generated acrimonies that were socially derailing the Church’s influence. Pius IX then decided to convene a General Council to be held in Rome. According to the Hales, when Pius IX was elected in 1846, he instituted a series of democratic reforms in the Papal States and sought to grant Constitutional foundation to his people. The “extremist” Jacobins of Rome and Bologna took these reforms to the point of seizing power from the Pope. Consequently, the Pope fled to France. On his return to Rome, he was followed by French troops. In view of the sufferings of the people, his return to Rome was followed by a series of counter reforms; the Pope denounced the liberals and the democrats especially in Italy where he saw his own subjects closing down monasteries and seizing convents and Church properties. The enthusiasm of the people to unite Italy slowly diminished the papal national authority.

The convening of the General Council (The First Vatican Council) was seen by much of Catholic Europe, especially in England and America, as a chance to humiliate the Pope and
therefore these two geographical spheres intensified their campaign to denounce the summoning of the Council. By the year 1860, the Pope had virtually lost his papal authority over the States, and his authority over the Eternal City also was even contested by Garibaldi, and the self styled “King of Italy,” Victor Emmanuel. Hales recounts that instead of the convening of the General Council helping the Pope politically to fight the extremists, it became a source of embarrassment. To the popular understanding, the convening of the General Council was to anathematize the extremists and their liberal theories, which Hales argues did not meet the popular favor in the western world, namely, in France, in America, and England. Hales emphasized that the leaders of the West, especially the French emperor Napoleon III and the British Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone feared that if the General Council was convened by Pius IX, the Council would be used to reinforce the Syllabus of Errors which he had written. It is the understanding of many historians that the challenge of denying and accepting the work of modernity contributed to the struggles that the Church went through in its attempt to secure for itself a paramount place within the Enlightenment period.

b. The Enlightenment and the Church

It is worthy of note that the publishing of the social encyclicals was the result of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century work of the Reformers, the Utilitarian, and the Idealists, notably Reformers like Montesquieu. According to McIntyre, Montesquieu has argued, contrary to Hume and Hobbes, that what creates different forms of social life is that “men are governed by many factors: climate, religion, law, the precepts of government, the examples of the past, customs, manners; and from the combination of such influences there arises a general spirit.” In McIntyre’s view, Montesquieu considered the Hobbesian “individual” a myth, and asserted
that “if we look at the societies to which individuals belong, we discover that they exemplify quite different types of system. What ends an individual has, what needs, what values, will depend upon the nature of the social system to which he belongs.”

McIntyre further notes that Montesquieu alleged that institutions are not end in themselves but exist to supply the necessary background against which alone the ends and needs of the individual can be intelligible. Montesquieu could therefore be read as having advanced the significance of the individual as embedded within the institution in which he lives. However, according to McIntyre, Enlightenment authors were not particularly innovative, adopting positions that accepted the status quo and only questioning it in cases that affected their own interests.

It is against this backdrop that Jean-Jacques Rousseau is credited with the concept of human nature which is overlaid and distorted by social and political institutions, yet whose genuine wants and needs provide the ground for morality and also corruption of social institutions. Rousseau’s philosophy was to restore a respect for creativity and worth of individual human person. He explored the notion of individual liberty and his beliefs about political unity in order to fuel the romantic spirit of the French revolution. According to him, there will certainly be inequalities among individual persons in society but he argued that the inequalities in morality and politics are purely conventional systems. He noted, “The state was originally introduced as a law-making and law enforcing agency which by providing impartial justice would set right the various disorders that arose from social inequality.” Unfortunately, according to Rousseau, the state has become an instrument of despotism and tyranny. He therefore proposed the theory of Social Contract (Du contract social) in which he noted that in every society, each individual chooses to trade off their natural liberty of independent life for the civil liberty that is secured by the state and that allows social rights over individual rights.
However, Rousseau cautioned that within this social contract, individual liberty must not be completely abandoned but secured for the unity of all with the view of benefiting everyone. He noted: *Trouver une forme d’association qui défend et protège de toute la force commune la personne et les biens de chaque associé, et par laquelle chacun s’unissant à tous n’obèisse poutant qu’à lui-même et reste aussi libre qu’auparavant.* For Rousseau, this dilemma was the problem that faced all social organizations – the security of individual participation in the general will. On account of this difficulty, Rousseau saw democracy as dangerous to the participation of the individual; he argued that as long as it executes the general will, aristocracy could be a workable system but he cautioned against monarchical system because it serves the interests of the private welfare at the expense of the common good.

In short, Rousseau reacted against the artificiality and corruption of the social customs and institutions of the time. Error and prejudice in the name of philosophy, according to him, had stifled reason and nature, and culture, as he found it, had corrupted morals. In *Emile* he presents the ideal citizen and the means of training the child for the State in accordance with nature, even to a sense of God. This “nature gospel” of education, as Goethe called it, was the inspiration, beginning with Pestalozzi, of world-wide pedagogical methods. The most admirable part in this is the creed of the vicar of Savoy, in which Rousseau shows a true, natural susceptibility to religion and to God, whose works are visible to human beings. The *Social Contract*, which argued that all men are born free and equal, regards the State as a contract in which individuals surrender none of their natural rights, but rather agree for the protection of them and became the text-book of the French Revolution. Emmanuel Kant would later take up the notion of the “ought,” which addresses the dialectical tension between the individual and society in the face of the complexity of the will of the majority as against that of the minority.
The writings of the Enlightenment period had influenced the social teachings of the Popes, especially Leo XIII and John XXIII. Subsequent encyclicals concerning social relationships and society as a whole will address some of the dilemmas that have been raised by the reformers - the Utilitarians who advocated a hedonists paradigm (Bentham and Mills) and the Idealists (Kant). Much Enlightenment work had influenced the Church’s thought both in theology and in secular matters, especially in matters of human dignity and the person’s place in society and the world. These thoughts would surface in the deliberations of the Council Fathers concerning the definition of the Church and its relationship with the world.

c. The Historical Developments Leading to the Convening of the Second Vatican Council

Was there a need for the Second Vatican Council and has the Church changed in its structural, administrative, and its hierarchical regime? I would like to briefly look back at the concept of “Church” and its operationalization and how it has been triangulated over the years. In his ecclesiological work on Models of the Church, Avery Dulles employs different models to define the Church. He looks at the Church as an institution, as a mystical communion, as sacrament, herald, and a servant. He argues that each of these can be evaluated in itself and each also contributes, to some degree, “a major affirmation to each basic ecclesiological type.”29 Therefore, looking back at the definition of the Church as employed in the Middle Ages, Robert Bellarmine writes that the Church is specific type of human community (coetus hominum): “The one and true Church is the community of men brought together by the profession of the same Christian faith and conjoined in the communion of the same sacraments, under the government of the legitimate pastors and especially the one vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman pontiff.”30 According to Jerome Hammer, three implications follow from this definition: profession of the
true faith, communion in the sacraments, and submission to the legitimate pastors. These implications rule out as a member of God’s Church anyone not a member of the Holy Roman Catholic Church and also that the Church is defined in terms of physical elements, a visible society.

According to Dulles, the definition was significant in the context of that time because of the Reformation schism. In the period of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, others scholars began to re-analyze the definition of Bellarmine with the view of returning the Church to its biblical foundations. Thus, within the period in question, Emile Mersch made a distinction between Bellarmine’s definition of the Church as society and the Church as a Mystical Body, that is, “The Unity of those who live with the life of Christ.” In 1943, Pius XI in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis* defined the Church as a “mystical” body of Christ and identical with the Roman Catholic Church. He reaffirmed and emphasized that “only those are really to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith and who have not unhappily withdrawn from the Body-unity or who for grave faults have been excluded by legitimate authority.” The meaning of the Church as a “mystery” has been questioned over the years, with theologians from various disciplines attempting to define it precisely. The encyclical sought to align the meaning as defined by Bellarmine with the “Mystical Body” of Christ, noting that “those who exercise sacred power in the Body are its first and chief members,” and the laity are to “assist the ecclesiastical hierarchy in spreading the Kingdom of the divine Redeemer.” The origin of these definitions is unknown, but one can assume the influence of historical and cultural exigencies pertaining to the periods in question. Cleary, the concept of “Church” as known from the ancient times has undergone different phases of metamorphosis throughout the centuries.
d. Pope Leo XIII

On August 4, 1879, Leo launched his famous reformation of Catholic theology in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in which he imposed the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas on the whole Church. He stated, among other things, that the writings of Thomas Aquinas were the glory of the Catholic Church because “with his own hand he vanquished all errors of ancient times; and still he supplies an armory of weapons which brings us certain victory in the conflict with falsehoods ever springing up in the course of years.” 35 Leo’s goal was to depart from modernity’s intransigent philosophy of Kant and other modern philosophers and introduce a systematic philosophy and theology within the Church. According to John Gallagher, the Pope wanted the Church to depart from modern philosophy which set reason against faith and which made the human being the measure of all things,36 and thus from Leo XIII to the present, Popes have adopted Neo-Thomism as the measure of Catholic theology.

However, Leo XIII began a reform on Social Teachings that have become the underlying teachings of the Church on matters pertaining to the Church and society. In 1891 the first encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, was published, condemning the aristocratic and monarchical rule of the few who owned vast properties while majority of the people they ruled were denied their dignity as human beings due to their poverished condition. Further, the encyclical for the first time opened a dialogue with the world on issues that affected the ordinary worker. It condemned the excesses of capitalism. Vallely notes in this regard, for example, that the lifestyles of the aristocrats completely reduced the rest of the populace to mere instruments of work.37 The Pope therefore reiterated the medieval view concerning a just wage. The document stated: “The wage ought not to be in any way insufficient for the bodily needs of a temperate and well-behaved worker. If having no alternative and fearing a worse fate, a workman is forced to accept harder
conditions imposed by an employer or contractor, he is the victim of violence against which justice cries out." What the Pope intended to achieve through this encyclical was to plead with the world to see a “common sense” of justice by the world is ruled. The Pope further emphasized: “The condition of the workers is the question of the hour. It will be answered one way or another, rationally or irrationally, and which way it goes is of the greatest importance to the state.”

The boldness with which Leo XIII set out to defend the wretched in the world of capitalism began to evolve with a set of principles that were to guide the Church into the twenty-first century. These principles which form the heart of Thomas Aquinas’s work on society, however, were pronounced in a different light by the Pope.

Aquinas, who had followed the vision of Aristotle concerning the state, had written about the idea of the common good – that the goal of the state ought to be ‘the greatest possible happiness of the city as a whole and not that of any one class, a concept which Plato had propounded in his work in the Republic and the Laws. In these works, Plato ascribes virtue to the rulers and who are to inculcate them in the ordinary people, but such education should be considered as an imposition and his notion of political philosophy was tantamount to a totalitarian regime where power was in the hands of the few. On the other hand, Aristotle would write about this notion and affirm, to some degree, Plato’s political philosophy but with an additional twist. Aristotle agrees with the hierarchical form within the state, that is, the rulers versus the artisans, and apportions different category of lifestyles to these two strata in society. (It must be understood, according to Alasdair McIntyre, that Aristotle’s audience in this categorization was a small audience and thus fit within his understanding of political philosophy.) The Aquinasian view of politics thus was greatly influenced by both Plato and
Aristotle’s view of the state. The utilitarian thinkers would later expound on the ordering of society calling to mind what the philosopher Francis Hutcheson termed as “which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers.” According to Vallely, Hutcheson’s statement departs from the idea of dictatorship and calls for respect and integrity of the individual as well as structuring society that offers conditions for human cooperation and the achievement of shared objectives. Pope John XXIII put it succinctly as “all those conditions which favour the full development of human personality.” In short, the concept of the common good was an end in itself and it opened a dialogue between the rulers and the ordinary citizens of the state. Thus, Leo XIII noted in his encyclical Rerum Novarum that “the end of civil society is centred on the common good in which one and all, in due proportion have a right to participate.”

The state has one basic purpose for existence, which embraces in common the highest and the lowest of its members. Non-owning workers are unquestionably citizens by nature in virtue of the same right as the rich. . . Since it would be quite absurd to look out for one portion of the citizens and to neglect another, it follows that public authority ought to exercise due care in safeguarding the well-being and the interests of non-owning workers. unless this is done, justice, which commands that everyone be given his own, will be violated. Wherefore St. Thomas says wisely:

“Even as part and whole are in a certain way the same, so too that pertains to the whole pertains in a certain way to the part also.”
The pursuance of the theme of the common good by Leo XIII was to highlight the respect for individual rights and dignity infused in each person by his creator and thus he noted:

Equity therefore commands that public authority show proper concern for the worker so that form what he contributes to the common good he may receive what will enable him, housed, clothed, and secure, to live his life without hardship. Whence, it follows that all those measures ought to be favoured which seem in any way capable of benefiting the condition of workers. Such solicitude is so far from injuring anyone, that it is destined rather to benefit all, because it is of absolute interest to the state that those citizens should not be miserable in every respect from whom such necessary goods proceed.47

While not condemning capitalism like his predecessor, Pius IX, he opted for it but with a caveat regarding the distribution of the wealth. Leo pointed out that while wealth is necessary, it was not to be made an end in itself. Rather, the human person should retain primacy over wealth, and the market was to be checked, though not allowed to derail the participation of the ordinary citizen. By articulating these sentiments, Leo rejected socialism, arguing that “when socialists endeavor to transfer privately owned goods into common ownership they worsen the condition of all wage-earners. By taking away from them freedom to dispose of their wages they rob them of all hope and opportunity of increasing their possessions and bettering their conditions.”48 He further noted that consequently, “all incentives for individuals to exercise their ingenuity and
skill would be removed and the very founts of wealth dry up. The dream of equality would become the reality of equal want and degradation for all.⁴⁹ Vallely sums up the Popes view on Marxism for us contending that the Marxist notion that class wars would bring about the changes which brought justice to the workers was firmly ruled out and that an abhorrence of “class struggle” has remained an unwavering principle of Catholic social teaching ever since.⁵⁰

Within the context in which the Pope addressed the issue of the common good, there was also the concept of *subsidiarity*. According to this concept, decisions should be taken at the lowest level possible which is coterminous with good government which implies also that the state could not take over individual’s initiatives or property. This theme would later be dealt with by Pope Pius XI in his 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. In this document, Pius XI emphatically stated that “It is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community.”⁵¹

Intimating the notion of Leo XIII, Pius XI asserted in the encyclical that “The right ordering of economic life cannot be left to a free competition of forces. From this source as from a poisoned spring have originated and spread all the errors of individualistic economic teaching.”⁵² The irony of these statements for the Church is that while it proclaimed these secular virtues to the world, it refrained from embodying them in its own ecclesiastical rule. Pius XII (1939-1958), who followed the steps of Pius XI, did nothing to change the Church’s own hierarchical structure to reflect the very virtues that the Church preached to the world. As a way of protecting its own structures from being tainted by the doctrine of the common good, the Church turned a blind eye to its secular operations through the maintenance of a highly rigid hierarchical system of government protected by canon law.
II. The Hierarchical Structure of the Church

According to Dulles, the hierarchical nature of the Church is conceived in terms of authority whereby the hierarchy govern their flock with pastoral authority and as “Christ’s vicegerents, impose laws and precepts under the pain of sin.”53 In other words, the Church is not viewed as a democratic society but in the words of Dulles, as “one which the fullness of power is concentrated in the hands of a ruling class that perpetuates itself by cooption. It is a vision proclaimed and promulgated by Vatican I and continued by Vatican II.”54 Among other views, the Second Vatican Council emphasized these points.

Continuing in the same task of clarification begun by Vatican I this Council has decided to declare and proclaim before all men its teaching concerning bishops, the successors of the apostles, who together with the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ and the visible head of the whole Church, govern the house of the living God. . . . In the bishops, therefore, for whom priests are assistants, our Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme High Priest, is present in the midst of those who believe.55

The classical nature of the Church, comparable to any closed type of organization, is hierarchically structured and admits no confrontation or dialogue. The foundation of the hierarchical structure of the Church was fortified in the nineteenth century to combat modernism and associated social and intellectual developments that the Church found detrimental to its mission. Until this period the Church was centered on the Pope of Rome whose vicegerents
were the bishops. According to Schillibeeckx, the reason for this “personality cult” rested on two vital foundations: first, the predominance of the Church’s teaching that centered around Christ (Christology), and second, the social importance of papal infallibility. The first notion about Christology, according to Schillibeeckx, neglected the work of the Spirit in the Church, that is, that the Spirit blows where it wills, and the second view surrounded the notion that the Pope was the representative of Christ in this world which was in line with the Roman Empire’s structure of appointing governors to represent the emperor. Shillibeeckx notes that by accepting to propagate the solely Christological theology, the Church reduced the gift of the Spirit to the Church to merely obedience at the lower level, that is, the believing community, to everything that was decided at the top. Thus, believers were completely excluded from any decision making-process and in so doing reduced them to the level of only recipients without dialogue. Schillibeeckx argues that the effect of this pyramidal structure on the Church has been detrimental, especially in matters that were secular in content, and tended to strengthen the “personality cult” feared by many believers. This fear was grounded in the unavailability of channels for dialogue or recourse to alternative judgments.

Further, it has been noted in ecclesiastical writings that what the hierarchical structure amounted to was the turning of the Christian religion into a bourgeois religion, a notion which still persists even after Vatican II. By accepting and adopting a secular structure that admitted no dialogue but thrived on monologic communication, the Church ironically brought upon itself the inability to stand up against tyrannical structures. To many minds, the Church’s self-understanding as a champion of anti-feudal ideas was not tenable because the Church itself was deeply involved in the preservation of the feudal system which it has maintained until the convening of the Second Vatican Council. In a letter addressed by Bismarck on May 1872, to the
ambassadors of the German Empire prior to the election of Pope Pius X, Bismarck took issue with the Church in Rome, arguing that the appropriation of absolute power by the Pope to himself was synonymous to the strengthening of the idea of infallibility. He also asserted that by appropriating to himself such absolute power, the Pope would cause other governments to see the bishops and their roles simply as pawns and officials to an alien power.⁵⁹ The response by the bishops to Bismarck’s address indicated that “the Pope is subject to divine right and is bound by the commands given by Christ to his Church, and is bound by the content of Holy Scripture to the tradition and to the official decisions already taken.”⁶⁰

Underlying the bishops’ letter is something that eludes many historians – that the bishops, by pointing to the Holy scriptures and the work of papal predecessors, were implicitly arguing that apart from matters pertaining to the faith of the Church, the Pope could not in any way promulgate dogmas without the approval of the whole Church, and the emphasis is placed on scripture and the tradition of the Church as guide rather than the Pope alone. The implication of the letter that affected the outcome of Vatican I’s decision (which has subsequently been misinterpreted) was that Vatican I strongly supported the notion of indefectibility which implies that “the divine redeemer wanted to equip his Church in the definition of faith and morals.”⁶¹ The contradictions that characterized the enlightenment and the Church mainly surrounded notions of progress and historicity. While the Enlightenment looked at the new man of modernity, the Church in retrospect talked about the “old Adam,” and while the Enlightenment analyzed the concept of truth and other empirical concepts, the Church’s hierarchy concentrated its efforts on nonhistorical truth, which can only be comprehended through faith. In short, the contrasts that existed between the Church and the Enlightenment were concepts pertaining to natural reason and knowledge and human freedom of choice and the natural knowledge of God.
Consequently, what the Church was doing was rejecting the implicit foundations of Christianity which is, to use Schillebeeckx’s term, “responsible Christianity.”

In effect, the Church rejected the notion that truth is not static, contrary to the Enlightenment view of truth as not static but fluid and in constant changing process. In a very interesting move, Pius XII affirms what his predecessors have laid down concerning the rejection of truth as a changing virtue that directs man in his progress of creating and recreating his environment. The Pope stated in the encyclical *Lamentabili* that truth knows no history and therefore history must adapt itself to the existing unchangeable truth. According to this religious view, the Enlightenment pursuit of truth as progress did not satisfy the needs of man. It must be argued that the Pope’s standpoint points to Scholastic metaphysics which was understood as the sole expression of God’s will in history. His view was therefore not different from the expression of Gregory XVI who proclaimed:

> From this repulsive source of indifferentism springs the absurd and foolish claim or, more exactly, the folly that every man should have freedom of conscience and should be able to demand it. The way to this pernicious delusion has been prepared for by the demand for complete and unlimited freedom of opinion which seeks to go on to the annihilation of the holy and the revealed.

According to Schillebeeckx, this document was laid aside by the Second Vatican Council and erased from Denzinger’s content. The historical vestiges of the Church therefore necessitated a call for a dramatic vision of the Church whose mission has always been championing the
progress of man through freedom embedded in the dignity of the human person. It is historically impossible to deny the Church’s fight against modernity, especially in the realm of the division between Church and state. It is therefore my contention that given the historical facts dating back to the tradition of the Pius’s era traversing the period from 1846 to 1958, the Church maintained a strong opposition to change within its walls and issued condemnations to those believers who sought to bring new perspectives in the field of theological discourse. Further, I maintain that the birth of the Second Vatican Council which propelled new perspectives in the area of human freedom – freedom of conscience, human dignity, freedom of religion, human progress, tolerance and dialogue with other Churches and especially the emphasis on human rights – was problematic to conservatives who wished to maintain their hold on human freedom and obedience to the hierarchy. The reasons are varied and date back to the apostolic times.

a. The Early Church and the Concept of Authority

The early Church spoke about ministerial authority in terms of the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ within the believing community which it believed to be plenitude with the pneuma or the Spirit of Christ; therefore, the teaching of the apostles and the believing community maintained a pneuma-Christological model in order to bring about the liberating authority of the gospel they preached. It had nothing to do with the formal structure of authority which the Second Vatican Council and the past Councils have maintained as dating back from the apostolic times. The authority maintained by the apostolic times is what is known as 

paratheke (παραθέκε), which means “the entrusted pledge” (1 Tim. 6: 20 & 2 Tim. 1: 4), which uses the concept to mean the “gospel.” The teaching (didaskalia) was directed toward the teaching of God, who in Jesus is the Savior (Titus 2: 10). What is at stake here is the unbroken
succession of the apostolic teaching authority about matters concerning the faith of the believers, who are thus are encouraged to be filled with the pneumatic fruits of the gospel message. The ministers of the Word were to be subjects of the authority of the Word. On the basis of this view on the structure of the early communities, there were to be no masters or servants among the believers, “neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor freeman, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ” (Gal. 3:28-29). This Pauline exhortation has its foundation in the synoptic gospels: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you” (Mt. 20:25-26; Mk. 10:42-43; Lk. 22:25).

The kind of authority expounded for us in the gospels is therefore different from the type of hierarchical authority that the Church took over from the Graeco-Roman Empire during and after the reign of Constantine, which was then followed by the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius, who attempted to validate and legitimize the hierarchical structure through philosophical and theological expositions.69 His expositions maintained a principle of substitution which dissolved the pluralistic nature of the ministries and reduced the ordinary believer in the gospel to a recipient at the base of the pyramidal structure. This type of structure was initiated for pastoral convenience but was retained as a means of control in matters related to authority while the clergy and the episcopate basked in the light of perfect status demanding obedience from the laity.70 This hierarchical structure persists to the present, with rejection of any notion of democracy, which the Church understands as going against divine law. In view of this argument raised by the Church, many theologians, among them Schillibeeckx, have questioned the hierarchy on the grounds that it can suggest democratic structures for civil society but would not admit the same structure within its own institutional structures.
The Praxis Religious Dialogue model advocates some form of “listening democracy” for the Church, because it will encourage meaningful participation within the Church and further augment the progress of the Church as envisaged by the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent encyclicals by Pope Paul VI, especially *Progressio Populorum* and *Evangelii Nuntiadi*. At least, in the Western notion, human beings have been directed to articulate their freedoms in thought and action but such articulations are subject to the locale, the environment and the cultural systems that reflect the identity of the individual within a given country, society, community, group or family. The Church therefore should be the first to articulate such notion in view of its mission to emancipate the individual from blindness to his freedom and dignity and its mission to pursue advancement of the human condition for a better life, all done within the message of the gospel which is powerful enough to demand a change.

Thus, to appreciate the significance of the work of the of the Second Vatican Council, it is to understand the history of the Church in the past and the estrangement of the believer from the dialogic nature of the gospel which is directed to set him free from all oppression and appreciate God’s love in Christ which is given to him through his relationship with Jesus, the Christ. It is within this context that the Second Vatican Council’s document on the Church becomes meaningful – a breaking away from its feudal history in preparation to accept the liberation message of the gospel which calls the Church to constant revisitation of the praxis of reform.

b. Ecclesia Semper Reformanda: A Process of Re-Invention

In light of the foregoing understanding of the Church and its history, the Church is constantly called to examine itself in renewal process (*metanoia*), which becomes the
foundational criticism for the Church as it proclaims the gospel message in order for it to sustain the freedom which the gospel envisages for the believer. This renewal process points to the early Church’s proclamation that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18) and further: ”I shall be with you to the end of time” (Mt. 28:20b). These statements can be understood to mean that there would always be sufficient people to stand up and transmit the light of the gospel so that the Church will persist in its efforts to defend the weak and the wounded. The renewal of the Church and its efforts to persist in the transmission of the message through its mission entails openness and acceptance, a notion which Lonergan constantly returns to in his interpretation of the subject. The openness of the Church must be a gift to the world, that is, becoming part of human intersubjectivity, which implies knowing, doing, and applying its cognitive and volitional perspectives. For Lonergan, this openness entails becoming a gift. In an essay entitled “Openness and Religious Experience,” Lonergan enunciates the openness to humanity in three ways, namely, openness as a fact, openness as achievement and openness as gift. Saracino has noted that the idea of openness in Lonergan should not be treated merely as a metaphor of spiritual transcendence but should be understood as “an event by which the whole person, mind, will, and body, is challenged to transcend previous horizons of being called into question by God and others.” Schilli beeckx, in a similar tone, recognizes that Christianity by its very nature is a ”symbol of openness, not closedness.”

What all this development amounts to is that the faith of the people who believe in the message of Jesus, the Christ, must have as its primacy the Christian story (theory) and the “pathic” praxis over and above everything because “liberating action in faith does not call for less but more critical-theoretical analysis and the praxis involves a liberating power which seeks to realize salvation for all and as a result seeks to allow truth to flourish within the Church.”
Truth for the Church, therefore, should not be limited simply to the cognitive power of the believer but above all to the story which Schillibeeckx deems as possessing a “pathic” praxis, which focuses on the stories of the suffering in order to allow those stories to be part of the intrinsic nature of the Church. It is in view of this staunch belief in the power of the Christian message that even secular regimes have confronted the Church in the past whenever it was deemed to be straying from the gospel message. In view of the constant struggle between the mission of the Church and state, it was not surprising that the Church was seen to err in its involvement in secular affairs more than concentrating on the gospel message that was to bring liberation to the suffering.

III. Pope John XXIII and the Progress of the Church

The dignity of the individual and the progress of the human community was to become an important issue for the Church in the history of the world. With the transition from modernity to postmodernity, the Church could not remain in its cocoon but to open itself to the world in order to become aware of the groans of millions of people who sought solace from the Church’s voice against dictators of the world and communism which seemed to be increasing in prevalence among developing countries. By the end of the 1950, a new papal voice was emerging to take the side of not only Christians but non-Christians as well. Pope John XXIII appeared on the stage of the ecclesiasts and the world leaders. His voice resonated with the transformations that were taking place within the era in all spheres of life, including socio-economic, political, cultural, religious, and technological changes. Thus in 1963, he published his first encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and addressed it not only to his brother bishops but to the leaders of the world and all people of good will. John XXII asked Catholics to cease from their
perception that they are the sole possessors of salvation, which had created separation between the Church and other world religions. He called on them to join in the world’s public life in order to transform themselves, their Church, and their environment. Building on the works of his predecessors, the Pope drew on the concept of the common good and argued:

The attainment of the common good is the sole reason for the existence of civil authorities. . . For the common good, since it is intimately bound up with human nature, can never exist fully and completely unless the human person is taken into account at all times. . . It is in the nature of the common good that every single citizen has the right to share in it. . . Hence every civil authority must strive to promote the common good in the interests of all, without favouring any individual citizen or category of citizen. . . Nevertheless, considerations of justice and equity can at times demand that those in power pay more attention to the weaker members of society, since these are a disadvantage when it comes to defending their own rights and asserting their legitimate interests. . .

John XXIII advanced this position before not just to the world but within his own Church, as if to say to the Church, “Make yourself available to the world and be ready to be accused by the world and dialogue with the world!” For the Pope, for instance, the old concept of the *common*
good that demanded equality for the poor had to give way to a new understanding of “preference for the poor, an option for the poor.” The Pope integrated in his vision of the Church and the world, the reiteration of Human rights, which had not gained popularity with the “old Church” of the past. His implication for reiteration of the concept was to emphasize dignity of the human person as created in the image of God and thus has an inalienable rights and duties toward the neighbor and society.

Vallely has argued that the Pope also took a critical look at the state and asked the different states of the world to “impose controls on major companies to obtain social justice.”78 By acting vigorously to structure societal controls directed toward enhancing the dignity of the human person, the Pope was expanding the definition of the common good to embrace the nature of states as having the right to exist and determine its nature for the development of the person. He called the rich nations to be present to the poor nations through aid. On this notion, Davis, the head of CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) has noted that giving aid to the poor countries runs contrary to the aims and goals of the orthodoxy of the neo-liberal free market solutions imposed on poor nations by the West towards the end of the twentieth century. However, the standpoint of the Pope would influence the Second Vatican Council in preparing the document on “The Church in the Modern World,” which would be published as Gaudium et Spes in 1965.

With Pacem in Terris, John XXIII defined the Church in a new way that would change the vision of the Church and propel it into the twenty-first century. The contents of the encyclical already revealed to the Church and the world that there was a broken link between his predecessors and the new age he foresaw as that which would be the foundation of the Church. The Church would be defined anew and propositions for new structures, especially the
hierarchical structure, would also be defined. The Pope was ready to open the windows of the Church to the outside world not only to see the world as it is but also to allow the Church to wrestle with the world in matters concerning the human person’s dignity, rights, duties, and aspirations. A Council would have to be convened to tackle these issues and thrust the Church into a new horizon to face the challenges that were ravaging the world and its peoples. On January 25, 1959, at the Basilica of St. Paul-Outside-the-Walls, the Pope, accompanied by seventeen cardinals, presided over the prayers for unity and after the ceremony, announced, to the shock of the cardinals, the summoning of an ecumenical council to “promote the unity of all the Christian communities.”

Thus, the import of *Pacem in Terris* depicts perspectives that were far more removed from the usual encyclical fundamentals that were mainly doctrinal and dogmatic in character. The encyclical focused on the call for respect for order in the universe, the human person and his fellow man, his society, and his bond with the rest of the world. On one hand, the metaphor of order, running through the encyclical, depicts the idea of wholesomeness, coherence, purity, and transcendence in the universe and in the nature of man and on the other hand, reveals the evil and anguish of the universe and man in a world torn apart. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model would consider that order is hermeneutically understood as a dialogic ground to foster mutual respect, building a bridge of love on which all the broken pieces of human nature could be brought together to create a spiritual reality, which becomes the essence of the bond between man and his world. However, there is caution as one reads the encyclical concerning the prophetic illusion, which prevailed and is still present in our world, an illusion that comes from ideological and technological narcissism.
The sense of man’s rights and duties demonstrates the fundamental spiritual reality of the world in which man finds himself and the dialogic nature of the universe. Thus, the rights and duties become a spiritual reality when men are able to communicate knowledge to each other in the light of truth. John XXIII stands as one of the men whose rhetoric of peace and respect for the world and man places him among those who have worked religiously to promote non-violence in our world. However, prior to this all-embracing encyclical, the Pope has issued an encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, (May 15, 1961) which in sum was directed toward Christianity and social progress. In this document, the Pope affirmed the role of the Church as a teacher able to make distinction between good and evil and with the ability to nurture, like a mother, the poor and the oppressed in fulfillment of its mission. The Pope summarily called on the world community to live in harmony and work toward the common good. As one who was born on the farm, he made a passionate appeal to the world to give the utmost attention to the plight of farmers and farm workers in poor rural areas. Part of this encyclical became a guiding light for the Pope in structuring his famous encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, which influenced the definition of the Church in the “Dogmatic Constitution of the Church” (*Lumen Gentium*) and the “The Church in the Modern World” (*Gaudium et Spes*).81

On January 20, 1959, John XXIII called a council through an inspiration which he called “a flash of heavenly light” to redefine the Church, its history, and its relations with the world. In his view, the council was to establish a dialogue with the individual, society, and the world community, which he had already opened in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. While avoiding the term dialogue, he employed a new concept, “a new Pentecost” for the Church, which in his mind was a renewal (*Aggiornamento*), a word which would characterize the Council’s description of its work. The totality of the work of the Council was to be understood in the light of a renewal
that called for religious experience and conversion, a theme that would later be employed by Bernard Lonergan in defining human subjectivity within the context of a person’s relationship with the Other.\textsuperscript{82} Timothy McCarthy has argued that the Pope was convinced that the Church should respond to God’s presence in the world as manifested through the “signs of the times,” a term that has been used in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* to indicate the discernment of the Church’s activities within itself and in the world.

According to Peny Lernoux, the Pope challenged the new Church which he envisaged to struggle for the dismantling of colonialism in order for the colonized to determine their own future, the effort of workers to obtain their socioeconomic rights and duties, and to make every effort to emancipate women from their subjugation in a paternalistic world.\textsuperscript{83} The term would also be employed by the Council in drafting the document *Gaudium et Spes*: “In every age, the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel . . . We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live.”\textsuperscript{84} These words stand in sharp contradiction with the view of the Church and the view expressed by Giles of Viterbo (1469 – 1532) during the Fourth Lateran Council in 1512 that “men must be changed by religion, not religion by men.”\textsuperscript{85} For John XXIII, the Church existed for all peoples and therefore the *Aggiornamento* which he hoped for the Church was solidarity with the world in fighting against evil and working for the dignity and rights of all men.

McCarthy notes that the view of *Aggiornamento*, according to the Pope, was not “a simple-minded rejection of all that was old and a breezy acceptance of everything new, but rather disengagement from the limitations of the past and from a culture no longer viable.”\textsuperscript{86} In the same vein, Lonergan has contended that “*Aggiornamento* denoted critical involvement in the
new culture without denying its evils and its need for transformation."\textsuperscript{87} Whichever way, the Church was engaged in a crisis facing Christianity as a whole. Modernity and postmodernity brought its own challenges to the Christendom so different from previous periods. The measure of progress was dependent no more on God but on man’s capacity to predict and control nature and, as Fisher argues, “It is not the use of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki and Hiroshima but the desperate struggle since then to create a world in which nuclear warfare becomes impossible.”\textsuperscript{88}

Man’s quest for fulfillment did not depend on God but on the construction and structuring of a welfare society imbued with a sense of justice and peace. Therefore, pertinent questions about man’s existence devolved from whether Christ was human or divine to whether the Church was relevant to man. The search for religious fulfillment therefore directed man’s attention to how the Church could change to serve man’s aspiration toward changing society, meeting his needs, and understanding the changing environment.\textsuperscript{89}

The problems that the Council had to deal with was numerous, ranging from its own hierarchical structure, its own people within the Church, its relationship with other Churches, the state, and additionally the challenge of disengaging itself from the past errors of the Church dating back from the councils of Trent’s contention regarding grace and justification and Vatican I’s philosophical opposition to rationalism and materialism. The refusal of men to be juridicized by the Church on secular matters remained an enigma for the Church especially in teaching about morality. The Church, of course, had taken a unilateral standpoint in the past concerning its teachings without any expectation from the secular society and therefore the estrangement of society from the Church to act independently seemed to be a blow to the existence of the Church. Fisher therefore argues that if the Church had recognized the relative autonomy of the secular order, the Church would never have sought to impose her authority in spheres where she had no
right to do so, nor would it have sought to bolster her prestige with temporal power which
obscured her real mission and prevented her from carrying out her proper task; she would also
not have squandered her energies in political intrigues and power ploys nor would she have sided
with the rulers against the oppressed subjects.90 On account of the Church’s failure to
acknowledge what was happening around her, Vatican II was seen as a necessary convention to
look introspectively at her nature, role, and mission in the world. John XXIII had experienced
not only the arrogance of the Church but also the pains and grief of the Church brought about by
the industrial revolution which ended the feudal system, the humanist existential philosophy, the
French revolution which produced an egalitarian regimes around the world, and the
abandonment of the Church by the bourgeoisie. In his own time, he had experienced World War
II and had seen the derailment of European colonial powers of parts of the world which in some
measure undermined the Church’s cultural systems and the ascendancy of secular mores, and he
also witnessed the emergence of the two worlds, the Eastern and Western superpowers.

Fisher argues that the human miseries which encircled humanity were too glaring for the
Church to pass over and the challenge of technical and scientific discoveries made it imperative
for the Church to divest itself of certain monopolies. In this light, Fisher points out that the
Church had itself to blame, for it was guilty in insisting on its jurisdiction over the secular
domain, the secular philosophers who insisted on the absolute autonomy of the secular were
judged to be guilty and therefore in demanding freedom from the rule of the Church, they threw
out “the baby of religion with the bathwater of ecclesiastical interference, rejecting the whole
sacred order along with the Church’s exaggerated claims in the secular order.”91
IV. Vatican II and the Document on the Church: The Council’s Definitions of the Church

The most two imposing documents of the Council’s work are first “Revelation” (Dei Verbum) and the “Dogmatic Constitution of the Church” or as it is referred to in Latin Lumen Gentium (Light of the nations). I would concentrate on the document on the Church in this section in order to throw light on how it was defined by the Council. In this document, the Council defines the Church as a mystery, seeking to enrich the concept in order to depart from Vatican I’s scholastic and juridical characterization. Thus, in his allocution at the first session, Pope John XXIII first of all defined the Church as the “loving mother of all,” spreading everywhere the fullness of Christian charity and second as a little flock made up of frail and sinful men who stand in constant need of purification and renewal. John XXIII deemed the existence of the Church for the world to be significant and thus sought to open it to the world. In calling the Council, therefore, the Pope took into consideration the past history of the Church and argued on theological grounds that while on one hand the Church cannot depart from the rich patrimony of the early Church Fathers, it must on the other hand take a critical look at the present, “to new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate.” In this light, the Pope departed from some of his predecessors who arrogated to themselves worldly powers and riches with little concern for those they served.

As a point of departure, John XXIII noted that the Christian apostolic spirit of the whole world expected a step forward in the Council’s deliberations on the mission of the Church and especially in its doctrines. Therefore, it was necessary to approach theology in a new way, through research methods and literary forms of modern thought. Laying emphasis on the hermeneutical interpretation of Sacred Scriptures and the Magisterium, the Pope argued that “the
substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another, and all these had to be with equal proportion of respect to the doctrinal formulation of Magisterium, which the Pope characterized as “predominantly pastoral in character.” In pursuance of a new vision for a troubled Church, John XXIII introduced a difference between the old Church and the new Church and argued that while the old Church condemned those who opposed the Church erroneously, the new Church will prefer to “make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity.”

For the Council fathers, the Pope was opening a new vision for the Church which was completely different from the Church in the bygone years. Many of the Fathers gathered at the assembly believed that the history of the old Church was incompatible with a postmodern view of the world. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was evident to the hierarchy of the Church the world beyond its walls to which it was called to minister was experiencing an immense economic trauma, because the industrial revolution was creating huge wealth for some while the majority of people suffered poverty. Significantly, the conditions due to the Industrial Revolution contributed to the loss of the Papal States, especially in Italy during the unification of the country. Vallely has argued that the confluence of historical forces at the period in question was also the opening of new consciousness in the Vatican which produced a new awareness about the world. He notes that in the past, Popes took the side of temporal authority which was contrary to the vision of the itinerant founder of the Church who said to his followers: “You know that among the gentiles, the rulers lord it over them, and great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen . . .” (Mt. 20:25ff). Within the context of this injunction, Vallely points out that since the time of Emperor Constantine when “all the institutions of Rome were put at the feet of Christianity,” the Church gathered ecclesiastical and secular powers and aligned itself
with the wealthy and the powerful. The Church’s apparent contradiction of its proclamation of a communitarian life for the Christian community and its message against the individualism of the West called for a new set of teachings to repair the damage done to the image of the Church and to win the trust of world. Thus, Leo XIII began resolving the contradictions that besieged the Church, but because of his own conservative position, could not complete the task. Leo, at the beginning of his pontificate, issued an encyclical In Scrutabili Dei Consilio in 1878 in which he expressed his fear of liberalism, noting that liberalism was like a “deadly plague which infect [it] in its inmost recesses.” However, fearing the situation that marked his predecessor, Pius IX, concerning matters of the intellectual, economic, and political situation of the times, Leo brought the Church to the margins of the world but made all these attempts within the context of the traditional Church.

The council Fathers had envisioned a different vision of the Church, a vision that would depart from the “triumphalist” definition that characterized the Church in previous centuries. However, did the Council give an efficient definition to the Church that encompasses what Jesus intended in asking that his message be spread throughout the world? The answer may have been insufficient to convince the Church to open its doors to dialogue with its clergy, the laity, and other Churches because the Council Fathers applied several notions to describe what the Church is, failing to provide a definitive basis for openness.

The Council’s definition of the Church began by looking at the Scriptural basis for the existence of the Church, the historical relationship, and then its relevance to the world at large. The struggle in defining the Church from the opening addresses of John XXIII and Paul VI gave the Fathers some measure of insight into exactly what the definition should entail. Desmond Fisher (1967) has argued that in the main, the Fathers construed their definitions from Paul VI’s
opening address to the Council by focusing on the four objectives, namely, renewal through deeper self-awareness, reform in the Church itself and in the world, Christian unity with other Christian denominations and other faith traditions, and building bridges to the contemporary world. These four objectives all point to the idea of dialogue in the sense that the Church, according to John XXIII, had to reinterpret itself in light of what was happening in the world in order to bring help to those she serves. However, it is arguable that from the inception of the Council to its completion, the very people who constitute the Church, the laymen and women, were barely consulted about the convening of the council and matters that would be further discussed. If Vatican II is still in the gestation period after forty years, the above reason could be one of the numerous reasons. Fisher contends that, for instance, in Britain, a survey conducted before the fourth session of the council indicated that only a minority of British Catholics knew what was going on in Rome and that most of them were not even interested in knowing. And the reason for such ignorance could be attributed to the fact that up until the convening of the council as announced by John XXIII, the laymen and women were hardly part of the Church. Was the council concerned with the ordinary person in the Church or was it purely an ecclesiastical business of the cardinals and the bishops and a few priests who happened to have been selected as *peritus*? The answer to this question is “yes” and “no” because John XXIII envisaged a “pastoral” Council but the final product of the Council was something different.

In his *Pacem in Terris* document, John XXIII brought the Church face to face with the things that touched the very soul of the ordinary person in the world, like justice and peace, the dignity of the human and his inalienable rights in society, his community and in his family circles, war, especially the conflict between the East and West, the concern for the developing countries by the rich nations, and also the necessity to strengthen the world body of the United
Nations where the world could meet to articulate their concerns.\textsuperscript{105} John’s concern for the ordinary person focused on the depersonalization of the human being and his estrangement from society from the period of modernity to postmodernity. How could the Church be a “mother of all” to the people in the world?

The attention of over 2,300 cardinals and bishops, not counting the priests who were among them, was redirected to deal with matters that would be too much for the ordinary Christian and non-Christian to conceptualize and embody them in his day to day living. Fisher has strongly argued concerning the view of the ordinary lay person, that the work of the Council had very little effect on their daily concern. How much does the bishop know about the daily lives of the ordinary person and even the pastor in the parish? Fisher maintains that the average layman in the pew is greatly underestimated and consequently does not appreciate the precious “dignity and responsibility of his calling and of his personal responsibility in fulfilling it.”\textsuperscript{106} Neither do many priests know what the layman’s role is nor, by extension, the role of the priesthood. Even if some of them do, they cannot communicate it “because of the lack of suitable channels and because the whole existing climate and machinery of the Church prevent it.”\textsuperscript{107}

There was therefore a major work to be done in setting in motion the work of the Council. In defining the Church, the council called attention to the biblical notion of the Church, calling into question whether the Church is indeed the Good Samaritan which Jesus characterizes his followers. The council called attention to the departure from the old definition by Trent and Vatican I which viewed the Church as “a perfect society,” “centralized” and “defensive,” tending toward selfishness in its own introspection. It therefore defined the Church instead as an open institution and a synergic establishment.\textsuperscript{108} The biblical and the historical views of the Church
brought the Council to reflect on the mission of the Church as one sent to dialogue with the world and to work for justice on behalf of those who are denied their rights.

The Council’s position on this important issue became imperative because of John XIII’s assumptions in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* in which he called on the world to work for justice. The Church could be nothing else unless it stood for justice for the poor – a notion that constitutes its mission. Thus, in pleading for peace with the world to recognize the dignity of the human person, John XXIII adopted a natural law paradigm which calls revelation as foundation of its existence rather than reason, which has been understood in the Church as a highly philosophical treatise that made sense only to theologians. In taking this approach, the Pope could address all people of good will in the world. In appealing for peace, the Pope also was asking the world to recant and bring order to bear on disorder in the world, which he noted “is founded on truth, built upon justice, nurtured and animated by charity, and brought into effect under the auspices of freedom.”

V. The Preparatory Commission

The first draft by the preparatory Commission indicated that the biblical image as we read it in the Vatican II Documents, “the mystery of the Church,” remained by definition the Roman Catholic Church. During the discussion of this first draft in a plenary assembly, it was decided by Council members that a new draft be rewritten. The reason for the rewriting of the draft on the definition of the Church was to remove it as far as possible from the definition given to the Church in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* by Pius XII which sought to define the Church in terms of its social, juridical, and corporate dimensions. The implication of the content of the draft, and here I would prefer to employ Schillibeeckx’s description, which demonstrated that the
Pauline notion of “body” in Romans and 1 Corinthians where believers were considered to be the “body of Christ” through their union with the crucified and resurrected Christ was understood as foundational in the Church’s definition. From this union, the believer, through his actions, transitioned to the social and juridical notion of the concept of the body, which is the Church and which constitutes, according to Schillibeckx “the differentiated and organized totality of gifts and services.”111 By drafting the notion of the Church in this way, the Preparatory Commission sought to transcend the social and juridical definition of the Church as envisaged in Mystici Corporis of Pius XII. The Commission in this fashion laid the emphasis on saving acts of the exalted Christ. The second draft expanded the notion of the Church to include the visible entity of the Church, noting that the meaning as submitted did not connote two entities but one reality because the Church is grounded in this world and is ordered as a community governed by the Pope and the bishops in union with him.112 But another interesting addition was that “although outside the Church’s structure, various elements of sanctification can be found which, as realities peculiar to the Church of Christ, contribute towards Catholic unity,”113 for example, the different cultural strands that promotes healthy social growth in the sphere of politics, economics, and even other authentic religious content that highlights the growth of the human person in his relation with the Supreme Being and his neighbor.

This new second draft was again rejected on the grounds that it omitted the eschatological dimension (that is the Christian orientation toward the second coming of Christ) of the Church because as the definition stood, it gave the impression that the eschaton has been already realized in the Church. By including the notion of the eschaton, the idea of ecumene would be highlighted. The third draft then incorporated the idea of the eschatology which the Church proclaims – looking toward the future for the coming of the Lord.
VI. The People of God as the “Mystical Communion”

Thus, the purpose of the document ‘Dogmatic Constitution of the Church’ is that the mystery of Christ is really present in the Church in a concrete way even though the mystery may be seen and understood as present in shadows.\textsuperscript{114} However, one significant distinction which Schillibeeckx (1990) and others point out is that the new Dogmatic Constitution of the Church written by the Vatican II accepts the interpretation of a Church that is both institutional and eschatological, that is, in this Church, God has brought together those who believe in the saving message of his son so that salvation could be brought about for all peoples.\textsuperscript{115} The primacy of the Church as “The People of God” distinguishes the Council from all other Councils in the life of the Church for it was only after the defining the Church in these terms that the Council turned its attention to other functional ministries that give the Church its physical structure. In taking this stance, the Council was implying that the ministries of the Church are within the notion of the “people of God” and not outside it. In other words, it is within the notion of the people of God that the charism of the Spirit finds its operation.

However, the expression of the notion of the \textit{sensus fidei}{116} was compromised even by the Second Vatican Council because it pointed the Church toward a pyramidal or hierarchical understanding of the Church. Whether this expression was intentional or not, it is still to be seen in the way the government of the Church operates. Schillibeeckx has argued that “. . . in practice a ‘predetermined harmony’ is postulated between the ‘believed faith of the whole Church community’ and what the hierarchy proclaims and formulates as faith and policy, while believers are not involved in either the expression of the faith or the government of the Church.”\textsuperscript{117} Schillibeeckx takes fault with this compromise, contending that according to the will of Christ, there can be no opposition between the content of faith which forms the basis of the faith of
believers and what the hierarchy proposes. For the “object of the life of the people of God is the ‘revealed mystery.’”\footnote{118} However, the role of the hierarchy in decision making is still the same as it was in the past, even according to Vatican II and therefore no real change has taken place. When individual strays from the propositions of the hierarchy, it is deemed as conflict and the resolution of such a conflict always invariably results in the call for obedience.

What this call to obedience entails is that the hierarchical propositions take precedence over the real mystical communion of the faithful and identifies such propositions with a structure that is authoritative and demands obedience. Dulles refers to this notion as the institutional model in terms of power which is concentrated at the top.\footnote{119} The bishop, according to Dulles, is given the fullness of hierarchical power while the priests participate in that episcopal power. In his view, all the functions are juridicized and therefore when bishops teach, the “people of God” are obliged to accept their teachings not because of a particular bishop’s knowledge or personal gifts but because of his office. Regarding the priests’ office, whenever they are enabled through the sharing in the “power of the keys” to give or withhold at their discretion the means of salvation or grace and thus when they command, it is understood as one set over the faithful by Christ and therefore to resist such command is to resist God’s commands.\footnote{120}

The conflict between the “People of God” as the Church and the internal propositions of the hierarchy is what Schillibeekx points out as conflict of interest in which the hierarchy always has the upper hand. Dulles also argues against such appropriation of authority that breeds conflict between the sensus fidei and the sensus hierarchicus because the Church has become too clericalized\footnote{121} even after the Council demanded the inclusion of certain democratic structures like the Roman synods, the national councils, the Episcopal conferences, priests’ council, diocesan councils and parish council of the laity together with thousands of lay organizations in the
Church. However, many of the lay organizations which are sanctioned by the Council as legitimate in their formation and structures, such as the national and diocesan councils, are seen by the hierarchy as interfering with the dispensation of the grace of God and therefore are made subject to the hierarchy. The Council stated:

Every layman should openly reveal to them [bishops and pastors] his needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which befits a son of God and a brother in Christ.122

However, with a compromising stance, the Council asked the laity as well as all disciples of Christ to accept whatever their sacred pastors as representatives of Christ might decree in their role as teachers and rulers of the Church.123 This idea of compromise, notes Schillibeeckx, is what the Council predominantly followed. This position jeopardized the sense of “the People of God” which the same Council has called for as constituting the entire Church.124 The compromise that the Council either advertently or inadvertently maintained is still the monarchic feudal system which derails the Council’s call for equality of all members in the Church and fosters conflict between the sensus fidei (charisma) and the sensus institutionis. The work of the Council thus brings into focus another significant conflictual issue of the Church, that is, the dialogic nature of the Church, because how can a bureaucratic, hierarchical institution allow a real Praxis Religious Dialogue to flourish not only in the Church itself but outside the Church, especially with other Churches?
VII. Revisiting the Dialogic Nature of the Church

By its very nature, the Church is dialogic. It transmits in various ways the Gospel message to its members. However, the mode of transmission of the message had fallen short of the Church’s missionary activity. The Second Vatican Council emphatically defined the Church in terms of dialogue by first noting that the definitions of the Church orient toward the pastoral, Christocentric, biblical, historical, and eschatological nature, and it followed these definitions with the total tasks of the Church as witness (μαρτυρίαν), ministry (διάκονία), and fellowship (κοίνωνία). While these three concepts are all biblical, they also encapsulates for us the gist of the Church’s mission statement as “called to bring the good news to the poor, sight to the blind, and proclaim liberty to captives and announce the approaching favor from Yahweh” (Is. 62: 1-2). In the view of the Council, these three core elements also formed the basis of the Church’s ecumenical work. I would like to briefly analyze the three foundational terms because they implied in the four key features that formed the work of the entire Council’s deliberations.

a. Witness

Witness is a testimonial referent action that a person undertakes on behalf of another in order to affirm, confirm, or dissent on an issue. The Church witnesses to the message of the gospel transmitted to it from the apostles. In view of its long history and culture, the message is tinted by historical and cultural transformations that have taken place over the centuries. However, the gem of the message remains the same throughout the centuries and therefore the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the Church’s mission statement and recalled the faithful testimony by the apostle:
Something which has existed since the beginning, which
we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes,
which we have watched and touched with our own hands,
the Word of life – this is our theme (1Jn 1: 1).

The witness that the believer testifies to also reflects his identity and defines his perception and
his world view. However, in view of the power of the message to which he testifies to, his
participation in social structures is also shaped by the message he carries. Further, the message is
prophetic in nature but prophetic not in the sense of foretelling the future but reinforcing the
mission of the Church, that is, to liberate the captives, and grant sight to the blind and announce
the favorable grace received from Jesus, the Christ. Thus, the witnessing calls for identification
with the values of the message, which is also the coming of the kingdom. It is in view of this
mission that anything that calls for different internal propositions stands in the way of the
“revealed mystery,” which has been articulated by the Second Vatican Council.

b. Prophetic

The prophetic nature of the message constitutes the message of the witness as prophet.

The prophet not only announces but intrinsically becomes the message itself. The mission
statement calls for a mission that involves a *kinosis*, that is, a complete emptying of the Church’s
own nature and “self” in order to become the embodiment of the message it proclaims. Thus in
defining the mission of the Church, the Council focused on reclaiming the dignity of the human
person which can be seen as compromised by the emergence of the Church’s hierarchical feudal
structure and other political institutions over the centuries. *Gaudium et Spes*, in its broader
context, initiated the relationship of the Church with the world. The Council made central to this
document and *Dignitate Humanae* the dignity of the human by affirming: “By no human law can
the personal dignity and freedom of man be so adequately safeguarded as by the gospel of Christ
committed to the Church” (n. 41) and then in light of its mission statement reiterated, “In virtue
of the gospel committed to her, the Church proclaims the rights of man; she also acknowledges
and holds in high regard the dynamism of today whereby these rights are everywhere promoted”
(n. 41). By focusing on the dignity of man as part of its mission, the Church regards as essential
the interrelations existing between the Church and society, communities, and the followers of
Christ. According the individual his inalienable rights, the Council insisted, “Let it be recognized
that all the faithful whether clerics or laity, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry, freedom of
thought and of expressing their mind with humility and fortitude in those matters on which they
enjoy competence.”¹²⁶  By doing and engaging actively in the mission of the Church, service is
being rendered to humanity. As a prophet, the disciple stands beside the oppressed in the struggle
against injustice. Within this context, the gospel comes to live and takes effect.

c. **Service (Διάκονια: Ministry)**

Traditionally, the concept of service or ministry has been strongly attached to a
hierarchical connotation that is, being delegated to perform service within and outside the
community of believers. The Second Vatican Council emphasized the importance of every
“disciple, as an obligation, to take part in the spreading of the faith, because each disciple is seen
as a visible extension of Christ in the world and functions as his body.”¹²⁷  By virtue of
ministering within and outside the community, the disciple not only propagates the gospel but
ethically engages society and the community of believers and points them to the direction of
openness and dialogue through which the message is articulated. Of course, while it cannot be
denied that the Church has since the Second Vatican Council been engaged in the transformation
of society, it still lacks the humility necessary for the performative function of dialogue. The
mission of the Church includes the mutual engagement of other religions and the individual in
dialogue with humility and respect without the call to certain obedience because the word of God
as a communicative agent, within the Praxis Religious Dialogue model, would not be limited to
the purview of the few who believe that only they can possess the charism for biblical
interpretation. Limitation of the interpretive gift to the hierarchy alone runs counter to the
reading of Vatican II articulated by the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue.

In the document *Nostrae Aetate*, the Council argued that other believers of different
religions search for answers to their complex questions concerning their existence through these
different religions and so fulfill the notion of religion as concerning a relationship with a deity
who is believed to respond to the needs and concerns of the worshippers. It is in light of this
understanding that the Council emphasized the notion that salvation also lies beyond the confines
of the Catholic Church and therefore the Church cannot distance itself from these religions but
should engage in a Praxis Religious Dialogue with them in an effort to find a common purpose in
the service of all humankind. The characterization of the Church as “witness,” “prophetic,” and
“service” points the Church in a direction where it has no choice but to be the voice of men and
women who grope in the dark while propping up those who are already baptized into the Church.

VIII. **Relevance of the Praxis Religious Dialogue to the Church**

The encyclical *Pacem in Terris* highlights three main themes, namely, order in nature and
man, man’s relationship with his fellow man in community and society, and man’s association
and relationship with his political sphere. In its entirety, there is a call for respect for nature, life, and man’s contributions towards his society, and all these rights and duties are to focus on the promotion of the common good of society. Invariably, the dignity of the human person, which is intricately interwoven with his rights and duties, underlie the whole work. John XXIII’s experience taught him to understand God’s creation as a dialogue that invites each person to participate and respond. The dialogic nature of the bond between God and man restrains anyone in engaging in disorderly conduct towards the laws that govern the human person and God’s creation.

Additionally, the proliferation of economic life in the West was seen as not an end to human life until “in the intimacy of his conscience,” the human person, inserted into a political community could relate to his fellow man without unreflective biases but in the light of ethics that demanded respect and complete negation of the self (*kinosis*). The hermeneutics of faith which also runs through the work raises the assumption that while the majority of the world’s population was Christians, evil seemed to be ubiquitous and therefore the only practical thing that could restore peace was the amalgamation of faith with action – a theory-praxis model – for the enhancement of the human person and his world. These elements that surface in the encyclical can only be appreciated when reconciled with the person of Pope John XXIII.

In calling on the Church to be attentive to the “signs of the times,” the Pope was asking the Church to observe the rapid transformation in the world in the areas of culture, religion, the growing gap between the rich and poor states, ideological differences between nations, the explosion within the scientific realm, and the deeper question concerning man’s existence in this universe. Thus, in an attempt to give some provisional answers to some of these questions, the “Pastoral Constitution of the Church” articulated the breakdown of dialogue in the world and
called on the Church to actively participate in the activities of the world so as to fashion man’s conscience in accordance with its mission to further progress. In a paragraph concerning the freedom of man to pursue his vision in the realm of science, the Council made the following statement:

. . . “acknowledging this just liberty,” this sacred Synod affirms the legitimate autonomy of human culture and especially of the sciences.

Further, the Council called the Church to listen, noting, “We should listen to the voice of God . . . in the voice of the times,” in order to discern the groans of the world, which implies also the engagement of dialogue with different institutions in the world which the Church considered in the past as secular in order to foster the progress of man, especially with other Churches which have been conceived by the Church as outside the realm of salvation. Thus, in five main areas, the Council devoted its attention to look at a) the dialogue within the Church, recognizing lawful diversity, b) dialogue with “those brothers and communities not yet living with us in full communion, c) with “all who acknowledged God,” d) with those “who cultivate beautiful qualities of the human spirit, but do not yet acknowledge the Source of these qualities,” and finally, e) with “those who oppress the Church and harass her in manifold ways.”

It went further even to acknowledge atheists, arguing that all men should join in the fight for progress for the amelioration of man’s state and his search for meaningful life in this world. In humility, the Council asked the Church to admit its past errors and join in shouldering the responsibility for the present plight of the world, and “that rather than striving to rule in the
affairs of men, the Church must offer herself as a servant to men. 

In light of this understanding, the Council argued strongly that the mission of the Church is directed toward creating a social milieu in which man does not consider himself as *qua* man but as one inserted within the social setting where he finds his fulfillment as a social being. The Council in this vein noted

>This social life is not something added on to man.” . . . Man’s social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on each other.

The notion of community which prevails throughout the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and the work of Vatican II demonstrate the uniqueness of the mission of the Church. The Church could bring about the new visions through dialogue, which demands reflection, because human existence cannot, in the word of Paolo Freire, be based and achieved through “false words but only by true words.” Reflection is necessary to recognize the truth encountered in dialogue and thereby to transform the world. To exist in the world is to dialogue with the world and in dialoguing, we name the world to give it a new horizon of significance which leads to the idea of praxis that is, transforming the world through dialogue. Freire argues in this context that in transforming the world, “no one can do it alone . . . in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.” Freire thus emphasizes the importance of dialogue as a significant constituent of transforming the world because through the interaction, we not only fulfill our vocation as creators but also fulfill ourselves by becoming more human. The Church thus cannot engage in the process of dialogue without first becoming humble in the face of the Other because it is through a self critical
analysis that it can forge continuity with the Other in the hope of transforming each other. Thus, Pierre Furter once argued:

> The goal will no longer be to eliminate the risks of temporality by clutching to guaranteed space, but rather to temporalize space . . . The universe is revealed to me not as space, imposing a massive presence to which I can but adapt, but as a scope, a domain which takes shape as I act upon it.\(^\text{134}\)

The task of the Church is therefore to engage the world in dialogue to facilitate the development of man in his search for fulfillment of his being. The difficulty for the Church in coming down from its pyramidal posture to the base of human thought dates back from its monarchic feudal period when it understood itself as above the world of consciousness and ordinary life but, as Freire points out, “our cultural workers must serve the people with great enthusiasm and devotion, and they must link themselves with the masses, not divorce themselves from them.”\(^\text{135}\)

The notion of the “masses” has been understood in the communist and socialist terms, and has therefore attained a pejorative meaning compared to the meaning associated with the notion of capitalism and democracy, but within the biblical context, the “masses” (\textit{anawim} in Hebrew) are the “poor” (the overburdened with the travails of this world) to whom the Church is sent to bring the Good News (Lk.19: 20; Mt. 5:3).

In this context, Freire articulates Pope Leo XIII and Pope John XXIII’s view for the Church in their social thought, which tempered the Church’s perception of itself as “knowing all” and as encouraging elites to view themselves favorably because of their “good deeds” for the
poor. Freire notes “the myth of the charity and generosity of the elites, who, as a class engage in the selective doing of “good deeds”, and further this view of selective “good deeds” is criticized by John XIII in his encyclical Mater et Magistra, in which the Pope argued that “the myth that the dominant elites, recognizing their duties,” promote the advancement of the people, so that the people, in a gesture of gratitude, should accept the words of the elites and be conformed to them”136 should not be part of the Church’s missionary endeavors because it is thematizing and calls into question the conceptualist approach to subjectivity which underestimates the essence of dialogue and a naïve interpretation of poverty.

Probably, one can assume that throughout the Council’s work on the definition of the Church and its engagement in the world through the reading of the “signs of the times,” the Council adopted a naïve view of the “individual” and “the Church” as subjects in dialogue because of the nature of its mission. The Council barely touched the notion of the individual as a knowing being, whose objectivity is essential to dialogue though not foundational, and the reality of history, culture, and the freedom of societies and their development. These concepts, which are ontological, call the Church to divest itself to uphold the intrinsic value inherent in the gospel it preaches. For it is inexplicatively difficult to understand, for instance, the Church’s call on society to establish dialogic structures to facilitate communication among themselves while it puts barriers in the way of dialogue with other Churches and the individual within the Church. A typical example is when the Church becomes critically engaged with the notion of “corporeality” and yet cannot come to grasp with the notion of the “body” in its own theology. Saracino argues that as Christians, we are overwhelmed with bodies and body language: “There is the human body, of believers, the ecclesial body, the incarnate body of Christ, and the Mystical Body of Christ,”137 and yet when it comes to dealing with the notion of the real human “body,” the
Church immediately recalls a traditional perception of the body based on Augustinian thought that points to the notion of concupiscence (carnal desire). The convening of the Council has brought many changes to the Church and has transformed the way it employs its tools for its missionary activities. The challenge still remains in the area of dialogue which was the foundation of the Council’s work. The Council ended its convention but its articulations are still to be operationalized. The community called “The People of God” is still on its pilgrimage, learning through the struggle of daily life the essence of being human for the sake of the other. The challenge for the Church now is how to open itself by removing the canonic obstacles that prevent it from engaging in fruitful and genuine dialogue with its own members and other Churches. The dialogue calls for a *kinosis* (emptying of oneself) in order to see beyond what lies in the “between” on the narrow ridge.
ENDNOTES

3 Ibid. p. 146.
5 Ibid. p. 149.
6 Ibid. p. 155.
7 Ibid. p. 155.
8 Ibid. p. 157.
10 Ibid. p. 2.
11 Ibid. p. 2.
12 Ibid. p. 3.
15 Syllabus of Errors (1864), 42, 70, 184, 296

17 Hales, p. 11.

18 Ibid. p. 11

19 Ibid. p. 11

20 Edward Eldon Young Hales. p. 12-14.

21 Ibid. p. 15


23 Ibid. p. 179.

24 Ibid. p. 183.

25 Ibid. p. 183.


27 Ibid. p. 185

28 See Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.


33 Mystici Corporis, American Press, ed, No. 29; tromp ed, No 21.

34 See the encyclical Mystici Corporis and also for related issues see Hamer: The Church is a Communion, p. 18-20.


38 *Rerum Novarum*, 45.

39 *Rerum Novarum*, 58.1


41 *Republic*, Bk. IV, 475e-476a

42 *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1130b; Book I, 1094a.


45 Ibid. p. 65

46 *Rerum Novarum*, 49.


48 Ibid. p. 4.

49 Ibid. p. 12.

50 Vallely, p 7.

51 *Quadragesimo Anno*, 79

52 Ibid. p. 88.


55 *Vatican Ii, Lumen Gentium*, nos. 18 & 21.

57 Ibid. p. 199.
58 Ibid. p. 199.
59 For a comprehensive reading of Bismarck’s address, see N. Siegfried, Actenstücke betreffend der preussischen Culturkampf, (Freiburg, 1882), p. 99-100.
60 See Siegfried, Actenstücke, no. 35, p. 266. Also for further reading on the answer of the German Bishops, see ibid., 264-7. For the approval by the Pope of the bishops’ letter, see ibid. p. 271.
61 Dezinger-Schönmetzer, Enchiridion, 3074; see Mansi 52, (1330-133).
62 Schillibeeckx, the Church, p. 203.
63 Pius X. Lamentabili., ASS 40, 1907, p. 470-478. The document states inter alia, that ‘Veritas non est immutabilis plus quam ipse homo, quippe quae cum ipso, in ipso et per Ipso evolvitur.’
64 Ibid. p. 470-478.
66 See Schillibeeckx, The Church, p. 216.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
70 Ibid
74 Ibid. p. 178.
308

76 See Schillebeeckx, p. 178.

77 *Pacem in Terris*, 56.


80 See *Mater et Magistra*.

81 See *The Documents of Vatican II*.

82 See his book *The Subject*.


84 *Documents of Vatican II*: ‘The Church in the Modern World’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4)


89 Ibid.


91 Ibid. p. 25.


93 Ibid. p. 12


95 Ibid. p. 715.

96 Ibid. p. 715.


98 Ibid. p. 716.

100 Ibid. p. 4

101 *Inscrutabili Dei Concilio*, 1878.

102 For the Council, the Church is biblical, historical and dynamic which separates it from the old definition of the Church as a ‘perfect society.’ See Vatican II Documents, *Lumen Gentium*, Introduction.


104 Ibid. p. 10

105 See the document, *Pacem in Terris*.

106 Fisher, p. 26-29

107 Ibid. p. 12.


109 *Pacem in Terris*, no. 167

110 *Schemata Constitutione et Decretorum*, series secunda, Vatican City 1962, ch. 1, nos. 7, 12.


112 Ibid. p. 191.

113 *Schemata Constitutione et Decretorum*, series secunda, Vatican City 1962, ch. 1, nos. 7, 12.

114 Ibid. p. 194.

115 For more on this view, see Schillibeeckx and Karl Rahner, Avery Dulles and also *Schemata Constitutionis et Decretorum and also the Constitution on the Church*,

116 *Sensus fidei* espresses the notion that it is the People of God who articulate the work of the Spirit within and among them and it also expresses the free play of the Spirit within and among the people of God. Other notions such as *sensus communis* or *Christifideles* are all expressions pointing the people of God and not to the hierarchy. See A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, ch. 3 where he discusses the notion of the Church as a Mystical Communion and also E. Schillibeeckx, *The Church*, p. 207.


118 Schillibeeckx, p. 208.

120 Ibid. p. 154.

121 Ibid. p. 155.


123 Ibid. no. 37.


126 *Gaudium et Spes*, 62.6

127 Dulles, p. 215.

128 Pastoral Constitution of the Church (*Gaudium et Spes*), nos. 58 -93.

129 Ibid., no. 59.

130 Ibid, p. 311-312.

131 Ibid. ‘Response,’ p. 312.

132 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 25.


138 St. Augustine, “Treatise on Marriage and Concupiscence.” See Book 1, Chapter 9. The idea if the “body” for Augustine was understood as something that was an obstacle for Christian development. The Church’s insistence on the body as an instrument for sin in its previous teachings, was taken from St. Augustine’s teachings on the notion of the body as the source for carnal sins. This notion has somewhat changed over the years but the underlying assumption of the body as leading to sin still lingers on in the Church’s teachings.
Chapter 8
The Models of the Preconciliar and Postconciliar Church

I. The Ecclesiological Models of the Church: the Vertical and the Horizontal Axes

II. The Concept of Model

III. The Church’s Structure: Situating the Church as an Organization
   1. The Physical and Spiritual Image of the Church
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      a. Weberian-Taylorism Classical Structural Theories
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IV. Conceptualizing the Church as an Institution: The Church as Society

V. Elements of the Church’s Cultural Systems Necessary for Interdependence
   a. Authority, Traditions, and Paternalism
   b. Pastoral Nature of Leadership in the Church
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BACKGROUND

Over the years, both Catholic and Protestant theologians have provided different views on the kind of ecclesiology being practiced in their respective traditions. The word “ecclesiology” refers to the study of the Church, addressing issues about the nature of the entity defined by that term. Is the Church an organization/institution, or is it a mystery, in which case it is removed from the realm of physical reality? Further, if it is an organization, then what are the elements that constitute its structure? In addition, if it is not an organization in the strict sense of the word but simply a mystery, then what makes up this mystery?

I intend to limit the focus to defining the Church as an organization (institution) and as a mystici corporis, as Pius XII defined it in 1943, pointing the Church to a transcendent entity situated in existential concrete realities. From both a theological and ecclesiological perspective, the Church is a community of religious believers. However, when situated within an organizational perspective, it is understood as possessing all the different characteristics of an organization which makes it definable in terms of its physical structure, behavior, and functions. It is important within the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model to explain the Church from both an organizational and ecclesiological perspectives because the nature of the Church is something that embraces both a divine and temporal realities. Two different approaches are possible for such an analysis: a subjective approach, which describes the different interactive processes that take place within its environment, and an objective perspective, which describes an organization in terms of its structure.

Subjective approach places humans in the active and creative role within the organization, and therefore analyzes human behavior, sense making of their actions, and their impact on the organization, while the objective perspective places structure as the central locus
of the organization. There are theorists who maintain that structure is constantly being created in an organization (Morgan & Smircich, 1980), and Weick has noted concerning the organizational structure approach: “A creative process is required in order for the structure to be recognized as routine. Structure is not just there. It is enacted and “accomplished” through the process of organizing.” The organizational structure of the Church fits within the context of how those within the Church, through their communicative enactments and accomplishments, determine the nature and growth of the Church’s physical structure. Dulles argues: “The Church of Christ does not exist in this world without an organization or structure that analogously resembles the organization of other societies.” Weick’s perspective permits both the subjective and objective approaches to frame the understanding of organization as not merely a structure but made up of humans whose interlocking behaviors reveal the nature of the organization and its goals achieved through formulated rules and guidelines. Weick states, “Goals are formulated and accounted for” through human interaction, noting that people’s actions in the organization “generate outcomes that ultimately provide the raw material for seeing something.” This perspective informs the Praxis Religious Dialogue model concerning the make up of the Church—believers who, through their interactive behaviors and performative activities discern the future direction of the Church so that the leaders can formulate guidelines for the Church’s missionary activity. In theological terms, the interlocking and interactive communication of the People of God constitutes the sensus fidei, which the Church believes is guided by the Holy Spirit.

In effect, St. Paul analogously compares the Church to a structure with Christ as the head, and the people as the body of Christ (Col. 1:18; 1:24; Eph. 1:22; 4:15). The interlocking and interactive behavior of the people of God is punctuated by their communicative practices, which in turn reveal what Weick terms as “organizing,” that is, their various activities implicit in their
verbal communication, their actions, and the validity given to each other to produce the necessary environment outcomes needed for the structuring of the organization. Thus, in analyzing the ecclesiological models of the Church, it is important to take into consideration some of the analogies used to describe the Church in its divine and human characteristics. I will mostly be using the work of Dulles, who has done so much work for the Church in the area of ecclesiology.

Avery Dulles has noted that it would be crude to address definitively the concept “ecclesiology” from its inherent polarities such as protestant vs. catholic, prophetic versus priestly, vertical versus horizontal, and institution versus event in view of the complexity of the concept. He therefore approaches the definition from the notion of “types” and “models,” which permits definition also of the “mystery” nature of the Church in analogous terms since human beings describe their lived-experiences in the world in terms of demonstrable symbols.

The application of “models” to describe the notion of “mystery” affords him a way of analogously describing the Church in its divine dimension. Dulles’s approach informs the Praxis Religious Dialogue model in its understanding of the Church in terms of the Church’s divine and human axes of “structure” and “behaviors.” This notion is important for the Praxis Religious Dialogue model because it approaches the Church from the perspective that considers organizations to be made up of people with different historical, traditional, cultural and socio-political backgrounds who through their common baptism are bonded together in the Spirit to promote not only their dignity as human beings but also the dignity of all peoples through sincere dialogue. The structuring of their activities is entrusted to the leaders of the Church in a designating sense so that there will be uniformity in their missionary vision. The leaders’ work therefore is understood in terms of “service” to the community. In this light, the Second Vatican
Council proclaimed: “These pastors, selected to shepherd the Lord’s flock, are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1).\textsuperscript{14} The pastors constitute the leadership of the organization called Church within which the believers, trusting certain individuals, repose their trust ($\pi\varsigma\tau\epsilon\nu\nu$) to help them in their religious endeavors through their sincere direction not as monarchs but as mere servants and stewards who are in constant dialogue with those they serve. On account of this trust, the leaders have the responsibility of initiating dialogue among the different interest groups within the community of believers so that through such mutual dialogue members can fulfill the injunction of the Lord: “strengthen your brothers,” (Lk. 22: 32) because it is the mission of the Church to seek to strengthen those who are weak and extend compassion to them.

From an organizational standpoint, George Cheney has defined the Church as “bureaucratic and hierarchical; it is steeped in tradition.”\textsuperscript{15} Cheney describes the Roman Catholic Church as an organization that has endured “as a self-correcting, living system.”\textsuperscript{16} He further notes that the Catholic Church qualifies not only as an institution but also as an organization of organizations or seen in another way as an organization of interest groups and movements.\textsuperscript{17} Cheney’s assertions reveal the Church as an organization that possesses similar characteristics of many social organizations (see Dulles, \textit{Models of the Church}, 1974, p. 1). However, the Church over the centuries has embodied rhetorical elements of organizational identity through different structural processes. These elements articulated by Cheney recognize that communication is constitutive of organizations. The particular character, the utilization of particular language structure, and the different voices within the Church make it a communicative entity, which informs the Praxis Religious Dialogue model in its attempt to
encourage the Church to be transparent in dialoguing with members in the community and other religious faith traditions.

Chester Barnard has pointed out that “organization is a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons,” implying that in view of the consciously coordinated activities of those involved, one cannot perceive it as merely a physical, concrete entity that is removed from individual action. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model envisages that through the different coordinated activities of the believing community, the leaders will be able to pull together those activities and validate them through dialogue in order to transform in a coherent manner the goals of the missionary activities. Barnard further argues that when all the different physical environments are removed, what we are left with is a communicative system that constitutes the essence of the organization. Cheney points out that Barnard’s view implies that the praxis nature of an organization is demonstrated in terms of how people interact, the kind of language they employ in their interactions, and how they persuade each other.

These authors’ views point to the complexity of the rhetorical nature of organization, which the Church has had difficulty in utilizing despite its long varied multi-cultural identities and rhetorical character. In effect, the Second Vatican Council sought to encourage the Church to depart from the top-down model of control to a cyclical formulation in which each member in the Church can identify with the very nature of the Church, which is dialogic (see “Opening Message” to the Council) and which Barnard maintains is necessary for an organization’s survival. The identification with the dialogic nature of the Church establishes members’ participation in the mission of the Church that defines their identity and allows them to share their experiences with each other within the given historical moment. The Praxis Religious
Dialogue Model seeks to enhance this historicality of the biblical narrative and encourage all members of the Church to be part of the story of Jesus through discourse.

I will return to this notion but first I will analyze the concept of “model” within the context of the Church as Dulles employs it in his book The Models of the Church. The analysis is important because it opens a horizon of opportunity to speak about the Church in analogical terms, which permits an experiential approach necessary for the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue.

I The Ecclesiological Models of the Church: The Vertical and the Horizontal Axes

Ecclesiological models of the Church embrace the notion of paradox inherent in the nature of the Church. The theologies of both Vatican I and II build on the Church’s past and present history to present an ecclesiological standpoint. First, the Church has been conceived of in two dimensions, that is, vertical and horizontal – divine and human. However, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model recognizes the difficulty encountered by theologians and ecclesiologists in explaining the transcendent nature of the concept of the Church, which requires faith for acceptance. Thus, from a human standpoint, models are employed to spell out the goals of the mission of the Church as “teaching,” “sanctifying,” and “governing” in order to bring the Church from the realm of the divine into the horizon of human language. However, the concept of model employed in theology to explain the nature, the physical structure, and the mission of the Church is only one of many concepts which in itself is inadequate in expressing the transcendent significance of the Church’s nature. Ewert Cousins has noted:

Theology is concerned with the ultimate level of religious mystery, which is even less accessible than the mystery of
the physical universe. Hence our religious language and symbols should be looked upon as models because, even more than the concepts of science, they only approximate the object they are reflecting. . . . To use the concept of model in theology then, breaks the illusion that we are actually encompassing the infinite within our finite structures of language. It prevents concepts and symbols from becoming idols and opens theology to variety and development just as the model method has done for science.23

Thus, the use of this type of model in religion demonstrates the struggle human beings experience in employing language to explain things beyond their human intelligence. The language of a given model is not neutral, however; it carries a standpoint or perspective that works rhetorically. Applying the notion of “model” to explain the mission of the Church as teaching, sanctifying, and governing frames the Church as an institution in which the functions and powers rest with a few members in the Church. Dulles notes that the divisions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing lead to further distinctions between the Church teaching and the Church taught, the Church sanctifying and the Church sanctified, and the Church governing and the Church governed. In each case, the Church is identified with a governing body or a hierarchy (Congar, 1965 24; Primum Schema: Vatican I- Dogmatic Constitution of the Church In Collectio Lacensis, 1890). 25

The models represent the Church as an institution in which the pastors are in charge of dispensing holiness through the “banking method” system, as Dulles notes, and in which the
recipients’ sole participation is their availability and acquiescence to the dispensers. The dispensers have the power to impose, under the pain of excommunication, their doctrines with executive power of governance invested in them from the apostolic see.26 These institutional characteristics reflect the hierarchical nature of the structure that describes the Church even after the Second Vatican Council.

In fact, Vatican I took pains to emphasize this point: “The Church of Christ is not a community of equals in which the faithful have the same rights,”27 and elsewhere it further noted, “He cannot have God for his Father who does not have the Church for his mother.”28 Accordingly, Vatican I could maintain the article of faith, pointing out that “outside the Church no one can be saved”29 and that “Who is not in this ark will perish in the flood.”30 These articles of faith proposed by the Council were indicators that the Church was an “ideal,” perfected beyond to any other society in accordance with the definition by Robert Bellarmine who propounded that the Church is a societas perfectas.31 The tendency of Catholicism to assert itself authoritatively after the reformation period turned the Church into a “total institution exuding terror and creating fear among both its members and dissenters.”32 It distanced itself from other denominations that have separated from the one true Church. Dulles has further noted that the three chief assets of the institutional nature of the Church gained acceptance in Church documents of the past few centuries and strengthened its hand in dealing with its opponents. He writes:

Since the Catholic Church repeatedly affirms that its doctrinal, sacramental, and governmental structures are founded in divine revelation, it is difficult for the
faithful to take a different position. Any Catholic who
wants to back away from these institutional claims is
likely to be embarrassed by the strong official pronoun-
cements that can be quoted against him.33

The institutional nature of the Church, according to Dulles, has provided significant links
between an uncertain historical periods and a significant religious past through its insistence on
the element of continuity with Christian origins.34 Therefore, it has been very difficult for the
Church to make a one hundred eighty degree turn to accommodate the transformations taking
place in the world today. However, in dialectical fashion, this same insistence on institutional
nature has also affirmed “the identity of Catholics”35 in a world of confusion and
dissillusionment, giving Catholics stability in their religious aspirations and augmenting their
loyalty to the institution. The institutional nature of the Church also reinforced the Church’s laws
both in defining its ecclesiastical offices and in assailing its dissenters with both equanimity and
magnanimity to the degree that other Christians viewed Catholics with envy.36

Dulles and other theologians have also maintained that the insistence on the institutional
character of the Church has very meager support from a scriptural basis and even from records of
early Christian tradition because scripture does not “portray the Church as a single tightly-knit
society.”37 For instance, the Pauline models of the Church tend to be “more organic, more
communitarian, more mystical.”38 The Praxis Religious Dialogue model takes seriously these
three elements as constitutive of the Church’s nature and mission. Within the Church, all
members, through their common baptism, are called to live the Word in their lives, a notion that
the Pauline letters frequently proclaim because through baptism, the community of the baptized
are called to relate to each other with mutual respect and compassion that points the community
to the mystical nature of the Church. Paul VI pointed out in his first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*:
“The mystery of the Church is not a mere object of theological knowledge; it is something to be lived, something that the faithful soul can have a kind of connatural experience of, even before arriving at a clear notion of it.”

The Praxis Religious Dialogue model takes further the underlying assumptions of Paul VI’s argument by declaring some of the institutional elements in the Church as unfortunate because of the impediments they create for an authentic Christian experience of the Word. For example, the insistence on virtues like obedience to the *Magisterium* and to the hierarchy instead of encouraging members to strive to work toward achieving virtues like compassion, love for one’s neighbor, respect, acceptance of each member as constitutive of the proclamation of the mission of the Church, and the understanding of diverse opinions as derivative from a mutual understanding through dialogue which Vatican II termed as “compassionate dialogue” are often ignored or compromised in favor of conformity, indeed obedience, to hierarchical views. From this perspective, it could be argued that three deficiencies emerged in the Church’s history to become essential characteristics of the Church, namely, clericalism, juridicism, and triumphalism. The insistence on these elements created passivity among the lay faithful that in the course of the Church’s development made them mere appendix to the hierarchy status and the proclamation of the gospel became like a legal entity to them. It also removed the focus of attention from the *communio fidelium* to the hierarchy and by so doing displaced the community of believers who constitute the Church.

In effect, from the perspective of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model, the inherent gem of the biblical narrative that serves as a guiding principle to the pilgrimage of the faith
community has been compromised for the primacy of hierarchical authority with the demand for obedience from the faithful. The deficiencies implicit in the institutional nature of the Church have also displaced the prophetic nature of the *sensus fidei* to situate it within the hierarchical structure. Jesus Christ himself, as a great prophet of all times, criticized the institutional religion of his time, while referring the hierarchy and their institutional religion to judge him by the Spirit from which he spoke (Mt. 5: 1-48). Further, the Pauline ecclesiology does not admit institutionalism but rather a *non-officio* system. These views are biblical in content and they oppose the strict juridical system of the institutional Church of Christ because institutionalism places impediments in the path of creativity and fruitful scriptural and theological deliberations.42

Many scholars have argued against institutionalism and its resulting effects in the Church, especially in our age when the Postconciliar Church is mandated to strive for the achievement of excellence in both intramural dialogue and ecumenism (see Vatican II Document, *Unitatis Redintegratio*; also Dulles, 1978/2002; Schillibeeckx, 1990). The task for the Church can be realized in its fullest dimension when its institutional nature is tempered with its mystical essence, which is always guided by the Spirit through discernment of the times. In our present age, institutionalism is equated with a closed society or community. Such a society or community is regarded with suspicion because it nullifies the creative abilities of people, clouds their vision, and prevents them from growth to maturity.43

The Second Vatican Council recognized the need for a change in the definition of the Church as a perfect society and thus departed from the insistence on the notion of institutionalism. It emphasized both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Church to highlight the nature and mission of the Church in the world—a community of believers whose
mission is justified by their ability to confirm and strengthen each other (Lk.22: 32-34), witness (Mt.28: 16-20), and serve (Jn. 13: 1-15) one another and the world, always bringing to bear on their mission the essence of dialogue inherent in their biblical story, that is, reconciliation through “compassionate dialogue.”

For the Council, the implications embedded in the definition were important for the process of aggiornamento in the Church in order to move away from the constant insistence on the structures of institutionalism that hindered the Church and its relationship with many of its own members, especially other faith traditions. In fact, Paul VI stated in closing the Council: “From now on aggiornamento will signify for us a wisely undertaken quest for a deeper understanding of the spirit of the Council and the faithful application of the norms it has happily and prayerfully provided.” The Praxis Religious Dialogue model reminds the Church to continue the process of analyzing the concept of aggiornamento, situating it within its broader context to embrace the intended spirit of the Council in order to make inroads to the hearts of the people of God through sincere dialogue.

II. The Concept of Model

The term model is associated with words like images, typologies, structure, and paradigms. These conceptual elements have been employed primarily in the secular sciences. However, within the field of theology, I.T. Ramsey (1964) has demonstrated its application and usefulness. He applies the analogy of science to explain that when scientists desire to explain their findings, they reconstruct their experimentations with sufficient functional schematics that corresponds to nature with the object under study. He notes: “In any scientific understanding, a model is better the more prolific it is in generating deductions which are open to experimental
verifications and falsifications." According to this author, the term model is synonymous with analogy, which has been used in Neo-Scholastic theology to explain certain transcendental notions.

Further, Ewert Cousins notes that since theology deals mainly with concepts that transcend our human language, it employs the use of a religious language and symbols to translate these transcendental ideas into human understanding. This translation provides only an approximation, not the fullness of the concept. "To use the concept of model in theology, then, breaks the illusion that we are actually encompassing the infinite within the finite structure of language. It prevents concepts and symbols from becoming idols and opens theology to variety and development just as the model has done for science." However, Cousins warns that the application of the scientific method of utilizing models to explain or reconstruct religious experience opens up a dangerous road to the theologian because the application of language and symbols cannot adequately convey the religious experience that is to be explained or reflected on because that kind of approach may negate or flatten the consideration of the subjective element that is at the core of religion, since religious experience touches the very core of the human person. Therefore, two typologies, according to Dulles, are needed to for the utilization and application of the concept of model, namely, explanatory and exploratory, in order to convey the sense and functions of the concept of model.

The explanatory use of models is for the purpose of synthesizing what is already known, for example, the biblical notion of the parable of the mustard seed and the Sower (Mk. 4: 1-20; 30-32;). Some have interpreted that particular parable when considered as a model to convert the meaning of growth and mystery. The exploratory or heuristic model is applied for the discovery of new theological horizons, and the method is only meaningful in theological
expositions when it is embedded in Scriptures since the exploration is done through the revelation of God to man (Gal. 1:8). Theology therefore utilizes this type of model to discover new possibilities and define the historicality of the moment for the Church, a concept known in theology as the discernment of the times.\textsuperscript{51}

Further, the method serves its fullest purpose when its findings focus on helping the Christian community to discover new insights that were not available to them in the past, for example, the notion of the Church as Bridegroom derived from both the Gospels and the Pauline analogies of biblical notion of Israel’s relationship with Yahweh, and Christ as the Cornerstone of the Church.\textsuperscript{52} However, while these types of models help us to come close to the mystery of God, they do not give us a sense of knowledge of the fullness of the mystery hidden within the core of the Church.\textsuperscript{53} However, Dulles maintains that the recognition of inner and supernatural dimensions of theological epistemology is one of the major breakthroughs of our time because in the exploration of theological knowledge, theory and practice have been united.\textsuperscript{54} The fruitfulness of such theories, however, depends on how they are operationalized and triangulated through shared religious experience. When orthodoxy is not coupled with orthopraxis, theories remain moribund. Further, when a model is inappropriately applied, in the sense of being stretched beyond its horizon of possibilities (e.g., Gadamer, 1980), it ceases to be a model.\textsuperscript{55}

Models of the Church are useless if they do not bear witness to or reflect the lived experience of the faith community. An adequate model must take account of the faith community’s participation in historical, lived experience through the sharing in the life of the Church because the Church exists as a dynamic reality not for itself but for the members who bind themselves together through their faith to share in its life. Thus, Dulles further points out that some models are images that can be imagined, while others are abstract in nature and are not
precisely images. Dulles observes that a model is only as good as the theology that underlies it and does not exhaust explanation nor limit possibilities for exploration of alternative conceptualizations. As Max Black has pointed out, models are analogues, and Ian Ramsey has noted that they are disclosures to the extent that they partially and functionally direct our attention to the Church as a mystery using inadequate linguistic and metaphorical elements because of our failure to grasp the transcendental nature of the mystery. For these reasons, the explanatory and exploratory analysis of the concept of “model” becomes all the more important in dealing with the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of the Church so that the meaning of the Church is not compromised.

The enigma that the study of the Church poses to scholars regarding what really constitutes the Church has evolves contradictory views (Greeley, 1970; Schillibeeckx, 1990). Some have argued against the institutional nature of the Church because it is contrary to the biblical notion of “community” while others think that as a visible structure, it is an organization that has over the centuries become institutionalized. These arguments demonstrate the ambiguity inherent in many of the demonstrative definitions given to the “Church” in terms of images. These definitions, no matter how contradictory they may be, are helpful because “images” help human beings to comprehend the incomprehensible through reflection.

Sociologists like Greeley apply the concept of “organization” to define the Church from its structural image and its functional components. He understands the Church as embedded in society and therefore possessing organizational structures that resemble other organizations. Henri Bergson (1932), in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* maintains that there are two types of society, the closed and the open. The closed society or organization is one in which the organization turns in upon itself, because it is concerned with its own survival, and members
within the organization are compelled by force and fear to act for the cohesion of the whole. In such a society, anyone who is not a member is ignored, misunderstood, scorned, and even considered a foe. In organizational sense, such a society operates under the assumptions of Taylorism – a well structurally classified organization guided by well-defined rules and regulations that guide members. However, the open society, according to Bergson, excludes no one and nothing but welcomes all. Resonating with the theological perspective embraced by the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue, within the open society, there is a mysterious gift of self and love that come from the members’ relationship with God and one another. The Bergsonian society embraces all in love. Arnett, in the article “Communication and Community in an Age of Diversity,” has addressed the issue of “inclusion” and “exclusion” in community arguing that “our task is to join the hope of community with the reality fits difficulty and demands,” because a community embraces the contrary nature of life, a living experience that is capable of uplifting our moral claims about the significance of “human togetherness” while working toward a realistic life that recognizes the inclusive and exclusive nature of our human community.

Arnett further explains that in any community, there are those who “feel” that they are the ones who constitute the community to the exclusion of those who think that they are at the margins of the community. For those who sincerely “feel” that they belong to the community, the term “community “is a shield of protection for their elite standards and viewpoints and they speak of “my” and “our,” thus limiting access to those on the outside. He advocates a “thorough examination of the way in which elites, supported by resources of wealth/education/status and most often the nobility of birth and behavioral style, attempt to maintain power by downplaying
the notion of achievement.” Ober, reinforcing Arnett’s observation, has pointed out that in fact, elites are more inclined to discuss ethos than actual achievement.

In the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue, those who form the elite cult perpetuate the development of an aristocratic air that in Arnett’s view propels success through personality and behavior. This kind of status is less likely to be learned by the members of the believing community because they see themselves as excluded from the community. The different caste systems within the Church points to the observation of the authors – a Church that divides itself into different strata – bishops, priests, religious, deacons and the laity – whereby priests, religious, deacons, and the laity must submit to the direction of the bishops who are granted the fullness of the priesthood within the Church (see the document Christus Dominus, in Vatican II Documents). Priests act as deputies (principal collaborators) of bishops to carry out theirdictates, to which the laity responds in obedience (see the document, Presbyterorum Ordinis, in Vatican II Documents). The Praxis Religious Dialogue model points to the community image of the Church and affirms with Nell Nodding the view of “service and care” within the community of believers who form the People of God, by maintaining that through multiple voices in community, the whole community gains insight into the notion of what a community entails. Through a multiplicity of voices from different standpoints, the believing community comes to understand their story as embedded within a narrative that guides their dialogue. This community embraces the challenges that go with the narrative that is recast as open to the dynamic forces of the moment that may invite change and revisioning. The image of “society,” “organization,” and “community” frames for us the importance of commitment to the narrative of revelation that rests on love and compassion expressed in the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 29-37) that points to a communicative ethic that sustains the hope of the Church.
In this vein, Arnett, sums for us some requirements of commitment that brings together the building of a community that is guided by its narrative: First, no sense of community is possible without the notion of “inclusion and “exclusion.” He maintains that a community must be centered on an idea that pulls people together and reminds them of the importance of their collective existence so that it may search for ways to develop the individual abilities of the members. Second, a community must be open to others and offer the opportunity for inclusion to all who may offer insight and contribution that may help to nurture the collective agenda. Third, the community should strive to maintain honesty, that is, that a community is defined by inclusion and exclusion; that we need an understanding of communication ethics that embraces life as it is lived and simultaneously keeps alive the hope of a more ideal mode of interaction. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model thus encourages the Church to understand that the notion of community embraces an oxymoronic view that frames the Christian narrative as a vital communicative ethic for nourishing the aspirations of the community. Inclusion in and exclusion from the community of discourse should be based on desire to participate in the common project, not on hierarchical status or agreement with the opinion of others. In fact, Maurice Friedman has briefly summarized the notion of community as:

Whenever one is concerned about the principles that ground a group or organization or the persons within that group, in addition to oneself, the beginning of a “community of otherness” surfaces. The “community of otherness” permits a struggle over ideas and principles, while confirming one’s adversary. In short, the “community of otherness” holds in creative tension the importance of self, other, and principles that ground a community,
while encouraging confirmation of persons, even when their ideas clash with those of the majority.\footnote{71}

The authors agree that society, community, and group must all be centered on a common idea driven by a sense of desire to strive to maintain cohesiveness, otherness, and principles imbued with a love that encourages confirmation of members. For Bergson, the issue of otherness is even more important to religious community which must possess the love of the whole, to be able to constantly expand its vision of the members of the group, Bergson insists that such a community (group) must be situated within a religious context because it is different from tribal collectivism and it must authentically promote the gift of “self” within its moral dynamics which evolve from the spirit rather than on the law.\footnote{72} The type of community which Bergson is dealing with in this context is the charismatic type characterized by Victor Turner (1977) as liminality\footnote{73} (a community of equals) as found in the early Church of Acts:2: 42ff. (See Thomas P. Rausch, 1989; David J. Stagaman, 1999).

As discussed earlier, one way to conceptualize the Church, one model to describe it, is as an organization. However, none of the theological reflections on the Church efficiently defines the Church as an organization; rather, demonstrative and descriptive terminologies like institution, mystery, sacrament, kerygma, servant, and herald (Dulles, 1974) are used. Further, questions emerging from sociological and organizational standpoints point to the Church as an organization with institutional characteristics without necessarily pointing to the mystery dimension.\footnote{74} From this context, the understanding of the Church in its physical structure becomes meaningful. Paul VI addressed the Church as “the building raised up by Christ, the house of God, the temple and tabernacle of God, his people, his flock, his field, his city, the pillar
of truth, and finally, the Bride of Christ, his Mystical Body.\textsuperscript{75} These images convey a sense of cognate realities, revealing the incomprehensible to be intelligible in order to speak to us in our existential moment. Thus, the Church cannot simply be understood as a mystery unless it is brought to the level of human language for intelligibility.\textsuperscript{76}

In Dulles’s view, theologians prefer to define the Church using the classical type of definitions in terms of symbols, models, and paradigms because these tools have a long theological history.\textsuperscript{77} By understanding the character of the Church as a mystery, theologians signify many things, namely, that the Church cannot be intelligible to the human mind because of its limitations.\textsuperscript{77} This theological standpoint is borrowed from Thomas Aquinas and the classical theologians who likened the Church to a supernatural mystery, thus removing it from the realm of human intelligibility. The Church could be known through connaturality because we cannot conceive its length, breadth, height, and depth. Aquinas presents a theology from above whereby the Church is understood as divine and is made up of those who are brought into union with God through supernatural grace that flows from Christ, who is the head of the Church.\textsuperscript{78} On one hand, the Church cannot simply be objectified as a mere institution or a hierarchical structure and on the other hand, scholars and theologians work to define the complex mystery of the Church in language understandable by “embodied” human beings without losing the texture or significance of its spiritual reality.

Thus, Greeley situates the Church within the organizational field and analyzes it as a human organization. In his view, the Church possesses a hierarchical structure and is embedded in human history, the world, society, and its community, which requires openness to these elements. He notes:
The Roman Catholic Church is a human organization . . . Its goals transcend the earthly human condition and it believes that it is bound together by more than human relationships. None the less it is made up of human relationships, its members are human beings and its organizational problems are, to a very considerable extent, similar to the organizational problems of other human corporate structures. 79

Greeley underscores the physical structure of the Church, which theologians call “visible,” as constituting a human organization because it was founded to deal with people, and wherever people congregate, they routinize their procedural behavior over time in order that they might concentrate on substantive issues. 80 Without a structure, the Church cannot operate within the physical world because a structureless community or society is a contradiction in terms. Sociologists and organizational scholars have compared the Church to other organizations with regard to its procedural system of operation, classifying it as a “rigid, closed type” of organization. 81 Some scholars have argued that the Church adopted the classical type of organization in view of the events of post-Reformation Europe. 82 The experiences of the Protestant Reformation and the four centuries of conflicts between the Church and Deism, rationalism, naturalism, and the different kinds of atheism, according to Dulles, subjected the Church to a temptation to adopt a closed type of structure that turned it into an autocratic, imperialistic organization that “rules with an iron fist, while demanding blind obedience to its hierarchy.” 83 The adoption of this type of structure portrays the visible image of the Church as a
society, but biblically it is contrary to the notion of the spiritual community of grace\textsuperscript{84} that characterized the early in Acts of the Apostles: 2:42ff.

III. The Church’s Structure: Situating the Church as an Organization

The emphasis on the Church as an institution as understood prior to Vatican II cannot be understood in isolation from the movements taking place outside the walls of the Church at that time. The Council’s foremost preoccupation was to define and assign to the Church its essential character, that is, a mystery, which is a divine reality appearing in visible form (\textit{The Documents of Vatican II: Lumen Gentium}, no. 1).\textsuperscript{85} Envisaging the problem with the definition of a mystery-entity inserted in human history, which “cannot be fully captured by human thought or language” (\textit{Lumen Gentium}, footnote 1),\textsuperscript{86} the Council applied several analogous biblical concepts such as the Church as sheepfold, a tract of land, a vineyard, an edifice, a bride of Christ, and Mother in which the Church has always been seen and understood in order to bring the divine essence into human conceptualization. Pope Paul VI, too, emphasized to the Council Fathers that the Church “is a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God. It lies therefore within the very nature of the Church to be always open to new and greater exploration.”\textsuperscript{87} Implicitly, the Pope not only highlighted the vertical nature of the Church, but also affirmed the horizontal dimension of the Church already enunciated by the Council in order to enable the Church to fulfill its mission “since mankind today is joined together more closely than ever before by social, technical, and cultural bonds.”\textsuperscript{88} The horizontal dimension of the Church enables communication scholars to define and analyze it in its various aspects because it addresses human communicative interaction.
While theologians are able to apply the concept of model to speak about the mystery nature of the Church in analogous terms, other scholars of the secular sciences also endeavor to express and convey the very image of the Church from different perspectives. Greeley and Cheney in the fields of sociology and organizational communication understand the Church as a complex organization with many different subpopulations that embrace different cultural facets transnationally. Therefore, to understand the Church from its horizontal dimension, that is, from the numerous images applied by the Council, it is important to establish a base from an organizational perspective so that the Church’s institutional character can be analyzed for proper understanding. First, Cheney argues, “The Church is bureaucratic and hierarchical; it is steeped in tradition.” The Roman Catholic Church is not only “the oldest significant organization in Western civilization,” but endures as a “self-correcting, living system,” in the sense that it has adapted to different cultures and historical periods. However, the adaptation can be understood in terms of the Church’s mission to establish itself in other cultures while maintaining its identity. Cheney cites as an example the formation of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), an order influential around the world whose formation was driven by the forces of the Reformation with a task to respond to the activities of the Reformers.

These are isolated incidents but even these cases do not demonstrate the Church’s flexibility in dealing with such insurgent groups. Rather, the Church, like many closed organizations, tends to maintain its position through control of members and resources while seeking to ally itself with active and potential interest groups. In view of its organizational characteristics, Cheney argues that there are three key terms to describe the Church as an organization, namely, that it maintains an “identity” (in the form of interest groups) and that it is “rhetorical” and “organizational” (it controls).
As an organization, the Church transcends national borders, and it maintains offices like the curia, national bishop’s conferences and provincial offices around the world. It contains religious orders of men and women, lobbying groups, media organizations, social welfare agencies, educational establishments, deaneries and parishes. It was in view of these organizational elements that Kenneth Boulding argued: “To the most casual observer . . . it is clear that the Catholic Church in different parts of the world represents a quite astonishing diversity, not only of social structures but even of religious experiences and images.”

To understand the Church therefore in its vertical and horizontal dimensions, scholars have to make use of elements in organizational studies, theological anthropology, and systematic theology in order to express intelligibly the nature of the Church. Dulles, from ecclesiological perspectives, has tried to do just that.

He applies the concept of “model” in analyzing the Church from both theological and ecclesiological perspectives because such application affords him a greater possibility to make a sensible distinction between the vertical and the horizontal axes upon which the Church operates both in human history and as part of human religious experience. In the same vein, both sociological and organizational scholars (Greeley, 1970; Cheney, 1991) insert the Church within human organizational parameters for the purpose of analyzing the ecclesiological concepts and symbols from a variety of organizational approaches and development. To the minds of many theologians and ecclesiologists, such external analysis is tantamount to reductionism because sociological and anthropological analyses do not take account of the “mystery” nature of the Church. Theology and ecclesiology, on the other hand, perceive the Church as not merely a human organization but also as a divine presence imbued with human reality. In fact, Dulles notes that ordinarily most people consider the Church as an institution and identify the Church as
a ‘single, unified “perfect society;”’ however, he considers such notion as too mundane and therefore rejects the insistence on the institutional aspect as being the most distinctive feature of Catholicism. He notes:

For reasons explained, I hold that Catholics should not wish to defend a primarily institutional view of the Church. Reacting somewhat against earlier concepts of Catholicism, I take a deliberately critical stance toward those ecclesiologies that are primarily or exclusively institutional. But I insist that the institutional view is valid within limits. The Church of Christ does not exist in this world without an organization or structure that analogously resembles the organization of other human societies. Thus, I include the institutional as one of the necessary elements elements of a balanced ecclesiology.  

Thus, from the ecclesiologist perspective, the Church exists in this world not only as an institutionalized organization that operates within organizational principal models but also as a divine presence that transcends human vision. However, from a sociological standpoint, Greeley has noted that “the Roman Catholic Church is a human organization” because it possesses all the visible elements of any human organization and it operates within the principles of human organizations. It is in view of the Church’s assertive standpoint in defining itself as a mystery yet operating within human organizational principles that it can be studied analytically from the perspective of various human sciences.
From the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue, the greatest concern regarding the Church’s physical structure (visible) is the persistent behavior of the Church to ossify patterns of relationships that evolved in the course of many centuries to provide the needs of one era but do not respond to the needs of the present. Greeley has argued that like any human organization, the Church’s structure exists to enhance its operations in order to facilitate the relationships within the community of believers but he observes that it should not maintain a classical structure that subjects the members of the community to “domination.” In such a case, the existence and purpose of the organization becomes critically questionable. David J. Stagaman (1999), arguing from a historical perspective, has observed that after the centrality of the Church’s seat of administration passed from Jerusalem to Rome (after the destruction of the Holy City of Jerusalem -70 and 135 A.D.), subsequent Popes maintained a pre-eminence of authority of Rome as the foundation of the apostolic faith. In fact, Irenaeus, a decade later offered a list of bishops whose reigns were traced to the apostles Peter and Paul as the foundation of the Church. Thus, the historical annals of the Church within the first millennium demonstrate a tendency toward institutionalization of its models to accommodate the historical events of the periods in question. The values of the events, like in any organization and according to Greeley, were embodied as essential to the Church’s religious and political operationalizations within the environment in which it functioned. Since then, those values have been canonized as immutable. From the Praxis Religious Dialogue model, such ossifications of the values are contrary to the demands and injunctions of the revelatory narrative that spells out what the Church should be – a compassionate Church that serves rather than lords over others.

1. The Physical and Spiritual Image of the Church
The Church as an organization contains within itself two elements, namely, the physical and the spiritual. In one sense, as Cheney notes, it is an organization of organizations with subpopulations and subcultures and further possesses all the elements of human institution, that is, it is hierarchically structured, having the college of bishops at the top, followed by the priests/religious, deacons, and the laity. The structure is also “monarchic” in character because the labels of the models clearly differentiate the different ranks and demarcate by definition the lines of authority. Dulles maintained in this context that the Church is structured like other organizations in order to conform to societal structures so that it can function and facilitate the interactions of believers (Dulles 1974, Bergson, 1932, Greeley 1970, Cheney, 1991). According to Dulles, it was not until the Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium), that two other models, namely, the Body of Christ and Sacrament, were added. This dominant model, he notes, focused on the People of God, whose network of interpersonal relationships was deemed significant by the Council.

Dulles further observes: “The method of models or types can have great value in helping people to get beyond the limitations of their own particular outlook and enter into fruitful conversation with others having a fundamentally different mentality.” Robert Bellarmine, in De Controversiis, defined the Church as a specific type of human community, a coetus hominum, just like another type of human society, and preoccupied himself with the visible image of the Church. His definition of the Church dominated the post-Reformation period. He wrote:

The one and true Church is a group of men bound together by the same profession of the same Christian faith and by the communion of the same sacraments, under
the rule of the legitimate pastors, and especially of the one vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman pontiff. From the definition it can easily be gathered which men belong to the Church, and which do not.\textsuperscript{105}

The implication of his definition reveals three main elements, according to some authors, namely, the profession of faith, communion in the sacraments, and submission to the legitimate authority of pastors.\textsuperscript{106} According to this ecclesiological model, which Dulles calls a paradigm, the inherent elements are visible. Bellarmine further maintained, “Whereas the profession of the faith is essential, actual belief, being an internal and unverifiable factor, is not.”\textsuperscript{107} According to this notion, the believer is one who communicates with the Church by professing the Church’s faith, but does not necessarily have to believe in his heart what is professed, whereas a believer who believes in his heart but does not profess with his lips would not be a member of the Church. Further, the implication of the definition implies the Church is as visible as the former Roman Empire, the Kingdom of France or the Republic of Venice.\textsuperscript{108} The definition clearly reflects the history of the Church during the Constantinian times when the Church’s structures were almost synonymous with the secular state (Fuller, 1976). Thus, we are given a glimpse of the visible nature of the Church as an organization, defined in terms of a state with its own juridical system apparatus. Interestingly, this definition was maintained until the Second Vatican Council departed from it and defined the Church as a mystery, made up of the People of God (See \textit{Lumen Gentium}, Chapters. 1 and II.).

In accordance with the challenges faced by the Church prior to and post-Reformation periods, the Church maintained its state-like structure to compete and struggle with the
challenges of the changes that took place within the various ensuing periods. One would classify
the environment of Church at that period according to Emery and Trist’s categorization of the
level three causal texturing, that is, the *disturbed-reactive environment*.\(^{109}\) At this stage, the
Church found itself amidst emerging religious and secular bodies that were sources of challenge
to its domination. The authors argue that any organization that finds itself within this level
considers that what it knows can also be known by other organizations and the part of the
environment to which it wishes to move itself is the part to which the others seek to move. The
presence of similar others presents imbrications (patterns)\(^{110}\) of some of the causal strands in the
environment.

Throughout the centuries, the Church has reshaped itself in an attempt to relate to the
wider society and in so doing had trouble in maintaining its identity. A case in point is the
National Catholic Conference of Bishops (NCCAB) 1980 pastoral letter on *The challenge of
Peace*. The challenges faced by the bishops in maintaining their identity as Catholic Ordinaries
and at the same time as Americans posed an insurmountable struggle for them.\(^{111}\) In trying to
stay within the dictates of Rome, they were also challenged in their attempt to involve the
ordinary person in the conversation on the proliferation of nuclear arms around the globe.\(^{112}\) The
occasion that generated the uneasiness and tension within the Church in the United States of
America was that the bishops were trying to maintain their allegiance and collegiality with Rome
and at the same time wanted to involve Church members in the discussion concerning the
production of nuclear arms in the country in order that the outcome would not seem as an
imposition. Their action consequently brought the Church face to face with both its own
members and the wider society. Within this context, a new dialogic horizon for the American
Church was opened, allowing members of the Church and the wider society to be involved in the
discussion of an issue that was deemed important not only for the Church members but the ordinary member of the American society.

The rhetorical nature exhibited by the Church in discussions of the Pastoral Letter *The Challenge of Peace* (1980) led to the concept of a dialogic paradigm used by theologians in the United States in defining the Church. Three images have emerged through the discussion of these three authors, namely, Dulles, Cheney, and Greeley ((Dulles, 1974, *Models of the Church*. Greeley 1970, Rodes 1970 in *Concilium: Structures of the Church*). These concepts provide assumptive ground for the Praxis Religious Dialogue model’s understanding of the Church as an organization.

First, from theological and ecclesiological perspectives, the different organizational structural references summed up and applied to the Church as a perfect society (*societas perfecta*) (Bellarmine) point to the Church as grounded in existential reality and operating within human society while conforming to the organic processes of organization, that is, it maintains a physical structure, and it is rhetorical as a corporate entity that defines identity.\(^{113}\) In consonance with the argument raised by Stuart Albert and David Whetten (1985) that three criteria should be observed in formulating a statement for an organization’s identity,\(^{114}\) the Praxis Religious Dialogue model understands that Church as possessing the fundamental characterization of organization’s identity, that is, the Church’s presence in the world reveals first its “essence as an organization,”\(^{115}\) a criterion that claims the central character of the Church – the *sensus fidei* of the People of God; second, the characterizations that distinguish the Church as an organization from others, that is, the criterion of claimed distinctiveness\(^{116}\) – the Church’s tradition and doctrines embedded in the *Magisterium*; and third, an exhibition of some degree of sameness or continuity over time:\(^{117}\) the apostolic succession, male only priesthood, and the liturgical
celebrations through certain distinct rituals. This third notion has been disputed by David A. Gioia, M. Schultz, and K. G. Corley, who argue that an organization’s identity is relatively fluid if not unstable because it is the identity’s fluidity and flexibility that is a particular strength and allows the organization to accommodate rapid environmental changes.\textsuperscript{118} The characteristics of an organization’s identity reflect the Church’s environment and how it operates within the larger society. However, it is still pertinent to ask why theologians, ecclesiologists, and canonists often refer to the Church as an institution.

Some organizational scholars have attempted to clarify the problem by analyzing the components of organizations (Taylor 1911; Weber 1947; Selznick 1957). Philip Selznick (1957) has pointed out that organizations become institutions through the embodiment of organizational values, which relate them to the wider society.\textsuperscript{119} Since Selznick made this argument, other organizational scholars have further developed his line of thought and have argued:

Like other values, organizational values emerge to cope with relevant uncertainties and gain their authority from their reference to the requirements of larger systems within which people’s interests are largely concordant.\textsuperscript{120}

However, Selznick’s argument has attracted other organizational scholars to mount a critical analysis of the transitory period of this metamorphosis. First, Selznick’s argument demonstrates that organizations, as organic entities, are expendable and rational and therefore rationality and discipline are put in place as guiding principles.\textsuperscript{121} The arguments postulated are that organizations grow within their environment and become institutionalized as they reengineer
themselves to adapt to the social environment. Whether such organizations become formal or informal depends on a number of elements that may provoke the type. Thus, one may pose the question as to what type of organization is the Church. Is the Church an institution as some theological, ecclesiologists, and canonical scholars have pointed out? I will briefly explore the Weberian-Taylorism classical structural theories and the new approaches to organizational communication theories—behavioral and system—with the intention of relating the theories to the Church’s structural model. The central issue of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model regarding the organizational aspects of the Church is the communicative praxis which emerges through the interpretive interaction of the members of the believing community, and therefore if the members’ shared interpretations of their experience take place within an institutional environment, such interpretations are influenced by the rationality and discipline proposed and designed by the leaders.

2. Overview of Organizational Theory Models Applied to the Church

a) Weberian-Taylorism Classical Structural Theories

First, according to sociological and organizational models, the Church is an organization that has been institutionalized to conform to its environment, to coordinate, and to facilitate the activities of its members for the purpose of its missionary activities. In light of this goal, the Church has generated and maintained rules to guide members’ interaction and action, which the Praxis Religious Dialogue model considers to be consciously designed. The outcome of this consciously designed structure is what Max Weber (1947) termed as Bureaucracy of Formal Organization. What flows from this bureaucratic structure suggests that efficiency is related to a hierarchical pattern of authority. According to Weber, this pattern constitutes an Ideal Type of
a bureaucracy (See Weber, 1947), which is marked by relationships among the different positions with a purposeful plan and tasks divided among the various positions. Within this type of structure, lines of authority are arranged in hierarchical order (a pyramidal structure) and authority is vested in certain people within the organization.

Additionally, the rules and regulations are formal to enforce discipline with a clear demarcation of lines separating private and organizational lives of employees and employment is based on technical, downward communication, that is, it goes through the chain of command. These characteristics, according to scholars in the field of organization studies (Berlo, 1960; Peter & Scott, 1962; Perrow, 1973) lead to rational decision-making and administrative efficiency which in turn leads to the selection of “experts with a broad spectrum of experience for higher positions and disciplined performance governed by abstract rules, regulations, or policies and coordinated by hierarchical authority” which provides a rational and consistent pursuit of the organizational goals. Further, Charles E. Redfield (1953) has noted that these formal characteristics lead to interactions called positional communication where relationships are established between positions rather than people, and those who occupy the positions communicate in accordance with their status. Redfield has maintained that at times these interactive processes may be upset because in practice not all activities may conform to this well-defined procedure.

Weber’s analysis of organizational theory describes the constitution of the organization and the way it functions. However, over the years, other theoretical frameworks have emerged to contribute to the understanding of the models of organizations and their functional behavior. Taylor (1911) theorized the classical type of management in which the constructs of division of labor, scale, and functional process, the structure (line of production, staff (hierarchical in
nature), and span of control form the core of the functionary process of the organization. He referred to this type of organization theory as *Principles of Scientific Management*. Thus, Weber and Taylor represent the formal, classical theorists who advocate a bureaucratic organization for the purpose of predictability, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness, all of which characterize the Church in its functionary behavior. The structure advocated by these classical theories concentrates on two basic sub-structures, designated as line and staff.

The line structure involves the authority channels of the organization in order to stimulate the relationships for the accomplishment of the major goals of the organization. This type of functional structure resembles the military in its operations. The staff structure is established to offer support to help the line positions do their work better by offering advice, assistance, or service. The perspective articulated by both Weber and Taylor shows that the traditional form of organization or traditional bureaucracy (closed system) is designed to protect the internal core of the organization, that is, it is based on rational principles (protecting the management’s interest, not the workers’) and it is supported by legal sanctions (see Vatican II Documents, *Christus Dominus*, on Bishops) and exists within a legal framework (Canon 134, art. 1, 2 & 3 and also 138: on the executive power and power of governance of the Ordinary, 135). Taylor’s classical lineal structure also fits the Church’s structure as a rigid and closed system to the dissatisfaction of many.

While the Praxis Religious Dialogue model does not reject the closed system and the lineal structural characteristics of the Church as an organization, it encourages using those characteristics to achieve the goal of a more compassionate Church that develops the freedoms gained in Christ by its members which are directed toward the call for humility and service:
“Among the gentiles it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. With you this must not happen. No: the greater among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves. For who is the greater: the one at the table or the one who serves? The one at the table, surely? Yet here am I among you as one who serves.” (Lk. 22: 24-27). The Praxis Religious Dialogue paradigm recognizes that it is through the sign of contradiction that the Church can exist as an organization but different from all other organizations. The paradigm in this context affirms the call to aggiornamento by the Second Vatican Council, a call that demands a total metanoia from within:

“From now on aggiornamento will signify for us a wisely undertaken quest for a deeper understanding of the spirit of the Council and the faithful application of the norms it has happily and prayerfully provided.”

The Church’s structure, too, is organized to conform to the scalar and functional process to deal with vertical and the horizontal growth. It searches for order, rationality, and regulation of human behavior modeled on the Weber-Taylorism model. However, David L. Clark (1985) observes that the rigid characteristics inherent in the classical functional processes are so appropriate that it is difficult to entertain alternative perspectives that will challenge the very words that serve as guiding principles to the functional processes. For instance, in its search for universal unity, the Church became monolithic, aspiring for a single universal language – Latin; a single theological system based on Neo-Scholasticism, a single system of worship based on the Roman rite, and a single and uniform government founded on the Roman code of Canon Law.

Eventually it became rigid and fell into “sheer bigness” in dealing with its own members and those outside its boundaries. In most cases, many of the members of the community and even priests are prevented from giving their all for goal achievement and in the minds of many people
[priests], features of the classical model may operate in problematic ways: “The hierarchy promotes rigidity and timidity. Subordinates are afraid of passing bad news up the ladder” or “suggesting changes.”

History recounts that around the third century, Cyprian (an African bishop) saw the Church as a corporate body with a structure and constitution established by Christ himself and obtained from the Churches of the apostolic foundation. The Church is by this establishment and foundation, “arranged in a hierarchy of classes: the brothers and sisters as a whole, the virgins and ascetics, martyrs and confessors, and the clergy headed by the bishop who sets the standard. His ideal bishop demands from the congregation virtue, execution of his commands, and submission to God’s will, and in turn strengthens its faith, discipline, and righteousness…” For Cyprian, the Church does not exist without a bishop. However, Clark has noted that the antonyms to the rigid organizational characteristics, namely, inefficiency, unpredictability, irrationality, incompetence, ignorance, and prejudice could also be seen as encompassing a whole range of behaviors that could be seen as functional or dysfunctional depending on the situation. Thus, Clark describes counter-sayings, noting:

There is always either someone else to blame or some set of uncontrollable circumstances that no reasonable observer would pin on a single administrator – not even a chief executive officer. Authority and responsibility are almost never congruous in an organization. While some persons are squandering authority by avoiding responsibility, others are accumulating responsibility in the hope of increasing their authority. Individual authority and
responsibility in organizations are variables governed jointly by
the day-to-day sense-making activities of organizational participant
and designated organizational positions.\textsuperscript{137}

Clark’s observation reflects the notion of organizational culture, which is a subset of the
behavioral and system theory (Barnard 1938, Perrow 1973, Mayo 1951). The assumptions noted
by him demonstrate the fluidity and the haphazard nature of human beings which frame
organizational life differently than the Weberian and Taylorism model of human behavior. On
the other hand, the Weberian notion of the “ideal type” must be understood in the Platonic sense
than simply a prescriptive method for organizations, despite its position in many texts with the
prescriptive models. Nevertheless, the organizational culture approach suggests that human
beings constitute the organization and create the environment through their negotiated shared
realities. The idea that relationships within the classical type are between positions and not
people immediately places emphasis on structure rather than on those whose shared realities and
responsibilities foster cooperation and responsiveness within the organization.

Similarly, the Church’s apologetics of the fifteenth to the mid-twentieth century,
according to Dulles, emphasized the functionary institutional concept of the Church where the
institution was considered as necessary and all were obliged to either become members or
perish.\textsuperscript{138} Thus, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model points the Church to the juridical
understanding of the Church that evolved from a classical bureaucratic type of organization that
created an excessive concern for legalistic formalities to the extent that the spirit of service and
compassion underlying the nature of the Church was compromised for juridicism that advocated
a highly prescriptive approach to membership. Dulles has noted within this ongoing discussion
that even the concept of “unity” was extended to include “the subordination of the faithful to one and the same spiritual jurisdiction and to one and the same teaching Magisterium.”

Perrone, Billot, and de Guibert, according to Dulles, also augmented the powers of the hierarchy by inserting “into the very concept of unity the idea of obedience to the visible head of the Church.”

b) Behavioral Theories

There have been some concerns from the beginning regarding the implications of the classical theory of organization and the scientific management doctrine. Charles Perrow (1973) notes, “Bureaucracy has always been a dirty word. . .” However, Chester I. Barnard’s (1938) publication of The Functions of the Executive threw light on the earlier critique of the Weber-Taylor Ideal-classical type of organization. Barnard explained that organizations are constituted of people systems and not mechanically engineered structures. Natural groups within the bureaucratic structure influence the outcomes of the organization through their communicative responsiveness, and authority comes from below rather than from above, and therefore leaders need to function as a cohesive force. His line of thought highlighted and expanded the definition of classical formal organization, that is, “a system of consciously designed coordinated activities of two or more persons.” It also highlighted the system concepts and those who make the system work. It is the cooperation among people, not individual persons or positions, who make up a formal organization. Barnard’s emphasis on cooperative efforts prioritized human beings as the essential elements of organizations rather than positions for the growth of the organization and this cooperation depends on “the ability of human beings to communicate and on their willingness to serve and work toward a common goal.”
Dialogue model thus recognizes communication as playing an important role for the growth of the organization and the facilitation of the interactive processes needed to promote cooperation and output. It further notes that when people interact over time, they form a culture and re-create the culture over a period of time, much like the dynamism inherent in an organic matter that replicates itself and adapts to its environment.

In the same vein, Greeley has noted that in any large corporate body typical of modern society, the role of leadership is very different from leadership in the past. He cites the Teutonic tribe or the medieval feudal manor where the leader was a man who, by virtue of superior wisdom, or superior strength, was expected to know all the answers to the problems of the tribe. The followers of the leader did not have to understand the problem or the answers. Theirs was to acknowledge that the leader’s wisdom or strength surpassed theirs, and their role was to respond to his instructions.\textsuperscript{146} Greeley’s observation points to the Church in some areas where the bishop, as the ordinary of a diocese, assumes the role of the leader of bygone communities in which the leader’s strength and or wisdom was considered representative of the whole community. In fact, Vatican II points to this observation in its document \textit{Christus Dominus}, where the bishop is considered to possess the fullness of the priesthood and by this possession, demands full obedience from members of the Church (\textit{Christus Dominus}, no. 15; Cannons 134, art. 1, 2, &3; 135 and 138).

The Council considered the Church not only a divine institution but also an organic human organization organized to express the divine mystery of the Church in intelligible concepts, permitting the establishment of a dialogic interactive processes among the members. The vertical and horizontal nature of the Church is meant to transform the internal and external environment in which the Church finds itself (See \textit{Lumen Gentium}, Chapter II on the People of
God). For the transformation to take place, the Church needs to utilize the organic resources within itself so that it can respond to the challenges of adaptation.

Accordingly, Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1950), who introduced the general transport equation providing the underlying basis for system theory in organizational literature, has maintained that any living entity survives by importing into itself certain types of materials from its environment to transform them in accordance with its system characteristics.\textsuperscript{147} The theory underscores what the Church has become through the years, an organization that has imported certain organizational elements into its structure to facilitate its operational schemes during its many centuries of existence. However, the process of transformation to adapt to the various challenges is not often given the necessary impetus because it fails to open itself to certain environments. By the process of assimilation, F. E. Emery and E. L. Trist\textsuperscript{148} discuss the interrelational effects of organizations and their environments. In their view, the stability of an organization within any environment depends on how the organizations attains the stability it needs to function. They call the process “negentropic,” which enables the organization to attain “stability in a time-independent steady state – a necessary condition of adaptability to environmental variance.”\textsuperscript{149} In the eleventh century, the Church was a force to reckon with because only “in the Scriptures, where God had been revealed to the prophets and apostles, possessed the absolute guarantee of first truth”\textsuperscript{150} and the custodian of such truth was the Church. The Church became the locus for divine authority and the divine authority “was bestowed on the \textit{maiores}, the heads and teachers of the Church, especially the Fathers, ecumenical councils and more important synods, and Popes.”\textsuperscript{151}

Stagaman contends that in order to escape local control, the Popes of 1047 and 1049 adopted the spirituality of Cluny’s monastic lifestyle (Gregory VII was a monk of this Order),
centering the Church in both liturgy and doctrine. He notes that besides the strong reassertion and extension of papal primacy, the Popes from 1047 until 1075 set the universal Church on a solid canonical foundation. They conceived the Church as a “theonomy,” an autonomous and sovereign system of rights in law that expressed a superior divine law. They also attached great importance to the formal validity of ecclesiastical authority, the possession of a title in Church law. The Popes stressed the legal relevance of the canons of the Roman Church and emphasized the degrees of responsibility imposed on each rank in the Church’s hierarchy. Implicitly, the Popes were juridically supreme in the Church and their authority, through divine institution, according to Stagaman, was bestowed on the faithful like a font. All the means of salvation rested on the Pope and no one could restrict his power. The authority of St. Peter, acting through the Pope, accepted no dissent; any dissent was considered a heresy. Stagaman further documents that Gregory VII (1073-1085) mentioned in his twenty-seven propositions (Dictatus Papae) that papal decisions have force of law in the Church and that the Roman See is “subject to the judgment of no one and that all authority in the Church comes from the Pope…”

All these developments established for the acquisition of a single unified authority within a single structure gave the Church a visible structure to operate within the environment in which it found itself. However, in accordance with Bertalanffy’s position concerning the development and adaptation of organisms in the environment, the Church’s organizational development over the centuries should aid it to maintain openness to the environment so that the capacity of the dialogic organism within it could obtain additional energy. The derivation from Bertalanffy’s observation for the Church is that the necessary requirement of openness involves several corollaries such as equifinality, growth through internal elaboration, self-regulation, and constancy of direction with change of position and so on. Over time, these processes result in a
culture adapted to the environment necessary for the survival of the institution. With continued openness, the culture remains flexible type because information from to the environment continues to come in. The Praxis Religious Dialogue assumes the need for continued openness to the environment through not only interaction with other institutional structures, but also through dialogue with its members. The Second Vatican Council initiated the conversation that could permit this process to take place.

Vatican II asserted that the Church is primarily a mystery, a sign and instrument of the grace of God that unites men supernaturally to God and to one another. Until this undertaking by the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church understood itself as having achieved a state of equilibrium, fixed in its relations with the world and especially with other denominations. Bertalanffy underscored this state of affairs when he noted that in contradistinction to the organisms that are able to attain a state of stability through the process of giving and taking, there are those physical objects that simply attain a state of equilibrium and follow the thermodynamic process (see Bertalanffy, 1950) so that any change in the environment destabilizes their functioning process because of the achievement of the state of equilibrium. This state of functionary process, according to the author, is what physicists call classical physics, which corresponds to the sociological notion of a closed or rigid organization (see article by F. E. Emery and E. L. Trist: Human Organization, vol. 18, 1965) and which can be compared to the bureaucratic classical type of organization. The application of this notion to the Church as an organization opens up a view of the Church as a physical entity living and functioning within an environment but understanding itself as being in the equilibrium state, incapable of continuing the process of corollary development for growth. This state of dysfunctional equilibrium ended with the convening of the Second Vatican Council, which
provided the hope that the work of the Council would advance the Church’s missionary activities through openness to dialogue with its own members, other cultures and denominations.

c) Cultural Models

A cultural approach to organizations permits a focus on meaning and seems an appropriate model for the Church. According to Meryl Reis Louis (1985), culture involves behavioral expectations, shaping and being shaped, unique characteristics that set one group from another and a set of meanings that enable a group to act. These cultural factors become essential to the organization. Both an interpretivist and a functionalist approach to culture offer fruitful ways of understanding the culture of the Church.

The interpretivist approach to culture analyzes organization by focusing on the process of communication and how members within the organization make sense of the communication process. According to Michael E. Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo (1982), the stories and rituals that an organization performs become indicators of sense making for the members. Thus, the significant element in the interpretivist approach is how the stories are told, who tells them, and what meaning the stories and rituals hold for members. Myths, stories, and rituals have performative functions in acting out the communal integration and solidifying the faith and hope of the community. In the Church, the celebration of the sacraments is circular-action in nature because the desired ends of the community are fulfilled in the reenactment of the acts embedded in the biblical narrative from which the doctrinal assumptions have their origins. The celebration of the sacraments as performative events fit well within the interpretivist’s view because through the celebration, communal members celebrate their historical experiences embedded within the narrative that guide their pilgrimage.
The functionalist, too, may approach the cultural system differently by focusing on what kind of stories are embedded in the organization and what impact they have on the members.\textsuperscript{161} The cultural system of the Church hinges on the stories and rituals too. The story is biblical in nature and some parts, if not all, are ritualized through celebrations – the Eucharist, baptism, confirmation, Holy Orders, marriage, and the sacrament of the sick. The celebration of these sacraments is about life events that become meaningful to members through their faith experience. Based on the biblical narratives, the Eucharist, for instance, celebrates the enactment of the life experience of the faith community through the sharing of the body and blood of Christ, which orients the individual Christian toward the Second coming of Christ. It thus implies the acceptance of service toward one another and extends beyond the boundaries of the community. Functionally, it is through such celebrations that the faith community is nurtured and enlivened in the performance of their mission for achieving the growth of the whole Church.

Additionally, through the dialogic interactive processes within the faith community, the construction of the celebrations and their meanings are perpetually generated as the community defines its historical experiences through their daily experiences and events.

d. Organizational Culture and Impact on the Church

From an organizational culture point of view, the Church has, or more precisely, is, a culture because it is constituted of people who interrelate with one another through symbolic behavior. Its very existence depends on the shared meanings and interpretations that emerge through human interactive processes. Linda Smircich (1981) has noted that organizations:

\begin{quote}
depends upon the existence of common modes of
\end{quote}
interpretations and routinized understanding of experience which allow day to day activities to become routinized or taken-for-granted. When groups encounter novel situations, new interpretations must be constructed to sustain organized activity.¹⁶²

Her view reinforces Karl Weick’s (1977a) observation that the sense making of organizational members constitutes an organization. Organizational culture is a symbolically created context that allows members to make sense of events through symbolic processes. The principle that underlies Weick’s view of enactment of sense making is that humans interpret and then create their symbolic world, which then guides their activities.¹⁶³

Weick’s concept of organization explains the constitution of organizational culture. The stories, rites and rituals, and values created by the members of the organization become their cultural experience over a prolonged period of time. For the functionalist organizational scholar, the emergence of culture within an organization works for the purpose of the management of the organization where the emphasis is placed on predictability, control, and an objective worldview. This functionalist approach explains some elements of the Church. As Dulles observes, “The Church of Christ could not perform its mission without some stable organization features.”¹⁶⁴ He notes:

Throughout its history, from the very earliest years, Christianity has always had an institutional side. It has had recognized ministers, accepted confessional formulas and prescribed forms of public worship.¹⁶⁵
Dulles highlights traces of institutionalism found in the conciliar documents. The Second Vatican Council had defined the Church as a mystery, sacrament, Body of Christ, and People of God. Only after dealing with these definitive elements did the Council discuss the formal structures of ecclesiastical government, but it set the juridical sphere of government in the context of a broader theological consideration of collegiality embedded in co-responsibility that focuses on the intrinsic nature of the Church. By setting the Church within a theological consideration of collegiality for the governance of the Church, the Council was able to avoid the controlling system that prevailed in the Church.

The Council’s definitions of the Church also reveal elements that highlight the Church as an organizational culture. The culture of the Church as an organization is made visible through articulation and proclamation of the biblical narratives, the deposit of faith (Magisterium), the sacramental life lived through the lives of the community of believers manifested through the rites and rituals it celebrates, and the values inherent in the governing and teaching through religious education that focuses on the shared realities of the community. Through these cultural celebrations, the Church manifests its life, tradition, and history. Just as every culture has its prescriptions and sanctions, so has the Church. For example, a candidate receives baptism only after the profession of the faith of the Church, and then receives the Body of Christ. Only after the celebration of these passages does one become a full participant of the Church and partake of the cultural life that includes adherence to the laws of the Church. Thus, the cultural aspects of the Church reflect the basic parts of an organizational system, that is, the individual and the personality he/she brings to the Church, the formal organization or the interrelated pattern of vocations (call), the informal interactional patterns among individuals, the physical setting in
which the mission of the Church is performed, and the status and role patterns that produce expectations (Fisher, 1978; Bertalanffy, 1968; Boulding, 1965; Rapoport, 1968).

Framed as organizational culture, the Church’s elements reveal its intrinsic nature as dialogic. Within this framework, the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue proposes that the believing community must be encouraged to engage each other in discourse to facilitate their interaction. As a religious community, members depend on each other to live the story of Jesus, and their identity as Catholics becomes meaningful not through a focus on the individual believer, but through their shared experiences as a community that focuses on the dynamics of Jesus’s story. The discourse that takes place within the Church must be directed toward embracing all community members in order to appropriate the essentials of the biblical story to their daily practices. The Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks to emphasize the cooperation of each part of the elements of the Church’s structure in order to create a coherent wholeness within it.

e. Significant Elements of Church Cultural Systems Necessary for Interdependence

The Second Vatican Council’s call for aggiornamento in the Church can be compared to the notion of The steady state and dynamic homeostasis that is a component of Von Bertalanffy’s model of “an energetic in-put-out-put system”\textsuperscript{166} derived from the open system theory of organization. The model of “steady state” maintains a “continuous inflow of energy from the external environment and a continuous export of the product of the system.”\textsuperscript{167} Bertalanffy argues that at the point of differentiation, there is an emergence of specialization for greater functioning of the system, which leads to a stage of integration and coordination\textsuperscript{168} that evolves to counter the primitive static state. At the level of “integration and coordination,” all the different parts of the system are brought together for unified functioning. Von Bertalanffy called
this state “progressive mechanization in the regulatory process of organic systems.” The Church, in the view of the Second Vatican Council, already possesses the integrative component because of the achievement of unification through shared norms and values. However, the coordination component is an innovation yet to be achieved that is inherent in the concept of aggiornamento, which is to process the steady state of the Church through continuous flow of energy from the external environment.

In the same vein, the Second Vatican Council pointed the Church to the importance of the hierarchical structural functioning process of the Church in Chapter III of Lumen Gentium. The Council wrote, inter alia:

For the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God, Christ, the Lord instituted in His Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body. For those ministers who are endowed with sacred power are servants of their brethren, so that all who are of the People of God, and therefore enjoy a true Christian dignity, can work toward a common goal freely and in orderly way, and arrive at salvation.

Second, the elements of structure, function, and evolution are pertinent to the Church as an organization. Structure refers to the various relationships between the components of the prevailing system, with distinction among elements based on status and the goal as the purpose of order within the organization. The functional process of the organization, according to von Bertalanffy and others (Bertalanffy, 1968; Boulding, 1965;; Weick, 1965; Fisher, 1978) depends
on the performance of activities by individuals in conjunction with others. Changes within the organization will affect, and are affected by, functional and structural elements operating within the organization. Third, the authors note that openness is an important factor in an organization because of the social systemic nature of organizations. One significant characteristic of this element is the equifinality (Bertalanffy, 1968) that also characterizes the Church’s mission.

Equifinality means “the same final state may be reached from different conditions and in different ways” and therefore it is arguable that an organization may begin with certain initial conditions but change along its paths of development. This interpretation points to the task undertaken by the Second Vatican Council, pointing the Church to the notion of aggiornamento. In the context of aggiornamento, equifinality corresponds to an understanding of the Church as a community of believers on a pilgrimage bearing the same destiny, yet each member has different perspectives of the pilgrimage story and thus may take different routes to reach the same end state. The concept of equifinality as a metaphor is significant both for the Church as a People of God and especially for the Church’s ecumenical dialogue with other different denominations.

Bertalanffy’s contention that the notion of equifinality can be applied as well to the organismic process of adaptation within an environment (see Bertalanffy, 1950) and provides a theoretical element for the dialogic praxis model in explaining the need for constant adaptation by the Church to different environments, particularly dialogue with different cultures. The adaptation process is important, given the different levels of categories within the Church. Weick (1969) notes, “If there are different levels of analysis (e.g., individual, group, organization, society), the only way we can learn much about any of these levels is if we know how they are tied together, that is, how one level interacts with another level.” While the Second Vatican Council ties the different levels together as mutually inclusive bishops, priests/religious, and the
laity—and called this mutually inclusiveness the People of God (*Lumen Gentium*, chapter 2) and within this community of the people of God, each part is interrelated (1 Cor. 12: 12-21) for an efficient structural functioning of the whole.

Thus, the Council noted, among other things that “. . . the Church as whole, including the laity, has a total task which may suitably be summarized under the three captions of witness, ministry, and fellowship. These three terms are strongly biblical; they appear in the Greek New Testament as *matyrion* (μαρτυρίον), *diakonia* (διακονία), and *koinnia* (κοινωνία).”¹⁷⁶ These three elements were highlighted by The World Council of Churches in the third General Assembly in Delhi 1961 as being the central characteristics of the Christian community.

The emphasis that the Council placed on the exercise of witness, ministry, and fellowship by the Church minimized the notion of autocracy and the exclusive exercise of power that characterized the preconciliar Church. However, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model posits that not much has changed in the manner in which the Church is governed even when the Council introduced concepts such as “dialogue,” “collegiality” “coresponsibility” or “participation,” which bears some semblances of a path to democratic process.¹⁷⁷ There are still traces of autocracy by some bishops and priests in the areas of administration and dialogue.

While Cormac Burke (1988) denies that the Church is a democratic institution, he admits that the Council’s liberal stance on the governance of the Church¹⁷⁸ reinforced by the Code of Canon Law (cc334, 342-348) gives particular expression to the collegial spirit on a universal level, that is, the college of bishops, bishops, and their senate (c 495)—a bishop would act unlawfully if he did not provide for the establishment of the Council of Priests or did not consult it in major matters (cc. 461, 515, 536, 1263). A college of Consultors must also exist
(c. 502) to deliberate on matters and the bishop cannot act without the approval of this College (cc. 272, 485, 1277, 1291, and 1292). On the parish level, the Code broadens the horizon of the believing community to engage in the administration of the parish and thus a formation of a Diocesan Pastoral Council is mandated by the Code (cc. 511-514), not to mention the existence of a Financial Committee (c. 537). Clearly, the Council’s vision of the Church was different in many respects from the preconciliar Church.

IV. Conceptualizing the Church as an Institution: the Church as Society

The notion of the Church as a society tends to demonstrate a structure of a secular government as Bellarmine defined it—a visible society with rights and powers for its officials and offices and subordinate to no one.179 Some authors have argued that the institutional elements in the Church should not be understood as falling within the theoretical scope of institutionalism. However, Dulles has argued that in order for the Church to preach the gospel to men and women alike, it needs some institutional elements to accomplish such tasks and the author further adds that the notion of the Church as an institution cannot fully do justice to its comprehensive nature. Therefore, for theologians to explain the nature of the Church, two notions are offered, based on the theory of the German Sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies (1887)180 that there are two different kinds of classification, namely, Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society). A further replication of the idea by Charles H. Cooley defined Gemeinschaft as primary groups characterized by five elements: face-to-face relationship, the unspecialized character of the relationship, the relative permanence, the small number of persons involved, and the relative intimacy among the interactors.
According to this classification, *Gemeinschaft* defines the individual within his association with the community and vice versa. Cooley notes: “Perhaps the simplest of way of describing the wholeness is by saying that it is a “we”; it involves the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which “we” is the natural expression…”¹⁸¹ *Gesellschaft*, on the other hand, signifies a society that is visible with all the attributes of an institution. Tönnies’s classifications found in Arnold Rademacher’s *Die Kirche als Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*¹⁸² attained a prominence in the study of ecclesiology within Catholic circles. Rademacher noted that the inner core of the Church is the idea of community while the outer core is society. It is the society that reveals the outward nature of the community, for the society exists and thrives for the promotion of the community. Many theologians accept the notion of Church as community because as a Church, it cannot be an institution. Rudolf Sohm, for instance, maintained that the Church by its very nature transcended the notion of law, for it cannot limit itself to any human law.¹⁸³ Emil Brunner, in a similar understanding, conceived of the Church from its biblical perspectives, maintaining that the Church is *Personengemeinschaft* (community of persons), and therefore, the notion of priestly office, law, and sacrament were simply incompatible with the Church’s very nature.¹⁸⁴ These different expressions of the constitution of the Church reveal that scholars in the field of theology, ecclesiology, sociology, anthropology, and organization are at variance regarding what exactly constitutes the Church.

However, one thing that is clear from the foregoing analysis is the notion of a community bonded together through faith, based on their biblical narrative. Whether such a community can be called a primary grouping or a distinct formalized and visible society (Tönnies 1887), there is in fact a community maintained and directed by competent authority whose directives are based on doctrinal and canon laws. This expression falls under sociological and organizational theories
(Taylor 1911, Weber 1947, Perrow 1973, Greeley 1970) and reveals indicators that make the Church an organized institution that has traversed historical centuries. Thus, an organizational scholar can with theoretical justification analyze the Church from an organizational standpoint.185

Dulles has argued that Vatican II cannot be accused of the traces of institutionalism within the Church because the Council embedded the Church within the elements of mystery, sacrament, Body of Christ, and the People of God (*Lumen Gentium*, 1 & 2), a demonstration that points to the significance of the biblical nature of the Church. Only after the Council had pointed out the intrinsic biblical characteristics of the Church did it draw particular attention to the formal structures of the Church,186 which began in the early second and third centuries.187 The development of the institutional nature of the Church occurred in stages.

First, in the late Middle Ages, the notion of truth was attributed to God and could only be found in the Scriptures where God’s revelation to human beings took place. God’s communication of revelation was through the prophets in the Old Testament and to his Church in the New Testament. The medievals believed that God’s favor was bestowed on the leaders and teachers (*majores*) of the Church and the Holy Spirit gave everything they taught to them.188 Second, Congar argues the distinction between the early Christians’ disposition toward authority and the medievals’ notion of authority by noting that the early Christians paid attention more to the content of revelation and how it was expressed through teaching, which became the tradition of the Church, while the medievals paid more attention to the one who taught.189 Stagaman raises the issue of the early Christians’ notions of the cohesive elements in the Church as constituting the visible order of the Church, for which reason the administrative order and the governance of the Church depended in a greater proportion on the consent of “at least the articulate
governed” (those of social status). On the other hand, this notion took a different turn in medieval times.

The state of affairs in the Church that revolved on practices of simony and lay investiture brought against the Church accusations of tyranny, despotism, and nepotism to the extent that the ascension of Leo IX and Gregory VII to the papal throne assertively curtailed such predominant practices. Stagaman notes: “Their impact on the exercise of authority was decisive for the remainder of the present millennium. They all strove to deliver the Church from lay control.” Subsequent Popes would maintain this reform based on the belief that “only Rome could distinguish between contemporary error and ancient truth, suspend the force of Church canons in cases of need, and promulgate new laws to meet unprecedented necessities.” This state of authority in the Church was strongly employed during the Reformation period with Counter Reformation elements when theologians and Canonists, in their attempt to respond to attacks on the papacy and hierarchy, agreed to employ secular structures as an instrument against their adversaries. Congar, in Lay People in the Church, remarks that the ecclesiology of the Church has been marked by a tendency to regard the Church:

as machinery of hierarchical mediation, of the powers and primacy of the Roman see, in a word “hierarchology.” On the other hand, the two terms between which that mediation comes, the Holy Spirit on the one side, the faithful people or the religious subject on the other, were as it were, kept out of ecclesiological consideration.
By the second half of the nineteenth century, the institutional aspect of the Church has reached its culmination, and Vatican I expressed publicly with singular clarity in the first schema of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church the willingness of the Church to maintain such institutionalist outlook. In fact, the Council went ahead and proclaimed in a significant paragraph of the Dogmatic Constitution not only that the Church was a perfect society but also that its permanent constitution had been conferred upon it by the Lord himself:

We teach and declare: The Church has all the marks of a true Society. Christ did not leave this society undefined and without a set form. Rather, he himself gave its existence, and his will determined the form of its existence and gave it its constitution. The Church is not part nor member of any other society and is not mingled in any way with other society. It is so perfect in itself that it is distinct from all human societies and stands far above them.194

Part of the teaching of the schema was adopted by Vatican II in the preparation of the constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium, chapters 1, II, and III). Furthermore, in the first schema of the Vatican I, the concept of institutionalism as applied to ecclesiology, power, and functions were divided into three, namely, teaching, sanctifying, and governing. I shall attempt to spell out in brief these three elements, relying on the work of Dulles, to show how the Church in the pre-Vatican II times applied and fulfilled these functions.
Teaching

The concept of teaching dates back to the early Christian Church when teaching was considered the primary focus of the leaders. Thus, the notion of the Church as a secular educational institution in which the teachers hand down the doctrine of Christ was developed and maintained until the present. In this sphere, the Bishops (the masters) are considered to possess a special *charism* of truth (in fact, Irenaeus first applied the use of the word which has undergone a considerable change over the years). The faithful are conscience bound to believe what the bishops declare. In fact, this notion has not changed even after Vatican II because the bishops are still considered to possess the absolute truth of the Gospel. The Church therefore is a unique type of school where the teachers wield the power to impose their doctrinal teachings with juridical and spiritual sanctions. Teaching, therefore, is understood as juridical and institutional.\(^{195}\)

Sanctifying

Sanctifying was understood as if the Pope, bishops, priests and deacons possessed the ultimate key used in opening a valve to dispense grace. At least, this was the notion of the function and the hierarchy could shut off the valve when and how they deemed fit.\(^{196}\)

Governing

The governing function was done in the name of the Pope by the bishop, priest or the deacon. They governed the flock with pastoral authority. As Christ’s vicegerents, they could impose new laws and precepts on any member that was found straying under the pain of sin.\(^{197}\) These three functions characterized the Church as hierarchical and authoritative. The Church was above the secular society, an institution in which power is concentrated in the hands of the ruling
class that perpetuates itself by cooption. Once again, the scenario was clearly amplified in the
Vatican I schema:

But the Church of Christ is not a community of
equals in which all the faithful have the same rights.
It is a society of unequals, not only because among
the faithful some are clerics and some are laymen,
but because there is in the Church the power from
God whereby to some it is given to sanctify, teach,
and govern, and to others not.\textsuperscript{198}

Thus, Dulles has deduced from several documents, concerning the image of the Church as
presented to the world prior to the Second Vatican Council and has provided the following
material. He notes that before Vatican II Ecumenical Council (1962 - 1966):

- The Church was identified with the kingdom of God, and considered a perfect society.
- The Catholic Church is the one true Church. Outside the Church there is no salvation.
  Conversion was needed: other Christian Churches were seen as lacking ecclesial
  character, and it was generally taught that outside the Church there could be no salvation.
  Certainly, outside Christianity, other religions were deemed as having no salvific value.
- Divine revelation only existed in Israel (Old Testament) and Christianity (the Fulfillment
  of the prophets, i.e. promises of the Old Testament in the New).
- The Church is based on the sacrament of Holy Orders and the Hierarchy. A direct
  unbroken lineage could be traced, from the mandate given to St. Peter by Christ, to the
present pontificate. The Church was seen in an authoritarian and monarchical mold. The Church was centralized (Rome), with its focus on the Pope.

- The Church was a teacher: it was engaged in a monologue - teaching the world, teaching, explaining and instructing.
- An emphasis was given to the sacrament of ordination. Through Holy Orders, the charismatic power to teach, preach, forgive, sanctify, dispense divine graces, and govern, was given to the Church.
- Catholic life was generally devotional. The lay person was expected (in the words of Cardinal Octaviani) “to pray, to pay, and to obey.” The laity, to a great extent, was passive.
- Membership to the Church was defined clearly and in a legalistic manner.
- The Roman Catholic Church was legalistic in theological emphasis - uniformity in worship and belief was important.¹⁹⁹

The elements presented in the image format indicate a Church that was modeled on Bellarmine’s definition of Church as *societas perfectas* having all the secular characteristics. The format also indicates the separation of powers between bishops, priests, religious, deacons, and the lay faithful. In principle, the format defines the image of the present Church even after the Council’s definition of the Church as mystical body, sacrament, and the People of God (*Lumen Gentium*, nos. 1 & 2).

However, there is another image format presented by Pottmeyer that defines the Church’s communicative method modeled after the image presented above.
• The priority of the universal Church over the local Church (a universalist view of the Church)
• The priority of the ordained office holder over the congregation and the charisms (clericalism)
• The priority of the monarchical over the collegial structure of office (centralism)
• The priority of unity over plurality (uniformity), and
• One-way communication from above to below corresponding to the hierarchical system of strict superiority and subordination.  

This format underscores the whole communicative transactive process of the Church which has not changed even after the postconciliar Church took a different turn concerning the dialogic nature of the Church (See documents: *Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes, Redintegratio Unitatis, and Nostra Aetate*) as nurturing, liberating, confirming, and enhancing the dignity of the human person. The new notion of *communion fidelium* presented to the Church by Vatican II has slowly been diminished and replaced with the previous conceptualization of superior-subordinate relationship as implicit in technical dialogue.

Since the papal reign of Leo XIV, the Church has maintained a strict managerial control that has superseded any other institution or society and it reached its height during the reign of Innocent III (1198-1215) who taught that all authority in the Church resided in his office,  

until 1959 when Vatican II was convened to examine critically the whole structure of the Church in order to adopt what could be considered a reengineering system as suggested by Michael Hammer and James Champy in their work: *Reengineering The Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution* (1993),  

that would reconstitute the structure and enhance its operations.
During the first session of the Council, one notable Bishop Emile De Smedt of Bruges denounced the three preconciliar functions of the Church—clericalism, juridicism, and triumphalism—as symbols of displacement within the Christ’s Church because clericalism reposed all powers into the hands of the higher clergy from whom descended unquestionable authority to the base where the faithful are found. He further noted that such notion of Christ’s Church removed the Church from the apostolic paradigm of service and turned it into lordship. The Bishop thus reminded the Council that in the Church, all have the same fundamental rights and duties, so that Popes, bishops, and priests, together with the faithful, must form the people of God.

The bishop’s view succinctly expressed was to challenge the Council Fathers to take a critical view of the Church as juridical institution that conceives authority in the Church as an end, which cannot be differentiated from other secular, bureaucratic organizations in the world where rules and regulations define the organization more than or rather than compassion and love. The elements that form the foundation of the Gospel and which make the Church a reconciling and forgiving Church, according to the Bishop, was absent from the Church. He therefore called on the Council to view the Church as “the loving mother of all,” as expounded by Pope John XXIII in his opening address to the Council. Additionally, the concept of the Church as triumphalistic demonstrates the Church as an army on warpath against Satan and his powers. Such phrases, according to the Bishop, were scarcely in line with the condition of the People of God, who are in communion with the Lord and known as “a little flock made up of frail and sinful men” following the humble Lord. Furthermore, the bishop reminded the Council Fathers of the overemphasis placed on the juridical teaching authority of the Church as taught by Vatican I with its concomitant elements regarding the seven sacraments and a
hierarchy consisting of bishops, priests and ministers, forgetting the People of God who are the Church. While not denying institution of the seven sacraments by Christ and the apostolic succession as taught by Vatican I, he encouraged the Council Fathers to focus on the sensus fidei, which is the ecclesia.

However, the theological foundations of the Church reveal that the focus of theology was not to insert into the apostolic teachings things that were neither crucial nor significant to the formation of the ecclesia. It is interesting that Dulles points out the task of theologians of the period before and after the reformation (sixteenth century), which was to discover the origins of the offices, beliefs, and rites in the Church. Another feature of authority is the elevation of authority over revelation. The hierarchy understands itself as the sole custodians and interpreters of “revelation” because it possesses the fullness of the Holy Spirit. What all these conceptualizations reveal is an organizational culture that has, through its practices, assumed a bureaucratic form exhibiting traditional managerial control, reluctant to admit the views of the community of believers that it is to serve. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model understands the task of service to the community as one of enhancing the dignity of all members of the Church through participation in dialogue with those in the hierarchy. Currently, the elements of authority, tradition, and paternalism seem to be so embedded in the Church that they take precedence over the ordinary individual’s participation. The model of dialogic praxis frames Catholic identity as more than obedience and adherence to dogma.
V. Elements of the Church’s Cultural Systems Necessary for Interdependence

a) Authority, Traditions, and Paternalism

Within the theological and the ecclesiological fields, authors have employed a variety of perspectives in an attempt to explicate the complex development and understanding of the levels of authority, traditions, and paternalism as exercised in the Church (Yves Congar, 1962, 1965; Raymond Brown, 1970, 1979, 1980; Brian Tierney, 1977; Edward Schillebeeckx, 1981, 1985; Thomas P. Rausch, 1986, 1989; Wayne A. Meeks, 1983; Bengt Holmberg, 1980; Elizabëth Schussler Fiorenza, 1977, Schuyler Brown, 1984; David J. Stagaman, 1999). Any model of authority as it is operationalized in the Church will have both theological and ecclesiological consequences for the way God, Jesus, the Christ, revelation, the Church, ministry, sacramental life, and dialogue with other Churches is understood.

In his reflections on authority, Stagaman (1999) has underscored several factors. First, he notes that authority is not opposed to rationality because it does not stand in opposition to reasonable inquiry, freedom, spontaneity. Stagaman argues that authority cannot be easily disregarded even though it is not proven through verifiable scientific means, because traditions that form the basis of authority bear us along the way of life and serve as bodies of shared memories, images, ideas, and ideals that link us to the past, present, and future. They usher us into a meaningful whole and provide us with certain orientations and directions for the future. John Schaar affirms this notion by observing that without traditions, our lives would not be grounded in meaning nor would they have any purpose. Tradition is thus important in the context of its “continual presence of a spirit and of a moral attitude, the continuity of an ethos,” and as defined in sociological terms as “a spontaneous assimilation of the past in understanding the present, without a break in the continuity of a society’s life, and without considering the past
as outmoded.”214 Thus, the traditions of the Enlightenment grant us the perspectives of the autonomy of reason, embedded in the individual thinker as capable of independent on no one. However, the other side of this perspective is also true because the ability to think “in one’s library”215 independent from the cares of the world, with its *ad infinitum* doubting reality, is possible only through the toils of others who are not sovereign over their own existence but dependent on the traditions of their forbears. Second, Stagaman argues in this context that authority is not opposed to freedom or spontaneity, observing that authority should be understood as the artist understands his profession. The artist, under no obligation, follows his conventions, recognizing no rules but following his well-schooled instincts in the traditions of his craft, while innovating against that background. The artists are people who have mastered their craft.216

However, where freedom is unduly restricted or removed in the performance of the artistic work, the artist loses the liberty of the instincts, of his mastery and the spontaneity of his profession. Stagaman further notes that wherever authorities strives to make all free choices and spontaneous urges conform to preconceived standards or require loyalty to themselves as the supreme good, they no longer possess authority in any but the minimal legal sense.217 Thus, the goal and purpose of authority is respect to promote and develop human liberties and spontaneities in order to ensure that “free actions and spontaneous expressions are mutually enriching in a given social setting and guided by reasonable ends. The task of authority is the achievement of communities where people are self-actuated, intentional, purposive, and rational.”218

Third, the author notes that authority is not a subjective reality, that is, it is not a personal attribute but only a socially constructed derivation. The office holder only has authority because
it has been bestowed on him as a result of his talents through the customs and practices of the community. Thus, authority is located in the process of social construction and the human transactive processes that take place within the society or community. Stagaman emphasizes that “while individuals who occupy official positions can rightly be called authorities, it is important to realize that they are called so by derivation. Authority properly belongs to the community which authorizes persons to act in its name.” On the hand, authority can also be conceived as lacking legitimate ground in the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model, if not properly exercised to accommodate the very people through whom it is conferred.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue model thus argues that the exercise of ecclesial authority must bear the print of the People of God, whose sensus fidei strengthens and affirms the faculty. This reasoning follows Edmund Farley (1982), who points out that the Scriptures are not authoritative in themselves if they are not linked to the salvific will and work of God in Jesus Christ, which according to the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue and some scholars in the Catholic tradition, are dialogic in nature. Farley continues to argue that books, documents, laws, and commands removed from the context of human interactive processes can have undesired consequences. Often, people in authority exercise their authority on the assumption that it is based on the common good. Stagaman observes that the issue for the person in authority is not whether the exercise of authority in a particular instance is conducive to the common good but rather how well it can be properly and unambiguously packaged. The Praxis Religious Dialogue thus argues that in religious circles, the only way to understand authority and its different concomitants is to situate it within the dialogue between God and his people, in which all the events evolving draw the attention of those in the conversation and in which God reveals himself in dialogue and the people listen and respond through dialogue.
The Praxis Religious Dialogue model argues, following Stagaman, that authority must facilitate the constant interactive processes that take place within the community of believers, enabling the members to determine their identity. It must aid the members to cherish and respect the set of norms that they uphold as binding and must enhance the development of freedom in the individual. Anything short of this purpose derails the value of authority. Further, authority must be understood as a quality of human interaction with people\textsuperscript{224} and the goals objects they strive for. Implicitly, there can be tensions and balances in the interactive procedures and processes. However, as Stagaman notes, synchronically (denoting the tension-balance inherent in the exercise of authority) and diachronically (suggesting a link between the past, present, and future of the ethos of a people) such tensions should focus on what is given as plausible in the traditions of the community, allowing possible alternatives (diachronically), hoping that historically, tradition will question itself in each succeeding epoch. Thus, the interpretations of today, grounded in the traditions of the community, may be questioned in the years to come because of the open-endedness of tradition. Within this scope, Stagaman explains that tradition bequeaths to us its treasures, calling us to be cunning, resourceful, imaginative, and experimental in transforming it\textsuperscript{225}.

Stagaman has further noted in this context, “Hence, dissent is a requirement lest the tension and balances be irretrievably drawn in the direction of the structural and the plausible.”\textsuperscript{226} Furthermore, because human history is not made up only of graces but finitude that is prone to sin, humans often prefer to lean toward that which is not grace, and authority must therefore endeavor always to distinguish itself from authoritarianism because authoritarianism can lead to ideology which is inimical to the concept of authority itself\textsuperscript{227} and especially within the Church whose mission is to proclaim service to one another. In fact, within the context of the
Church, and in accordance with the biblical injunctions across the Gospels mentioned earlier in this chapter, the charismatic model of authority, based on service, would be preferred to the hierarchically structured Church viewed as dominating its members through a paternalistic relationship that inhibits the growth of members in the community.

In Kantian ethical theory, the autonomy of the individual based on the moral fundamentality adequately prohibits any paternalistic action that may be exercised through authority. The often filial relationship characterizing, for instance, bishop and priest relations tends to be paternalistic because the priest is required to uphold obedience to the bishop just as theologians are supposed to adhere to “The Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian” which demands their full recognition of obedience to the Magisterium without questioning. The bishop-priest relationship rests on obedience, which is implicit in the notion of “submission of intellect and will” that is assumed to be driven by the notion of obedience of faith, which the priest owes to God who reveals himself (Lumen Gentium 25). The relationship is therefore established on superior-subordinate basis where the priest acts on the orders of the bishop by submitting his “intellect and will” through the Church to him. The comparison between the obedience demanded from theologians and office holders in the Church applies also to many Catholics in the sense that it makes dialogue in the Church more difficult. Further, the notion cannot be reconciled with the view expressed by the Second Vatican Council concerning “the unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful, and charity in everything.” In view of this standpoint, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model posits that the kind of relationship that is demanded by the Church between bishops and priests derails the notion of dialogue as noted by Vatican II (see “Introduction to Vatican II Documents) and implicitly, it further denies the liberty, autonomy, rights, and dignity of priests and many Catholics.
It is therefore significant to explore the development of the concept of authority as it has prevailed over the years because a believing community is organized and structured in the way it understands authority. Questions such as who presides over liturgical celebrations, who has the right to speak in the assembly, and who makes decisions on behalf of the community become pertinent in the exercise of authority over the community for the reason that the operationalization and the triangulation of such exercise holds theological implications for the community and its members’ understanding of the message that underlies their pilgrim story. Thomas P. Rausch (1986) has argued elaborately on the models of Church authority noting that there are three different levels of Church authority, namely, authority as hierarchical, authority as charismatic, and authority as pluralistic.233

First, authority as hierarchical points to the direction of the Roman Catholic Church’s understanding of itself as having a hierarchical structure that dates back from the early centuries. Etymologically, Rausch notes that the word “hierarchy” evolves from the Greek words hierëus (ἱέρευς) (priest) and arche (rule, principle), which literally means “priest-rule.”234 Thus, during the Council of Trent, it was established that “Whoever says that there is in the Catholic Church no hierarchy established by divine ordinance consisting of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, let him be anathema.”235 Taking cognizance of the past Church traditions, the Council of Trent made such assertion as an affirmation of the historical protractions that have preceded it. Rausch has pointed out that the tendency of the Church since the 16th century is to identify authority exclusively with the ordained ministry in order to emphasize the institutional aspects of the Church. He also demonstrates that there is one shortcoming underlying this model, which is that it brings together all authority to the ordained, and thus overlooks and eliminates the other existing charisms necessary for the ministering of the community of faith.
Leonard Boff (1985) took issue with the hierarchical view, identifying it as a “pathological view of the Church’s reality”\(^\text{236}\) which correlates to a reductionist view of the lay faithful as mere spectators of the Church. Gregory XVI (1831-1846) emphatically asserted the distinction between the clergy and the laity, arguing, “No one can deny that the Church is an unequal society in which God destined some to be governors and others to be servants.” “The latter, argued the Pope, “are the laity; the former, the clergy.”\(^\text{237}\) Then followed Pius X who also stressed that “Only the college of pastors (he refrained from the use of the word clergy) have the right and authority to lead and govern. The masses (again the use of the Marxist terminology masses instead of flock) have no right and authority except that of being governed, like an obedient flock that follows its shepherd.”\(^\text{238}\) Underneath these statements lies the disenfranchization of the lay faithful whose very membership of the Church is reduced to that of the flock, which listens without taking part in the necessary intra-ecclesial dialogue.

The statements also evince a strong patriarchal hegemony. Many scholars also have pointed out that the exclusive understanding of authority in the Church tends to translate the notion into the concept of power, which is ontologically invested in the ordained ministers to consecrate, forgive, and bless while the Christian is excluded. For example, David N. Power (1984) notes that the notion of authority and power within the Church dates back to Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius who emphasized the hierarchical concept of the Church and the “magical” nature of the clergy in the celebrating of the sacraments even when he is unworthy and in so doing lost the sacramental nature of the Church as a community.\(^\text{239}\) While it cannot be denied that leaders in any group or community are desirable, an emphasis on the exercise of authority and use of power tends to sway the intrinsic understanding of the charism of authority, which is apostolic in nature.
Rausch argues that the charism of apostolic teaching authority, recognized from the beginning and exercised over the centuries by bishops, has frequently been understood not as an office through which the faith entrusted to the entire Church comes to expression, but as a special power to teach without error, possessed by all the bishops or by the Pope alone. The implication of this understanding of authority and power has discouraged the process of dialogue with other Churches because sacraments celebrated by those who are not incorporated into the Catholic Church are not recognized as valid sacraments nor are their Churches true Churches because they are outside the walls of the Catholic Church.  

Second, authority as Charism (χάρισματα - charismata) stresses that all authority is rooted in the Spirit, which each member receives at baptism. In the view of many authors, this notion belongs to Protestant theology that stresses the charismatic nature of the spiritual gifts enunciated by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians. For instance, Rausch has argued that since the 16th century, Catholic theology has emphasized the hierarchical structure of the Church to the denial of the diversity of the spiritual gifts of Spirit and the ministries (διάκονια) that go with them. While the two emphasis—charismatic and authority—are mutually interrelated within the Church, Dulles argues that Protestant theology tends to stress the liberal nature of the charismatic level, pointing out that Protestant theologians such as Auguste Sabatier, Rudolf Sohm (1952), and Emil Brunner (1952) have developed a theology of authority and Church that makes the charismatic alone normative. Hans Küng, a Catholic theologian, adopted the same line of argument in speaking about the original Pauline charismatic structure, noting that “the fundamental charismatic structure of the Church, . . . without appointed ministries— . . . must remain open as a possibility even today.” However, Gotthold Hasenhüttl has developed a different model of authority in the Church. He argues that the early primitive Church adopted the
institutional model to meet certain prevailing particular situations but with time, the model became ossified and turned into structures of domination. In the same line of argument under the charismatic model, Boff, using Marxist categories, has maintained that in the primitive community, all shared equally in the Spirit, but the Church has imitated the tendency of ruling classes to appropriate all power for personal use. He notes that over the years, there has been “a gradual expropriation of the means of religious production from the Christian people by the clergy . . . finally, in terms of power, they were totally marginalized, dispossessed of their power.” Feminist theologians have also argued for a charismatic structure rather than a hierarchical model noting that authority, as exercised in the early Christian communities has significant implications for the Church of today. Introducing the new concept of “discipleship of equals,” Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza (1983) roots the Church in what she calls the “Jesus movement” in which both men and women in the early Church participated equally in roles of authority but later gave way to a patriarchal leadership based on the male heads of households. Additionally, Sandra Schneiders (1986), using the egalitarian model, has pointed out that the “evangelical equality” that permeated through the early Church communities and which guided relationships and the celebration of the sacraments within the communities is contrary to the exclusive nature of the exercise of authority based on a hierarchical structure. Rausch thus points out that the egalitarian model, which in fact is an offshoot of the charismatic model of authority in the Church, is consistent with the contemporary understanding of sacramentality, for sacraments symbolically mediates grace because a sacramental efficacy can only be understood in terms of its symbolic causality. Rausch’s understanding of sacramentality and equality is situated within the Pauline discourse on equality through baptism into the Church. In the Pauline context, it is through faith expressed in baptism
that one attains union with Christ and his body called the community of the “People of God.”
Their equality is achieved through their union with Christ in the Spirit who infuses them with the unique character of the sensus fidei (their sense of faith) to interpret their Christian story.\textsuperscript{249}

Thirdly, authority as pluralistic tends to emphasize the sensus fidei, a notion introduced by Avery Dulles. He argues that the recognition that because authority can teach only the things that the people believe in, emphasis should be placed on the general sense of the faithful.\textsuperscript{250} However, he cautions that such recognition must be based on the views of those Christians who are committed more than those who are indifferent or considered to be marginalized, even though the views of the latter should be given some consideration. Further, he notes that there are those who speak with authority on theological matters based on their competence or scholarship and those with prophetic voices, men and women who can help the Church to discern truth and the signs of the times through their prophetic insights. Finally, there are the bishops who speak with authority based on their appointment to the Church’s pastoral office, assisted by grace particular to their office.\textsuperscript{251} These various perspectives point to the direction that authority as practiced in the Church is still a complex issue both within the Church and in relationship with other denominations, especially in forging a dialogic ecumenism. While Catholicism stresses the hierarchical nature of authority, Protestantism generally emphasizes the charismatic nature of the Church. The pluralistic model recognizes both the hierarchical and charismatic models as conducive for the ongoing nurturing of the faith community. Attempts to depart from either of the two could lead to an ideology that ignores the fundamental nature of authority and its development in the Church.

In this vein, Stagaman (1999) has extensively observed the logics of office and charism, paying particular attention to the conflict between office and charism. He notes that people
holding office usually assume that tasks in any organization are infinitely divisible and thus can exist independently of one another, while charismatic model operates on the assumption that tasks in any organization are linked in networks of dependencies, and that the criterion of divisibility depends on the nature of the tasks and the stage of completion of the task. In this context, each individual element is interrelated. Within the context of authority as hierarchical, office holders view individuals as elements within the operational system and each is separated from the other. The author further notes that office holders in hierarchical sphere believe that all elements in an organization are best related hierarchically for the only relationships suitable for an organization are of a superior-subordinate type.252

However, the charismatic model suggests that in almost every culture, people emerge according to the dictates of the emerging tasks and sometimes such tasks demand joint decision-making process whereby tasks are entrusted to certain individuals in accordance with their talents and skills. While office holders of the hierarchical model assume that boundaries are essential to the functioning of the organization, those of the charismatic model believe that the power to make decisions and the consequent responsibility are never permanent characteristics of the office holder. Office holders in the hierarchical model counter such argument with the argument that defining who people are and where each one fits into the system is of paramount importance. Charismatics counterargue that boundaries are never permanent but emerge for particular purposes and that as those purposes undergo changes so do the boundaries. Their arguments point to the understanding that official definitions seldom meet the expectations of the communicative processes operative within the community of believers. Importantly, the characteristics of the hierarchical structure and its communication only become legitimate to the
extent that they enhance and relate to the discourse of the community of believers and influence the existing boundaries within which the community operates.

The foregoing analysis of the different models of authority in the Church indicates a complex issue that mirrors the complexity of the field of organization studies. The change in orientation of prescriptive organizational theories from classical to cultural, as well as the development of descriptive social constructionist approaches such as that of Weick, over the last century are indicative of the challenge that organizations present to scholars who seek to understand their proper scholarly analysis and practical functioning. One significant contribution of the early behavioral theorists was the movement from organization and management as purely structure and task oriented to the consideration of people, their morale, and the environment. Of course, while people’s relationships are paramount in organizations (e.g., human relations, cultural approaches, some feminist approaches), both relationship-based approaches and more task-sensitive approaches are necessary for the fruitful functioning of an organization.

Additionally, the Fusion theory of Wight E. Bakke and Chris Argyris (1938), Linking Pin theory (Likert, 1961), System theory (Scott, 1961), and Social Systems theory (Katz and Kahn, 1966) have all offered a tremendous understanding of the nature and operations of organization. Nonetheless, more research is needed on the impact of the people who make up the organization and whose presence within the organization often transmutes the perspectives and even the very structure of the organization.²⁵³ If the goal of organizing for an institution such as the Church is to find the means to structure organizations to meet the hopes of those who function within it, dialogue becomes an essential component because the transactive communicative process of both the office holders and the lower ranks facilitates and propels the different functioning processes of the organization through the very persons who constitute it. Mayo noted:
I believe that social study should begin with careful observation of what may be described as communication: that is, the capacity of an individual to communicate his feelings and ideas to another, the capacity of groups to communicate effectively and intimately with each other. that is, beyond all reasonable doubt, the outstanding defect that civilization is facing today.  

Dialogue, therefore, becomes an important component in an organization. The fusion of the three authority models—authority as hierarchical, authority as charismatic, and authority as pluralistic—most likely cannot bring about an integration of organizational processes involving formal, structural system maintenance and the welfare of the people within the organization unless the fusion takes into greater consideration the orthopraxis of dialogue, which emanates from the anthropological nature of the human person. Such a turn moves away from a scientific management approach to organization and rests on the factors that evolve through relational interpendencies. While the Church struggles to maintain its ministry to the hurt and suffering, it is even more expedient to recapture the roots of its message, namely, establishing a dialogue with the other, rejecting the certainty of superior-subordinate communication. In the ambiance of a closed type of organization, obedience to the norms of the organization seems natural, but such a notion fades into oblivion in the context of the biblical message where nothing but love for the Other becomes the norm.
b) **Pastoral Nature of Leadership in the Church**

It is for this reason that many theologians and ecclesiologists from the last century have attempted to emphasize the pastoral nature of leadership in the Church, to which the Pauline epistles amply witness. Paul speaks of variety of gifts and ministries in some of his early missionary Churches. In his first letter to the Corinthians (12:28), he enumerates first apostles, then prophets, and third teachers, and then miracle-workers, assistants, administrators, and those who have the gift of glossolalia (τὰ πνεύματα). For Paul, leadership, rather than the notion of “office,” seems to be emphasized. The concept of office implies appointment to a position of authority to exercise a permanent public role within a society or community. This type of role is usually termed as an “institutional” role, which is in contrast to the charismatic leadership for ministry which Paul speaks of (I Cor. 12:7). Within each of the early communities, Paul would appoint leaders, which Schillebeeckx calls “incipient local leaders and pioneers.” Wayne Meeks also points to the roles common to all the lists that Paul speaks of in different communities, that is, apostles, prophets, and teachers (1 Cor. 12:28). These roles were all charismatic in nature and were for the good of the whole community.

Subsequent Church teachings seemed to have passed over the inherent meaning of both the Pauline and the Gospels’ ecclesial structure. Mathew, for instance, recognizes the authority of local Church leaders but warns against ostentatious living and religious clothing and paraphernalia and calls attention to the desire for first seats at the religious meetings and the desire to be addressed with special titles. (Matt. 23:5-10). In the Synoptics, the dispute over rank as to who was the greatest among the apostles was also about authority (Mk. 10:35-45; Matt. 20:20-28; Lk. 22:24-27). Further, a Petrine tradition warns the presbyters (elders) to exercise authority without lording it over others (1 Peter 5:1-4). In fact, the New Testament is
emphatic on the style for Christian leadership—service. Stagaman has maintained that the
overriding conviction undergirding the works of the New Testament writers is that the earthly
Jesus lived for the Church to come (the eschatological Church), that the risen Lord and his
present will for the Church constitute the call to testimony. The convictions of the New
Testament writers are still pertinent for today’s Church still exercising an authoritative office that
does not answer formally to its ordinary members. The Spirit of the New Testament calls forth
authority based on service—authority that reaches out with compassion to search for the voice of
the other.

Rausch points out that the type of spirit-filled authority exercised in the early Church
communities was lost as the original witnesses passed from the scene and the Church continued
to develop from the second to the third generations. During this time, an institutionalized model
of the office of leadership began to emerge and the presbyters took on the roles of prophets,
teachers, and leaders of the early Christian communities. Raymond E. Brown (1980) notes that
“in the Churches that were associated with the three great pillars of the New Testament, Paul,
James, and Peter, presbyters were already known and established in the last third of the
century.” Thus, the three roles of prophets, teachers, and leaders were assumed into the one-
fold ministry of a local bishop who was assisted by presbyters (πρέσβεις - elders) and
deacons. According to Rausch, this practice was already in place in Antioch and possibly in
many other Churches “shortly after the end of the New Testament era and Ignatius of Antioch
provided a theological justification for the position of the bishop: the bishop represents God, the
presbyters take the place of the apostles while the deacons represent Christ.” Further, Rausch
notes that the threefold ministry effectively provided for the pastoral care and leadership at the
local level while it also indirectly developed a structure through the office of the bishop in fusing
the various Churches to create a universal communion of believers.

While the process achieved some measure of unity of local Churches, it also lost the
Pauline concept of the multiplicity of charisms and the ministry of women in the Church. In
order to revamp and sustain the new institutional model of authority invested in the bishop, some
Greco-Roman sources of various household codes that emphasized a patriarchal domestic order
based on the submission of wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters were
incorporated in the New Testament epistles (Col. 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Pt. 2:13-3:7; Titus
2:5-9.). The bishop of a local Church, then like a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of a present day
organization, became the head of the household and presided over the celebration of the
Eucharist. According to John H. Elliott (1970), the first clear attempt to link the Eucharist with
Church leaders appears in Ignatius of Antioch. Ignatius wrote: “You should regard that Eucharist
as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or by someone he authorizes” (Smyrneans
8.1).264

In fact, there is a historical experience of the early Church contained in the Didache that
bishops and deacons were elected by the community for the celebration of the liturgy, which
used to be the function of the prophets and teachers of the Word (Didache, 15.1). With time, the
election of a bishop or a deacon dropped from use, giving way to the appointment of the office of
bishop and deacons with the emergence of the laying on of hands—a sign of appointment to the
ministry of community leadership and not for any particular function. Hervé-Marie Legrand
(1979) has pointed out that for a person to be installed into the Episcopal or presbytral office,
election or at least approval by the community was necessary,265 and it was from this practice
that Schillebeeckx noted that at the Council of Chalcedon (451 A. D.), much emphasis was
placed on Canon 6 which decreed that an ordained person without assignment to a particular community invalidated the ordination, a practice that is still in force even today.

c) Institutionalization of the Pastoral Office

Constantine’s Edict of 313 A. D. firmly established an institutional foundation of the clerical office. It changed the office from pastoral to an official legal status. Congar (1965) has pointed out that at the turn of the fourth century, Church officials could receive official status in the Roman Empire. The Church could own lands, acquire buildings, and bishops and priests were exempted from taxes and other civil duties. Around the fifth century, bishops began to wear the insignia of high officials like the pallium and the stole. The usage of the crozier used by bishops as a sign of his pastoral office appeared in Spain around the seventh century and in Gaul around the eighth and simultaneously with the wearing of the ring by bishops.

Congar notes that significant attention was given to gestures of handing over and touching important objects, taking the vow of obedience by placing one’s hands between the hands of a superior, and the handing over of instruments or insignia to incorporate one into an office. Schillebeeckx (1985) has maintained that the priest became a sacred person and his identity was defined in cultic functionary terms. The law of abstinence from sexual intercourse for married priests before the celebration of the Eucharist, which ultimately culminated in clerical celibacy, was also introduced. The Church adopted many Roman Senatorial cultic practices. Popes began to wear the diadem (a crown), the phrygium (a round white miter), red tunic, and carried the scepter. In fact, Gregory VII (1073-1085) claimed for himself an exclusive right in his Dictatus Papae to wear imperial insignia. The adoption of monarchical representations, images, and titles inculturated the Church into a hierarchical feudal system that
reached its climax in papal absolutism. Such absolutism reached its apex during the reign of Boniface VIII (1294-1303). The Pope declared in his famous papal bull “that it was absolutely necessary for the salvation of all men that they submit to the Roman Pontiff.” Further Boniface introduced the wearing of the *tiara*. (Congar has described that the papal tiara rose from the base to a single point at the top that “was an apt expression of the idea of pontifical monarchy and a quasi-pyramidal concept of the Church”). Thus, in the fourteenth century, the Conciliarist movement that grew out of the struggle to resolve the dilemma caused by the western schism (with its rival claimants to the papal throne), was partially a reaction to papal absolutism and the abuse of ecclesiastical power.

Throughout centuries, the Church has maintained that its authority, especially in legal matters, is divine. From the standpoint of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model, in attempting to live out its pastoral nature, the Church has leaned on its power structure, culminating in the compromise of its very dialogic nature of service. The Matthean version of the key (Matt. 16:16ff) given to Peter has always been a foundational argument of the Church’s possession of power as coming directly from Jesus, the Christ. But as Stagaman points out, any reading of the Matthean version concerning the key to the Kingdom should not ignore the preceding verses 13-23 which details the very person of Peter as “not only the rock but a stumbling block; not only the one to whom the Father in heaven has given special revelation but also one who is on the side of human beings, not only the only person in the Gospels to receive dominical blessing as an individual but also the Satan who tempts Jesus to abandon his mission.” Stagaman argues that Peter does receive real authority to bind and loose and to carry the keys of the Kingdom, and he is granted these powers in the perpetual struggle against evil and not for ostentatious living, with secular authority that answers to no one.
Further, the struggle against evil in this world inherent in the dominical blessing symbolized in the key was applied to every baptized Christian, and Stagaman further notes that in the East, it was applied especially to every bishop in Africa, and to the bishop of Rome in the West. Implicatively, the dominical blessing is not limited to any special office in the Church, as it is known in our time. Additionally, Stagaman explains that Petrine primacy is not presented as primarily a juridical point but rather the understanding of the Petrine primacy should be grounded in the fact that the story of Peter is always included in the telling of what God has done in Jesus of Nazareth. 278

In order to link the early Churches to the apostolic Church, the image of the bishop was first understood as the leader of a cult (in Rome), a spiritual leader, example, and a sacral focus in the Syria region, and in Asia Minor, the ordained preacher of the apostolic teaching. 279 Many authors have noted that bishops of the early Churches strived to link their roles to that of the apostles. Congar has observed that the local image of the bishop manifested in his personal qualities had to meet high standards. “Bishops were to be spiritual men,” maintains Congar, “assiduous in their study of Scripture, fasting, and hospitality. Other qualities frequently associated with the office are that the bishop be a good listener and willing helper, able to edify all the members. He was not to be interested in his own gain but concerned for the welfare of all, being thirsty after justice.” 280 It was within this environment that the bishop had to live his life. In fact, Congar points out that many bishops endeavored to fulfill the prerequisites enumerated and many scholars point out that the struggle to live according to the requirements is enshrined in the advice of Propus to Ambrose upon his appointment as prefect in Milan: “Act not as a judge but like a bishop.” 281
In recent times, organizations are considered as corporate bodies made up of different levels of structures with diversity of roles and mission statements. In the same fashion, between the second and the third centuries, Cyprian of Africa perceived the Church as a corporate body with a structure and a constitution established by Christ himself. Stagaman and others have observed that Cyprian understood the Church as hierarchically arranged in class—brothers and sisters, virgins and ascetics, martyrs and confessors, and the clergy headed by the bishop who sets the standard. The ideal bishop demands from his congregation virtue, execution of his commands, and obedience to God’s will. The view of Cyprian was that it was the college of bishops of a province who were competent to proceed against an unfaithful shepherd. In his view, without the office of the bishop, the Church does not exist; and if the Church is not our mother, then God cannot be our Father. In the Syriac Didascalia, Christians are exhorted to “love the bishop as a father, fear him as a king, honor him as a God.” It further put emphasis on the rights and jurisdiction of the Episcopal office while relegating the laity to a subordinate status. It affirmed that the Spirit of God fully dwells in the bishop who in turn communicates it to others through the laying on of hands in baptism and at ordinations of priests.

By the turn of the third century, according to Stagaman, the local Churches began to have their own courts and this establishment emanated from the Pauline dictum against Christians taking their fellow Christians to courts. Thus, bishops accompanied by their clergy met with Christians who brought cases against their fellow member of the community. Before the end of the fifth century, the bishop had become an official who wielded authority over Christians within his province. He alone performed the necessary sacramental functions unless he deemed it necessary to delegate a clergy. It is out of this historical practice that the bishop became the ruler of a diocese and the liturgy became something that the clergy performed. The development also
set the clergy apart from the laity. By the sixth century, the clergy also adopted a special rule of life and began to wear a special costume to differentiate them from the laity, and it all happened without any opposition from the laity or from any other quarters.285

The explanation and exploration of the models analyzed reveal that they have arisen over many historical epochs. The two main models, the vertical and horizontal, are not separate but mutually inclusive, revealing the presence of the God who reveals himself to us. By becoming man, God implicitly accepts all that goes with human nature in order to purify it. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model assumes that as a human organization, the Church operates within history, with a mission to transmute the finitude of human structures. Operating from both axes—human and divine—the Church’s mission must be embedded within the historicality of human experience in order to foster a deeper relationship between those who form the community of believers and the God they worship. Thus, the human structures that characterize the Church and facilitate its missionary work are necessary as far as they do not become obstacles in the way of the community members. As a human organization, it possesses some organic qualities to enable it to grow from strength to strength and adapt to its environment. Embedded within a spatio-temporal reality, it must take into account the different interactive processes that characterize the community of believers so that it can enhance and promote the shared realities of the members.

With a rich history and tradition, the Church has the ability to ensure that the story of the faith community is not lost through structures that inhibit their progress but aid the sense of the faith that underlies the pilgrimage of the community. The three dimensions of the Church to teach, sanctify, and govern are instruments to facilitate the growth of the Church through dialogue that is orthopraxic in nature. While the models yield a variety of results—the divine
yielding the sacramental, the kerygmatic preferences, and the human dimension producing the institutional and the servant models, they are all for the purpose of the growth of the faith community. For this reason, the dialogic nature of the models must be maintained and reconciled with the very nature of the Church to liberate, nurture, confirm, and strengthen members of the community in order that the Church may preserve the dignity of the human person on his pilgrimage. Dulles has argued that each of the dimensions bring out certain important and necessary points.

The institutional model structures the Church as a community made up believers and therefore needs a pastoral office equipped with authority for service. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model posits that that kind of authority must be based on the injunctions of Christ rather than on historical developments of predecessors who, it could be argued, fashioned certain types of authority to suit their needs.286 Flathman argued this case, noting that tradition is fluid and therefore interpretable within certain spatio-historical horizons in order to ground it within the experiences of those who make up the community. The institutional aspect of the Church seems to be rigid and doctrinal to the point that, as Dulles suggests, it could be substituted for God. When Church officials persist in reading the Vatican II documents with a preconciliar lens, never ready to let go of the embedded institutional Church that saw itself as a society equal to no other society, the potential for dialogue within the Church is compromised. Dulles’s argument that the Church also could be understood as a social construct that is constantly undergoing changes permits new spaces for dialogue within the Church, as articulated by the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue.

**Conclusion**
The image of the Church as Dulles and several scholars have presented rests on the vertical and horizontal planes which the Praxis Religious Dialogue model defines as mystical and organizational. The mystical aspect corresponds to the biblical images presented as emerging from the narrative of revelation in which God reveals himself to man and woman through an invitation to dialogue. On the other hand, the horizontal image of the Church reveals a Church constituted of people who, through their shared experiences emerging from their common shared narrative, relate to each other in a dialogic manner in order to reach their goal. The Church is compared to other organizations in many aspects it its interaction with the world, with its own members, and other faith traditions. As a Church that has its story based on the narrative of revelation, it is assumed that it would respond to the dialogic process inherent in the narrative—God communicating with his people through different cultures. The Second Vatican Council sought to point the Church to this direction of renewal, through compassionate dialogue with modern men, through social justice, and by addressing whatever concerns the world may have, and it placed a special emphasis on the quest for a community of peoples\textsuperscript{287} based on the love of Christ.

However, in a span of forty years after the Second Vatican Council, changes that would have encouraged participation through dialogue have been minimal. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model recognizes this lack of dialogue between the hierarchy and members of the Church who together form the community of the People of God. The model recognizes that priests and the lay people have little say in the official pronouncements of the Church. While there are some officials who assiduously work to transform the Church to meet the expectations of the sensus fidei, there are other officials whose vision of a transformed Church is contrary to the Petrine dictates that come to us from the Holy See. It would be significant for the Church to
provide a fertile ground for a Praxis Religious Dialogue within the Church in order to have the opportunity to listen to other voices that are being silenced by the Church.

Authority in the Church has met some resistance in the past, but as Stagaman has argued, with other scholarly voices, authority in the Church is “a service-role” to be performed on behalf of the people whose historical and religious experiences, emanating from their religious customs and tradition, call for openness and transparency. Until the exercise of authority in the Church is understood in the light of service, it will always remain an “authoritarian” concept that breeds ideology, and as Arnett and Arneson have indicated, “ideologies dictate” and indeed operate within the principles of institutionalism.

Further, Cheney argues that organizations that today still maintain or engage in corporate advocacy or rely on attempts at powerful but indirect political [religious] influence must not distance themselves from the daily concerns of their people who actually form the core of their polity or religious community. The nature of the Church is dialogic and must embrace not only the social concerns of the members of the community but their innermost groans regarding their freedom to engage in dialogue without constraints. Thus, it is in the interest of the Church to strive to adopt a Praxis Religious Dialogue approach, based on mutual respect and always ready to engage the crisis of the dialogic moments. When its message is textured by its actions within the historical moment, it will bear the imprint of its community whose pilgrimage story is that of Jesus, the servant of all. Such a stance also will enhance the missionary activities of the Church, promote cooperation among the Church and other faith traditions, and achieve the purpose of its existence “to liberate, nurture, confirm, and strengthen each other so that the Church can be a “mother of all.”
ENDNOTES


7 Dulles. p. 1.


9 Ibid. p. 110.


12 Ibid. p. 2.

13 Ibid. p. 15-18.


16 Ibid. p. 35.

17 Ibid. p. 35.

19 Ibid. p. 73.

20 Ibid. p. 73.


22 Ibid, p. 34.


27 Ibid, p. 31.


29 Dulles. p. 8.

30 Vatican I Schema, Ch. 7, no. 365.


33 Dulles. p. 39.

34 Ibid. p. 39.


36 Ibid. (2nd. edition) p. 38.

37 Ibid. p. 40.


42 Ibid. p. 36 (2nd edition). Dulles devotes the whole of chapter II of his book, Models of the Church to deal with the concept of “institutionalism” which occupies an important and major part of the Church’s structure. He argues that to understand the institutional nature of the Church, “one must draw upon the communitarian and mystical views of the Church”, p. 38 of the 2nd edition. E. Schillebeeckx also looks at the institutional aspect of the Church from a biblical and historical perspectives, drawing largely from the Church historical development and the new thoughts of the Second Vatican Council concerning the nature of the Church (Lumen Gentium). What possesses authority in the Church is Word of God, which St. Paul charged Timothy to teach because it is “the entrusted pledge”, (1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Tim. 2: 8; Titus 2: 10. See chapter 4 of Schillibeeckx book: The Church: The Human Story of God, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990).

43 Dulles. p. 27-30.


45 See “Introduction” to Vatican II Documents, W. M. Abbott, ed. p. XVIII.


49 Dulles. p. 28.

50 Dulles. Models of the Church, (2nd. edition) p. 29.

51 Ibid. p. 17-18.
52 Ibid. p. 17-18.


54 Ibid. p. 31.

55 Ibid. p. 31.


61 See Henri Bergson. *The Sources of Morality and Religion,* (1932)


63 H. Bergson. *The Sources of Morality and Religion,* (1932)


65 Ibid, p. 31.

66 Ibid, p. 31.

67 Ibid, p. 34.


*Council Speeches,* op. cit., p. 25. The Second Vatican Council used the same images in its document, *Lumen Gentium* in the first chapter to describe the Church.


Ibid.

Ibid.

See Yves Congar’s work: *The Mystery of the Church.* (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1960, p. 97-117; and also *L’eglise de S. Augustin à l’époque moderne.* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), p. 232-240. In these works, Congar presents the views of Thomas Aquinas on the Church as a communion of grace that is the seed of glory, which is the grace of Christ, and therefore all those who believe through the Church are brought in union with God through Christ.


81 Greeley makes the assumption that the Church’s structure cannot be denied as inherently organizational in the strict sense of the word because it operates on organizational structures as many other organizations.


83 Ibid. p. 4.


85 W. M. Abbott. The Documents of Vatican II. (Chicago: Associate Press, 1966). 14. The Council defines the Church as a mystery but uses ordinary human models or analogies to demonstratively indicate its nature and mission by drawing from the pastoral life (the shepherd), agricultural (a mustard seed), architectural (1 Cor. 3:9), married life (the bride). These images ground the Church in concrete human experience making it a physical reality that relates to its environment.


88 Ibid. p. 15.


91 Cheney. p. 35.

92 Ibid, p. 35.


95 Ibid. p. 8.

96 Ibid. p. 8.


100 Ibid, p. 86.

101 A. Greeley. p. 27.


103 Dulles. p. 32.

104 Dulles. p. 16.


108 Dulles. p. 20.


The event that evolved the serious discussion was about the proliferation of nuclear armament around the globe, and the understanding must be placed against the background of the Cold War when the United States of America intensified her production of nuclear arms as a deterrent to the Soviet Union which also was producing in no small quantity nuclear arms. Many Americans were against the proliferation of the nuclear arms by the United States and history recounts that there were numerous protest around the country to stop the production.


Ibid.

Ibid.


121 Charles Perrow (1964) in *Complex Organizations* has a problem with this argument because he notes that when liberal idealism fails in institutions, Selznick treats it as failure of the leadership when in fact some institutional leaders may infuse their organizations with values that are contrary to democratic values. [How will this point help your argument?] Second, Edward G. Rozycki (2000), in his review of Selznick’s book, *Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation*, also disagrees with Selznick’s notion that institutions are of higher social entity because it is contrary to Selznick’s own argument elsewhere that organizations are rational.


123 See M. Weber. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons; Talcott Parsons, ed. (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press and Falcon’s Wing Press, 1947). The various characteristics as listed by Weber are the following: Stipulated relationship among positions, Broad purpose or plan subdivided into tasks, Authority is vested in the position of performance, Lines of authority arranged in hierarchical order (pyramidal form), Formal established system of rules and regulations, Formal and impersonal procedures applicable to all, Enforcement of discipline, Enforcement of separate private and organizational lives, and Employment is based on technical qualifications.


127 Ibid. Also see Cyril Sofer, *Organizations in Theory and Practice,* (New York: Basic Books, 1972),


131 Ibid. p. 120.


137 Ibid. p. 49-50.

138 Dulles. p. 118.

139 Ibid. p. 118.


144 Ibid.

145 Ibid.


149 Ibid.

150 Ibid. p. 91.


152 Ibid. p. 94.

153 Ibid. p. 94.

154 Ibid. p. 94.


156 Von Bertalanffy. ‘The Theory of open systems in physics and biology.’ Science 111, 23-29

157 See Footnote1 & 3 of Lumen Gentium: “The Mystery of the Church. “

158 See article by F. E. Emery and E. L. Trist: Human Organization, vol. 18 © 1965)


161 Ibid. p. 115-130.


165 Ibid. p. 31.


167 Ibid.

168 Ibid.

169 Ibid.

170 Vatican II Documents, Lumen Gentium, nos. 11, 12, 13, and 14.

171 The Vatican II Documents. Lumen Gentium, 18.


173 Von Bertalanffy. p. 45.


178 Ibid. p. 30.

179 Robert Bellarmine defined the Church in terms of visible elements: that is, a visible society, visible as the Kingdom of France or the republic of Venice. See *De controversies*, tom. 2, liber 3, *De ecclesia militante*, cap. 2, “De definitione Ecclesiae” (Naples: Giuliano, 1857), Vol. 2, p. 75.


182 Refer to Haas und Grabherr. (Ausburg, 1931). There is also a recent development of variants on the notion of the categorization. See Werner Stark. *The Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 5. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966-72). Other comments by Rademacher can also be found in the same vol. 5, p. 72-75.


184 Ibid. p. 107.


187 See David Stagaman’s book *Authority in the Church*, chapters 4-5.

188 Ibid. p. 91-92.


190 Stagaman. p. 92.
191 Stagaman. Authority in the Church, p. 93.

192 See Stagaman, p. 93. Also this section has been development based on other scholarly works by Karl Morrison, Tradition and Authority in the Western Church (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 300-1139; George Tarvard, “The Papacy n the Middle Ages,” Papal primacy and the Universal Church, Paul Empie & Austin Murphy, Church, eds. (Minneapolis: Ausburg, 1974), p. 98-104.


196 Ibid. p. 35.

197 Ibid. p. 35.


199 The outline forms a summary of Dulles classic work on “The Models of the Church” which has been accepted as a foundational work on Ecclesiology in higher institutions and in the Church.


202 See Michael Hammer and James Champy, Reengineering The Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution, (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), especially chapter 3: Reengineering as the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business process to achieve dramatic improvements in critical,
contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service, and speed. The authors encourage companies to sacrifice willingly their old ways of doing things in order to make improvements in their organizations. They argue that without the willingness there should be no attempts of embarking on any reengineering process as the cost may be greater to the existing situation.


205 Ibid. p.144. Also see Vatican II Documents, introduction, p. 17.


207 The phrase is one of the images used by the Council Fathers to describe realistically the make up of the Church. The imagery is followed by another phrase: “Weak and humble, it stands in constant need of purification and renewal,” see introduction to the document *Lumen Gentium*, p. 17.

208 See Vatican II Documents, introduction, p. 17.

209 H. Dezinger and A. Schonmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 32nd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), nos. 1601 & 1775; 413 & 637. The authors are usually abbreviated as DS.

210 Vatican II Documents, *Dei Verbum*, nos. 9, and 10.

211 These authors have produced several works regarding the beginnings of the Church and its practices over the centuries, revealing a tremendous exercise of arbitrary powers that is unquestionable.

212 Stagaman. p. 21.


Ibid. p. 23.


Edmund Farley. *Ecclesial Reflection.* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982). His reflections on authority are from a Protestant perspectives on “the Book which many Protestants in authority often use as a source of authority in dealing with both biblical and secular issues.”


Ibid.


Ibid. p. 32.


226 See Richard Flathman. The Practice of Political authority. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980). While Flathman argues in favor of dissent, elsewhere he takes a different stance, which to my mind proves exactly what he says in this book that tradition is fluid, and hermeneutically interpretable with time.

227 Stagaman. p. 32.


229 Vatican II Documents, Dei Verbum no. 5.


231 Vatican II Documents, Gaudium et Spes, no. 92.

232 Vatican II Documents, Dignitatis Humanae, no. 3; Gaudium et Spes, nos. 12-17.


234 Ibid. p. 29.

235 D.S. no. 966; see also 960).


237 Ibid. p. 141-142. Boff was silenced by John Paul II in 1985 from publication of his ideas and was reinstated through the intervention of the Brazilian Bishops in April 1986.


241 Rudolf Sohm’s takes an anti stance against the Church as an institution. His arguments were accepted by Emil Brunner in his work: *The Misunderstanding of the Church.* (London: Lutterworth, 1952), p. 107.


249 See. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, (3, 26-29) where the apostle enunciates the notion of equality among those baptized into Christ.


251 Ibid. p. 100. See also Thomas P. Rausch. *Authority and Leadership in the Church.* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), p. 36-37.

252 Stagaman. p. 5-7.


260 D. Stagaman. *Authority in the Church*. p. 70.


264 John H. Elliott has suggest that the Lukan version of the dispute among the apostles regarding who was the greatest in rank among them (Lk. 22:24-27) suggest a trend associated with ministry and Eucharist which became the foundation for the later post-apostolic Church to build. (See J. H. Elliott.


268 See Rausch. *Authority and Leadership in the Church.* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), p. 64


270 Ibid. p. 118.

271 Schellibeeckx. *Church with a Human Face.* P. 140-143; 159-160.

272 See. Y. Congar. p. 125-126.

273 Dezinger Schömetzer (D. S.) 875.

274 Congar. p. 125-126

275 Rausch. p. 66.

276 Stagaman, p. 72. Further exploration of the subject can also be found in the article by David Bossman:


277 Ibid. p. 72.

278 Ibid. p. 72

Ibid. p. 130.

Ibid. p. 131.

Stagaman. p. 78-79.


Stagaman. p. 78-79.

Richard Flathman, The Practice of Political Authority, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). I have used Flathman’s notion of Political Authority in fashioning this section which in the Praxis Religious Dialogue model, corresponds to the practice of authority in the Church.

See Vatican II Documents, “Opening Message.”


Chapter 9
The Narrative of Revelation as Foundation for the Voice of the Other.

I. The Concept of Narrative and Narrative Theology:
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III. Legitimation of Revelation as a Christian Narrative:
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The different theological and ecclesiological narratives that describe the Church from different points, namely, the Church as sheepfold, a tract of land, a vineyard, an edifice, a bride of Christ, and Mother are attempts to reconstruct the Church in biblical images in order to make it intelligible to humans and at the same time emphasize the horizontal nature of the Church. The different analogous descriptions further offer clarity of what the Church is – a physical entity, a structure, an organization, and even a personification as a “mother” with maternal emotions and feelings, an agricultural image— a piece of land that possesses the potency to offer nutrients to things planted on it. These are all physical realities. However, the implicit nature of the Church which is derived from the biblical narrative of revelation and from which the Church attains its mission— to liberate human beings from their injustice and nurture them with the word of God by confirming them in the Spirit so that they would be strengthened to take up
their various Christian missions—was not properly highlighted by the Council. It is assumed that the Council left the details for the different National Conferences of Bishops to dissect the images and appropriate them to their existing conditions.

After forty years since the Council ended, not too much has happened in the area of dealing with the implicit assumptions of the narrative of revelation. Revelation as a narrative is historical in content; there is also the aporetics of temporality which demands a constant reflective and speculative form of thinking. Through thoughtful reflection, the refiguration of the different configurations leading to the events that formed the narrative of revelation can provide entry into the historical nature of the dynamics of the revelatory events which are communicative in nature. God’s intervention in human history recounted in the narrative of revelation is, by its very nature, an ontological intention or to use Ricoeur’s term, possesses a “historical intentionality” that is, God’s purpose for revealing himself to us within a historical moment. In view of this historical intentionality, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model aims at perspectivizing the concept of narrative through analysis in order to elucidate some of the significant elements inherent in the narrative of revelation and apply some of them in the call to Praxis Religious Dialogue in the Church.

I. The Concept of Narrative and Narrative Theology

Around the sixteenth century, John Donne, the English poet, argued that religion was like truth that stood on a colossal hill and to which everyone must turn to and struggle to the top. Donne’s argument, which focuses on his perception of “truth,” would later become the cornerstone of the Enlightenment process hundred and fifty years later
when truth would be linked to reason (λογος) and not religion because it was identified with what the Greeks called “mythos” (µιθος), story. Michel de Certeau has argued in the same manner that the Enlightenment understood religion as history of error bordering on faith. 5 Gavin Flood has also noted that even the perspective of the Enlightenment on “truth linked faithfully with reason would become a suspect in the long annals of the Enlightenment history and would be subjected to scrutiny by scholars like Nietzsche and Freud, whose influence would stray into the postmodern era.” 6 Flood has consistently maintained that with the link between truth and reason faded, the idea of narrative within the literary field was established, and narrative assumed a centrality in postmodern thought. Reason itself has become another field of narrative study even in the scientific world and has maintained a constant departure from the ancient traditional metanarrative. 7

Thus, in the Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Jean Francois Lyotard notes that postmodernity no longer views metanarrative as an essential guiding principle in the epistemological world for it is no more performative than science is in a technological world and this standpoint leads him to define postmodernity in terms of “incredulity toward metanarratives.” Lyotard’s report on knowledge is a departure from Jungen Habermas’ position on reason where Habermas takes a new critical approach to the rationalization of society defined in terms of “the communication community of those affected, who as participants in a practical discourse test the validity claims of norms and, to the extent that they accept them with reasons, arrive at the conviction that in the given circumstances the proposed norms are right.” 8 This position is of course is rejected by Lyotard as an unacceptable remnant of a “totalizing philosophical tradition and as the
valorization of conformist, when not terrorist, ideals of consensus.” Both Lyotard and
Habermas argue from an epistemological position, each consistently adopting a narrative
mode of perspective. Habermas, with a critical analysis directed toward the
communicative competence in society, maintains that the Hegelian tradition organized
around the value of totality only points to the stripping of many voices of dialogue and
maintains the status of monologue rather than that of commitment. The Hegelian notion
of totality points to the idea that all phenomena can be understood only in relation to
other phenomena but the concept is situated within the notion of dialectics and not
“completeness in the sense of producing a total or complete portrait of a phenomenon.”
Further, the concept is contextualized within the notion of dialectical perspective as a
way of thinking of the world in terms of relations or interrelatedness. For Hegel, the
notion assumes the same theoretical orientations as any holistic notion in the context of
relatedness. Hegelian notion of reality can thus be assumed to rest on the notion of simply
a manifestation of the mind, a philosophy which stands on the idea that everything is in
a process of motion, of becoming. His philosophy was to challenge the philosophy of
his time which he considered as falsely representing the notion of being which was
understood as “fixed” entities. In his view, the state of “Becoming” represented a higher
truth and revealed a deeper reality than mere static, fixed notion of “Being.” The idea of
“Becoming” is explained further to demonstrate that the comprehension that a
phenomenon and its opposite “passover” into one another and that “each immediately
vanishes in its opposite.”

The difficulty with Hegel’s idea is the teleological development of the notion of
“Becoming.” He regarded the final stage of “Becoming” as the teleological unfolding of
the “Idea” of the “Spirit” (Geist),\textsuperscript{15} that is, the immanent or rational order of the universe. Was there any theological implication of this idea? For Hegel, “Becoming becomes an evolutionary process through which humans become aware of God’s plan of the universe. His whole intention was to move away from the notion of ontology as “Being” to ontology of “Becoming” in order to achieve the knowledge of the “Idea” or the “Spirit” (Geist) through the higher consciousness of mind. Thus the notion of dialectics in Hegelian mind, points to the idea of “Being” and “Nothing” which for him is not a negative notion but essential to possessing a higher consciousness of “Becoming.”\textsuperscript{16}

Totality, in his notion has to be understood from the standpoint of idealism which characterizes the German tradition of Idealism. For Habermas, the notion of commitment is embedded in the communicative community, which through reason and conviction can reach an acceptable conclusion for a normative order in society. The commitment is directed towards his repudiation of modernity’s insistence of the return of the middle class “philistine of Spiessbuerger rejection of modernist forms and values and the acceptance of postmodernity’s expression of a new social conservatism.”\textsuperscript{17} This notion of a new social order, in the view of Habermas is driven by a sense of community consensus through commitment to communication in which the dissolution of subjectivity gives way to a host of networks of relations and messages.\textsuperscript{18}

There is a distinction between the views expressed by Hegel, Habermas, Lyotard, namely, that the Hegelian tradition privileged totalization embedded in the Absolute Spirit that characterized his view of the human person which was a departure from the concept of autonomous, finite and fixed entities that characterized the notion of ontology of “Being” to an ontology of “Becoming.” Habermas, on the other hand, pointed to the
idea of social transformation through communicative praxis in which relations and interdependencies are privileged instead of subjectivity as a source of consciousness constantly in the process of becoming. Lyotard however privileges doing Science and participating in lawful and orderly social reproduction within the context of information through technology. However, he recasts the coherence of scientific research and experiment in terms of linguistics and of theories of performative in order to inject new ideas that would lead to a return to the more familiar aesthetics of high modernism in an attempt “to make anew from a scientific paradigm shift of representational to nonrepresentational practice.”

Looking at these arguments in terms of language and rhetoric, both serve to open the idea of language as granting access to the truth and rhetoric as leading to the archē (ἀρχή), the primal or the “truth.” Arguably, Lyotard does not entirely dismiss the notion of narrative as a representational entity but advocates for a scientific narrative paradigm that propels and nurtures scientific research for innovational knowledge. As mentioned above, Lyotard demonstrates how postmodernism has generally evolved a new paradigm of scientific-narrative shift that involves a radical break with both dominant and aesthetic cultures that characterized modernity in which the insistence on production through industrialization seemed to be the highest form of the human spirit.

According to him, the claims of narrative or story-telling knowledge have retreated in the face of abstract, denotative, or logical and cognitive procedures generally associated with science or positivism. He thus privileges science as performative, a search not for consensus, but for “instabilities,” as a practice of paralogism, in which the point is not to reach agreement but to undermine from within the very framework in
which the previous “normal science” had been conducted. While admitting the place of science in postmodern era, he does not deny the significance of narrative even in the world of science for as he maintains even though postmodernity views the past as a primitive epoch whose data has no relation with the present, there is an attempt to redeploy the present scientific narrative as a property of storytelling itself belonging to the field of linguistics while at the same time maintaining that if there has been any break, it should be seen as a process from oral to written, then to storage in libraries, universities, museums, to computerization, and data banks. However, the break from mythic to performative narrative and science, according to him, should not be seen by postmodernism as a disappearance of the grand master narratives, but rather as a passage underground, an unconscious state of effectivity, a state which Fredrick Jameson refers to as political unconscious, the ground and untranscendable horizon that needs no particular theoretical justification, and whose inalienating necessities never forget us, however much we might prefer to ignore them.

In the main, Lyotard analyzes different categories of narrative, refiguring legitimation of narrative as the foundation of knowledge even for the sciences. He also points to the place of narrative in postmodern conditions characterized by computerized societies, taking the reader to the beginnings of the idea of myth, fables, and culture while offering these narratives a place in the industrial, postindustrial, modern, and postmodern societies. He divides narrative into two different categories: the grand (master) and the smaller narrative. He considers the grand as the old master narratives of legitimation and the small the units that usually characterize scientific experimental view of “truth.” He thus defines narrative as “all those literary works, which are distinguished by two
characteristics, that is, the presence of a story and a story-teller.”28 In this sense, a drama cannot be conceived as a narrative because there is no storyteller. Aristotle confirms this position in his *Poetics* when he notes that “poetry is better if its mode is dramatic rather than narrative.”29

However, the narrative still possesses a unique place in our human culture, and Lyotard points us to this direction, noting that it still serves as the foundation of our scientific experiments. The urgent level of Lyotard’s work on narrative points to a narrative which, like every other narrative, has the capacity to generate the illusion of “an imaginary resolution of real contradictions.”30 He maintains that the standpoint enunciated by postmodernity is incredulity toward metanarratives31 to the point that “the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation”32 because in contemporary society and postmodern culture, the whole concept of legitimation of knowledge is framed from a scientific culture of technology. For Lyotard, therefore, metanarratives have no significant place in postmodern societies because of the blossoming of scientific techniques and technologies since the Second World War and he equates the displacement of metanarratives with the crisis of metaphysical philosophy.33 He strongly defends the primacy of scientific knowledge, casting a shadow on the existence of narratives because the narrative function is losing its heroes, its great heroes are dying off, its great goal and dangers are virtually operable. These elemental forces of narratives are being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements.34

While respecting the position of Lyotard, it is also fair to argue that narrative whether secular in nature or religious in content still serves as a powerful tool for
understanding the past, the present, and the future. In fact, Gadamer’s hermeneutic work points us to the understanding that by looking at the past with critical mind, we are able to offer a clear insight in the present, a notion he call the historical tradition that offers us ample understanding (verstehen) of the present because of the questions we bring to the past. In similar fashion, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model approaches narrative as a significant tool that new ground for dialogue because by dissecting the religious narrative of the past that has reached us through oral and written transmission, a religious community is able to understand its origins and practices and are therefore capable of engineering new understandings necessary for its existence within a given historical moment.

What is lacking in the field of narrative among communication scholars working in the religious tradition is narrative theology, which has not been given due attention and has not been properly defined as a category of narrative that opens a horizon of religious significance for Christian communities. Tilley’s notion on narrative theology and its significance cannot be dispelled because it explains the importance of the place of narrative in the lives of religious communities and it aligns with the views of Praxis Religious Dialogue. The place of narrative theology in contemporary studies is generally attributed to theologians like Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, H. Richard Niebuhr, whose work detail along the lines of secular understanding of the central role of narrative, storytelling, and the re-enactment of story with the purpose of transmitting and teaching the virtues inherent in the story. Narrative theologies are in fact “exercises in understanding, assessing, and proclaiming a religious tradition which takes stories as conceptually and practically prior to doctrinal formulations or theological systematization, for these could
not make sense without a narrative context.” Therefore, in order to understand the life
and faith of a religious community, for instance in the biblical traditions, one must resort
to the studies of myths, legends, fairy tales, anecdotes, allegories, histories, and parables
which form the foundations of these ongoing sagas.

According to Tilley, in order to carry on the stories embedded in the saga of a
community, it is important that one undertakes the assessment of the new way of life and
the faith of the community and then evaluate the practices and proposals for their
appropriateness in carrying out the saga in their way of life. In Christianity, the story of
both God and his son Jesus are retold, proclaimed, and enacted through rituals so that
members of the religious community can relive the life of God and Jesus. The difference
between Christian story and the secular stories is the numerous shades of diverse
narratives that permeate the Old and the New Testaments which a Christian encounters in
his or her journey and the attempts to embody the stories in his or her life.

Tilley has argued that there is a weakness in the theories of Narrative Theology. His
argument is based the notion that it tends to lay emphasis more on fideism that focuses on
the traditional notion of claims of faith while neglecting the many problems concerning
truths and credibility that one usually encounters in dealing with multiplicity of narrative
traditions within different religious denominations. Fisher had argued in similar fashion
concerning traditional rationality which tends to place emphasis on hierarchical
systems, that is, those who can interpret the story and hand it down to those who
believe. Thus he notes that this stance tended to become the source of rationality for
controlling the views and vision of the members of the community.
In Tilley’s view, it is important that narrative theology embraces too the new way of faith to correspond with the many social and political conditions prevailing in one environment.\textsuperscript{39} For instance, Protestants, according to Tilley, tend dwell too much on biblicism, proclaiming that “the Bible (or parts of it) is the only source of knowledge of God and sole norm of Christian faith and practice. Catholics tend toward allegorization, constructing stories to conform to a preconceived doctrinal scheme rather than allowing the doctrines to emerge from understanding narratives.”\textsuperscript{40} Both the Catholic and Protestant traditions claim allegiance to the biblical narrative in many instances allow their doctrines to supersede the unfolding events from the narrative. From the perspective of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model, this type of allegiance results in an inability to engage in dialogue with the narrative of the faith tradition, which prevents the on-going dynamism of the saga necessary for response to a new historical moment.

However, there are inherent strengths in narrative theologies which are “the connections they show between theologies and communities of faith, between the practice of faith in everyday life and the expression of faith in ritual, and between the past and the present ways of believing and living Christianity.”\textsuperscript{41} Literary critics who embark on analysis, historians who engage in reconstructions, and philosophers who investigate narrative afford narrative theologians the opportunity to discern the nuances which are often neglected by traditional approaches. The notion of Narrative Theology is important for this study because of its contemporary views and the little attention that has been given to it in the field of narrative studies and Flood provides some insight concerning religion and narrative.
Religion and narrative, according to Flood, take place in time and are contingent because both seek to address the fundamental human questions about our identity and teleology. Religion offers a long view of time and history and locates human meanings within the larger and broader cosmic historiography. It also brings the past and the future to a proximity that propels the human thirst for that which lies beyond his reach. It joins the transcendence with the humane through the enactment and re-enactment of rituals, prayer, and meditation in order to heal the present thus embedding religion within the social and cultural context contrary to Mircea Eliade’s attempt to relegate religion from the present.\(^{42}\)

The enactment and re-enactment makes present the event of the narrative which is not pertinent only to Christianity but to many other religions. Flood has consistently argued that the re-enactment of the past that projects into the future makes religion a subjective entity because of the appropriation of the process of entextualization and contextualization which becomes a mechanism in producing the narrative identity of the subject of the narrative tradition.\(^{43}\) Accordingly, Flood notes that the subject creates a narrative coherence by fusing the story of the tradition with the story of his own life. Of course, the argument is basic to every religion because first and foremost, religion begins with the individual’s affirmation of a deity and then through the enactment of the text of the religious tradition, appropriates the tradition to his own story which is a story of a community, a people, or a society and only then does the narrative become meaningful to the individual. The Christian community in this context enacts the narrative of revelation in their daily practice of their religious belief. The enactment takes the form of dialogue with God through different religious practices that entail interactive communicative
praxis. The Praxis Religious Dialogue thus points the Church to this spirit of religious interactive process in order to facilitate and enhance the community spirit that is guided by the biblical revelatory event. As Crapanzo notes, “we succumb to an already warranted narrative of the self.”

Further exploration of the notion of the identification of the subjective story to the religious narrative story leads to the notion of the indexical, which the anthropologist, Greg Urban has argued as prevalent in many religious practices. He notes that the use of the first person, “I” of a religious discourse which refers to the god is usually subsumed by the usual “I” of the subject which is indicative of the hermeneutical dialogue that takes place between the subject and the deity.

The process of entextualization and contextualization brings to bear on the idea of remembrance, commemoration which persists in many cultures. In Christianity, the term remembrance is pervasive and is demonstrated in the celebration of the Eucharist which is a dialogue between the community of believers and their God and which also affirms the praxis religious paradigm that I am dealing with in this work. The concept of remembrance also emphasizes the notion of identity which Jean Heimann notes in his work “Narrative and Universal Reinterpretation” as “that which gives example of a way to relate to reality” which in the revelation story can be assumed as the relation with the intervention of God in human history. Heimann also argues that a narrative does not create identity but forms identity which again opens the notion of the individual versus the community. It is the individual who dialogues with the community’s story and situates it within his own story; however, the grand narrative does not obliterate his story.
Thus, Praxis Religious Dialogue does not downplay the role of myths, stories, and narratives because of the significant role they play in religious communities as they afford religious believers a way to interact, and communicate their beliefs and enact them in their practice of their religion. It also affords the Church the opportunity to dialogue instead of simply instructing the community and by granting the community the chance to dialogue through their stories embedded in the revelatory narrative, the dynamics of the saga is brought into the historical moment, allowing the community to discern the signs of the times and interpret them in light of their shared experiences.

a. Narrative as a Myth

Sketching the terrain of narrative therefore leads to a highly contentious field of study among literary scholars (Adams, 1996; Bakhtin, 1981 [1973]; Barthes, 1975 [1966]; Brooks, 1959; Fowler, 1977; Hayakawa, 1964) but invariably in the Western tradition, the concept of “novel” has never been conceived as the “final product of the narrative tradition.” However, in recent times, several scholars in the field have further evolved different narrative paradigms in an attempt to make distinctions between the novel and the fiction, a distinction that asserts that the novel does not serve as the superstructure for the evolutionary process of literature, for under the consideration of fiction there are also sacred myth, folktale, epic, romance, legend, allegory, satire, and confession included in the large subset of the field of narrative. To some degree, all these categories of narrative have vied for success to become the “product” of literature but not without criticisms. Many of the criticisms have focused on poetic works. Already in the ancient literary works, the focus had been on poetry - the criticism of Plato on
poetry. In Aristotle’s work on the “Poetics,” the criticism of the Homer’s Epic, and the Romantic poetic works.

In their work, *The nature of Narrative*, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg have pointed out that there is a real tradition in the Western world, which simply states that “All art is traditional in that artists learn their craft from their predecessors to a great extent. . . they may add to the tradition, opening up new possibilities for their successors, but they begin, inevitably, within a tradition.” Thus, within the epic tradition, there are many characteristics of poetic narrative and behind the epic lie a variety of narrative forms, such as sacred myth, quasi-historical legend, and fictional folktale, all of which has coalesced into a traditional narrative which is an amalgam of myth, history, and fiction. The epic storyteller tells a traditional story and the primary impulse that moves the storyteller is neither a historical one nor a creative one, rather it is a recreation. The storyteller retells a traditional story and the primary allegiance is not fact, not the truth, and not to entertain, but to make a conscious effort to tell the story as preserved in the tradition from which the epic evolves. In this sense, Aristotle places sacred myth within a religious traditional ritual.

Furthermore, Scholes and Kellogg contend that the two antithetical forms of narrative emerged from the epic synthesis, labeled as the empirical and the fictional. The empirical narrative replaces the allegiance to the myth with allegiance to reality, that bears two components, the historical and the mimetic. The historical bears allegiance specifically to truth of fact and to the actual past rather than to traditional version of the past. It also requires for its development means of accurate measurement in time and space, and concepts of causality that is referable to human and natural rather to supernatural
agencies. The mimetic owes its allegiance not to truth of fact but to truth of sensation and environment, depending on observation of the present rather than investigation of the past. It requires for its development sociological and psychological concepts of behavior and mental process. It is the antithesis of mythic because it tends toward plotlessness and its ultimate form is the “slice of life.”

The fictional branch of narrative replaces the allegiance to the myth with the ideal (beauty and goodness) also bearing two components, the romantic and the didactic. The Romantic (aesthetic) narrative, on one hand, presents thoughts in the form of rhetoric. The didactic, on the other hand, is ruled by an intellectual and moral impulse, for example, Virgil. The two components seek each other for mutual support and justification. Within this fictional tradition, other scholars have demonstrated other components of narrative, such as narrativity (Sturgess, 1992). Sturgess notes that every narrative, however orthodox or unsurprising its course of elaboration, can be understood as bordering to some degree on investigating the nature of narrative. The different postures on the origins and development of narrative do not exhaust the complex nature of narrative because the field still remains one of investigation (Auerbach, 1953, Scholes & Kellogg, 1966, Frye, 1957) and there have been literary strides made in the field. Thus, myth is about human experience, human life, involving human knowledge, and affectivity for the past.

In this sense, the Aristotelian arrangement of sacred myth within the religious traditional ritual reinforces the place of narrative of Revelation within the traditional ritual context in which human experience, evolving from ritualistic practices, finds coherent meaning. In this context, revelatory narrative finds its origins in a traditional story as recorded by biblical writers in both the Old and New Testaments (Gen12:5ff; Ex.
Arnett and Arneson have explained that the development of narrative begins with a speech act which then is tested by people and other competing views and then fashioned into a story. The story depicts main characters, a historical structure, and a direction. A story develops into a narrative only when the communities in which the speech act began and became a story corporately agree directly or indirectly on its content to let it become a narrative. The story then ceases to be an individual product. The event of Revelation narrated through the Old and the New Testament went through the stages mentioned above, interpolating over the years, other cultural elements that helped to make God’s revelation to man meaningful. Thus, in the context of revelation as a narrative, one can plausibly argue that it is a human oriented story given to human beings for the fulfillment of their authentic human existence and therefore each person shares in its story which calls him to ethical responsibility toward the Other.

Thus, it is appropriate to pose the question: What type of situatedness with regard to revelation could the Church have in its dialogic model? The hermeneutics of the question will help to sketch the ground for a narrative. Of course, there are so many contentions on the nature of narrative but as Ricouer has pointed out, there are differences between the theory of narrative and that of action. He argues that every narrative presupposes a familiarity with terms such as agent, goals, means, circumstance, help, hostility, cooperation, conflict, success, failure, etc., on the part of its narrator and listener. The revelation narrative also contains all these various elements which in turn shape the action of the Church in its missionary activity. However, it depends on how the Church frames the story contained in the narrative because narrative provides an
interpretive context for understanding the significance of communication and action. By leaving out the interpretive context, as the Church encounters various cultures, people of different faith traditions and its own community members who have different socio-cultural, political and historical backgrounds, the significance of the communication is minimized and the dialogic nature of the narrative is lost to the recipients. Thus, Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks to situate the narrative of revelation within the context of communicative praxis in order to facilitate the understanding of the dynamics of the story, especially the parable of the Good Samaritan. I therefore intend to first, analyze the difference between narrative, metanarratives, and religious discourse and how they all contain similar assumptions and how they help to propel the Praxis Religious Dialogue paradigm in reconstructing and refiguring the dialogic nature of the revelation narrative.

b. Narrative, Metanarrative, and Religious Discourse

It is therefore plausible to assume that religious discourse and experience have the character of narrative and metanarrative that forms part of human experience and action and are directed by and embedded within the historicity of narrative. The convictions emanating from experience and action are said to be connected to the narratives which yield the convictions. In light of this religious discourse, Michael Goldberg (1982) has noted that:

A theologian, regardless of the propositional statement he or she may have to make about a community’s convictions, must consciously strive to keep those statements in intimate contact with the narratives which give rise to those convictions,
Goldberg argues that neither “the facts” nor our “experience” reaches us in discrete and disjointed units, awaiting the appropriate moral principle to be applied. On the contrary, narrative binds the facts of our experience together into a coherent pattern, and it is in view of such narrative that our philosophical analysis is needed to pattern the narrative intelligibly.

As an experience and action discourse, revelation can be understood to encompass both the fields of the novel and fiction (fiction used here in the Ricoeurian sense in which the narrative process by the biblical authors include sacred myth, folktale, epic, romance, legend, allegory, satire, and confession). However, the question here is whether the narrative of Revelation is open to hermeneutical interpretation, especially from the Church’s standpoint, for matters of interpretation have also had their share of the Western philosophical tradition, just as matters concerning rationality. Within Greek mythology, interpretation assumed a pivotal concern especially in the work of Aristotle (see *Peri Hermeneias* – Περὶ Ηζημένειας on interpretation) in which Aristotle’s interpretive work subordinates speech and writing to the content of thought. Speech is considered by him as a symbol of thought and the written word as a symbol of speech. Schrag has argued that the Aristotelian submission of speech and writing to epistemological and metaphysical concerns has significantly shaped the contours of Western philosophy, which implies that the narrative of Revelation, which has been shaped by Western
denotations and explications, has been shaped in that way as well, with its attendant biases.

However, the works of Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur have attempted to throw light on some of the missing links within the Aristotelian expressions on interpretation by looking at some of the core expressions on narrative within the Aristotelian philosophy. Although not addressed by these authors, the story of Revelation as God-man speech act finds its existential expressions in narrative structure as both a story that is existential in content and an event.

Further, as Goldberg indicates, what counts as meeting the various conditions of justification (of a story becoming a narrative) will vary from story to story and Stanley Hauerwas provides, in his 10 theses, some of the justification that “The social significance of the Gospel requires recognition of the narrative structure of Christian convictions for the life of the Church” (p. 9), and second, that “Every social ethic involves a narrative, whether it is conceived with the formulation of basic principles of social organization and/or concrete alternatives” (p. 9; also see Alter, 1981; Scult, 1983). Didier Coste, in his work, *Narrative as Communication* emphasizes that all theories of narrative are in fact necessarily central to any understanding of history. The formulations on narrative by all these authors raises some questions regarding the place of Revelation within the field of Christian discourse and convictions because revelation as an event embraces both the transcendence and human aspects and assumes all the elements of the categorizations of narrative, namely, a sacred myth folklore, legend, epic, and satire. I do not intend to go into all these different elements of narrative, but suffice
to note that it is important to ask how revelation as narrative opens itself to other competing stories and events.

I argue, following the preceding discussion, that narrative as a communication structure is embedded in historicity with a dynamic process and therefore subject to the forces of transformation and competing stories of society because it is embodied in human history and therefore the interplay of historicism and historicality are significant factors in the orientation of narrative tradition and postmodern ideology. Second, I argue for the significance of religious narrative as part of the very identity borne by the Christian in his relationship with other human beings. I maintain that religious narrative is not an alienated compendium of stories standing alone but related to the historical experience of the subject who relates to a deity.

Didier Coste, in *Narrative as Communication*, emphasizes that all theories of narrative are necessarily central to any understanding of history. Therefore, the concept of revelation in which Christians affirm the revelation of God can be understood as belonging to a narrative through which God rhetorically situates himself in history and moves with humans and engages them in conversation. In the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue, God opens up a channel of dialogue within the discourse to grant the partner the opportunity to experience the authenticity of human existence which calls for a responsible relationship with the Other. I would briefly apply Fisher’s notion of the *Homo Narrans* to discuss the issue.
II. Narrative of Revelation and Other Competing Narratives

In a most telling grand narrative analysis, David M Boje (2001) takes a strong
different analysis in his work on *Narrative analysis for a management and
Communication Research*. He notes that it is important in narrative analysis to recognize
the often implicit macro story that Lyotard calls the “grand narrative and he does this
through a critical postmodern de-essentializing analysis which juxtaposes local stories
with an official sanctioned grand narrative.”74 His argument rests on the assumption that
it is better to allow the local marginalized stories to dance in dialectic with the official
spectacle of storytelling.75 Boje assumes that Lyotard’s work is an answer to Habermas’
dismissal of all postmodern theory and critiques Lyotard’s radical posture in assuming
that postmodernity has departed from modernity (systemic and critical) and is living in
the postmodern hyperreal.76 Boje’s critique of Lyotard’s work rests on postulates that one
cannot easily throw out all grand narratives because even Lyotard admits the existence of
scientific narrative which legitimates scientific empirical research. The author therefore
develops a middle ground paradigm between the grand and the local narratives noting
that there are emergent and dissipating narrative frames of institutions and the more
bureaucratic narrative frames privilege some statements while marginalizing others.77
Boje’s contention frames for Praxis Religious Dialogue a critique of the Catholic Church
on Revelatory theology. From the standpoint of Revelatory theology, tradition, and the
Magisterium, the Church understands itself as the sole custodian of “revealed truths”78
and in this sense, privileges itself as maintaining a “grand narrative” frame from which it
possesses the teaching authority on matters pertaining to sacred Scriptures in relation to
the theologies of other Churches. Consequently, the Church is perceived as assuming the
role of magistra among the different religions. The Second Vatican Council itself subscribes to this notion when it noted:

Consequently, it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated in the same sense of devotion and reverence. . . . The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office [Magisterium] of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. . . . It is clear therefore that sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God’s most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls. 79

While the Church maintains its of stewardship concerning the interpretation and guardianship of revelation, the narrative development of revelation has taken on a competing nature whereby its metanarratives have undergone some form of metamorphosis while maintaining their intrinsic nature. Other religions may accept
revelation without believing in the Magisterium which does not necessarily nullify the faith practiced by its community of believers. In the same vein, it is the nature of narrative to admit some equilibrium within various cultures as the story is repeated at different cultural settings.

In fact, Boje’s position is not a new conceptual paradigm within institutional narrative frames because the middle ground paradigm does not seek a common ground but rather maintains a disparate and distorted view of both the grand and the small narrative. The emergent and dissipating narrative frames within institutions maintain some level of equilibrium while metanarratives develop with the hope that the story would expand while maintaining its historicity. Fisher (1984) reinforces this stance by noting that the whole concept of the narrative paradigm should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories compete with other stories that are constituted by good reasons, as being rational when they satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity.80

Consistent with this view, he demonstrates a gestalt of *homo narrans* against a backdrop of communicative and rhetorical praxis through which he conceives a narrative paradigm in which humans walk in the world as storytellers who are rhetorically situated in their movement from situation to another, constantly appealing to a narrative logic of good reasons which is older than the logic of epistemological rationalism.81 Further, David Carr (1966) points us to the direction of the phenomenon of narrativity which he demonstrates as “a reflexive structure of temporalized human life and history.”82 In his view, experience and action are seen as a display of an inherent narrative configuration and he strongly attempts to counter the prevailing views on narrative as a sequel to
experience, imposed retrospectively, as it were, on narrative as a literary effort which can only achieve an “ordering of life and action after the fact as it were.” 83 Paul Ricoeur, on the other hand, categorizes all the subset of the field of narrative as “fictional narrative” in the sense of a narrower extension and different from many authors who assume the term “fiction” to be synonymous with narrative configuration. 85 This Ricoeurian thesis on the hermeneutics of narrative underscores the notion of narrative as a structure inherent in human experience and action and which points to revelation as a religious narrative.

III. Legitimation of Revelation as a Christian Narrative

Revelation as a narrative event is recounted and accounted for by *homo narrans* within the multiplicity of the various forms of representations of the essential nature of human beings – *homo faber, homo economicus, homo politicus, homo sociologicus,* and *homo sapiens.* 86 According to Fisher, the recounting and accounting for of narrative represent both the various forms of human choices and actions. Recounting represents the forms of history, biography, or autobiography, while accounting for formulates the theoretical explanation or argument. He argues that both can be expressed in poetic forms like drama, poetry, and the novel and form the basis for all advisory discourse. 87 Contextually, the paradigm of *homo narrans* as a metaphor structurally incorporates all the different forms of narrative, as Fisher points out, and it demonstrates that the stories we narrate to ourselves establish a meaningful life world. 88 The Praxis Religious Dialogue thus points to Revelation as religious, cultural, social, and political narrative that subsumes the root metaphor of human interaction within communicative process. The communicative character of revelation relates the recounting and accounting for of
conflicts (replete in the Old and New Testaments – Gen. 3: 1ff; the Fall; Gen. 4: 1ff – Cain and Abel; Gen. 6: 5ff; the Flood; Ex. 12: 37ff. - the flight from Egypt and the forty years saga of the Israelites and Mt. 2: 13ff.; Mt. 14: 1ff.; Mk. 6: 14-16; Lk. 9: 7-9; Mt. 26:57: 68; Mk. 14: 53-65; Lk. 22: 54-55ff. - the constant dialectic between God and the religious hierarchy of Israel) and resolutions. The recounting and accounting for, according to Fisher, “is but a way of relating a “truth” about the human condition.”

Fisher’s metaphor of homo narrans is affirmed in Kenneth Burke’s definition of man as a “symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol misusing) animal.” As Burke points out, the idea of human beings as storytellers demonstrates the generic forms of the constitution of symbols, that is, that symbols are created and communicated as stories that are meant to pattern in orderly fashion human experiences in order to induce members of a community to dwell in them so that they can establish ways of living with a common purpose. In living together to formulate a patterned life, individuals develop a story that participates in the larger story of those who have lived, who are now living, and who will live in the future. Burke thus asks: “Where does our narrative get its materials?” He argues with the following response:

From the “unending conversation” that is going on in history when we are born. Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already
begun long before any of them there, so that no one present
is qualified to trace for you all the steps that had gone
before. You listen for awhile, until you decide that you
have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your
oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to
your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either
the embarrassment of gratification of your opponent,
epending upon the quality of your ally’s assistance.
However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows
late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the
discussion still vigorously in process.  

Revelation, as a *Deus-homo narrans* (God-man communication) event, assumes the
metaphor of a communicative event in which the story between God and man began
before us and continues to unfold, encountering the character of conflicts, resolutions,
and differing from culture to culture changing cultural systems, forming identities, and
structuring communicative processes.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue flows out of this contextual framework of
communication as an active, continually changing event that encounters friction through
conflicts, and resolutions. As a communication process, it is guided by persons, text, and
the historical moment and it is always situated among and between persons as it
addresses man’s deeper questions of the historical moment. It is an ever ongoing
conversation.
The conversation emerging from the encounter between God and man is characteristic of the intrinsic nature of both parties as it constantly unfolds itself and reveals the different phases of the encounter. As Martin Heidegger points out, “We are a conversation . . . conversation and its unity supports our existence.” Within the conversational experience of God and man, revelation, as a narrative supports the existence and the pilgrimage of those who have availed themselves to the encounter and it maintains the unfolding process of defining itself according to the dictates of the times. As a narrative of events, the communicative praxis inherent in the revelatory dialogues also maintains the social and cultural exigencies not only of the community of believers but also the larger society.

a. Creativity, Imagination, and Interpretation

As a further clarification, Bormann’s (1972) use of the concept “fantasy themes” and “rhetorical visions” and Frentz and Farrell’s (1976) adoption of language action paradigm points to the unfolding sequence of revelation. According to Bormann, Fantasy is a technical term that points to a creative and imaginative interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need and the themes arise “in group interaction out of a recollection of something that happened to the group in the past or a dream of what a group might do in the future.” Bormann explains the fantasy themes and the rhetorical visions as two fields that, when put together, become “composite dramas”, which he calls rhetorical visions. From a narrative standpoint, each of these concepts translates into dramatic stories that provide constituencies of social reality for the composers. They
become rhetorical fictions, constructions of fact and faith that attain persuasive force, rather than fantasies (Fisher, 1980b).96

In the same vein, the biblical discourses reveal numerous instances of such rhetorical visions. The call of Abraham (Gen. 12: 1ff; the divine promises and covenant (Gen. 15: 1-21; the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:1-18); the burning bush (Ex. 3:1-20); the departure (Ex. 13: 17- 14: 13); the ratification of the covenant (Ex. 24: 1-18); the consecration of Aaron and his sons (Ex. 29: 1- 46); anointing of David as king of Israel (Chr. 11: 1 – 9); return from the dispersion (Is. 11: 10 – 16); Isaiah reveals a sign to King Ahaz (Is. 7: 10 – 17); the birth and infancy of Jesus (Mt. 1- 17; Lk. 3: 23-38).97 These narratives fit within the category of both “fantasy themes” and rhetorical visions, and the language action paradigm of Frentz and Farrell (1976) for they depict how individual and group stories become public stories (Bantz, 1975; Duncan, Lee & Porter, 1977; Bennett, 1978 (narrative paradigm); Campbell, 1984). Gregory Bateson (1983) has claimed that “If I am at all fundamentally right in what I am saying, then thinking in terms of stories must be shared by all mind or minds, whether ours or those of redwood forests and sea anemones.”98 The biblical writers adopted the prevalent story style of their time in depicting and demonstrating the direction of God’s encounter with man in order to formulate a religious narrative that takes into consideration almost, if not all, the entire features of narrativity in order to create a meaningful gestalt for persons in particular and in general, across communities and cultures, and across time and place. The narrative style of the biblical discourse simply enables us, as Fisher argues, “to understand the actions of others”99 because it is through narratives that we enact our lives and understand not only our own lives but also the lives and experiences of others. The Praxis
Religious Dialogue model posits that the enactment of the stories of the sage inherent in religious narrative becomes significant when it is allowed to be discoursed by the believers rather than being protected and disseminated in piecemeal form through doctrinal formulations.

Tilley and others have argued that “traditional theological approaches see theological doctrines as primary and the stories as derivative. Doctrines were timely statements of Eternal Truths which were given their meaning by their reference to those Truths.” In line with this argument, the Praxis Religious Dialogue maintains that what theological formulations undertook to do was to amplify and explicate the meanings and then further ground the doctrines and by so doing relegated the significance of stories to the background as irrelevant on one hand, but useful for identifications, pedagogical, and illustrative tools on the other hand, for the teaching of moral or theological truths, and having very little bearing on theological statements.

However, as Tilley et al. point out, that this kind of picture does not do justice to the essential historicity of the human. The historicity of the human being calls for the use of human symbols; therefore, God’s revelation of his truths to the human being must reach him within his lived experience in order to be understood within the human worldview. For example, even if God directly revealed eternal truths, God would have to do so in a historically conditioned environment because generally human beings understand their existential nature in terms of their historically conditioned situation and their shared experiences. The affirmation of God’s revelation is in time and place and therefore divine revelation which the Church interprets can only be interpreted in the dynamics of the historical moment in order to make it meaningful. Therefore, the
importance of narrative theology to the paradigm of Praxis Religious Dialogue cannot be
downplayed because it is through narrative that human beings understand and interpret
their existence. The narrative form of revelation permits the human community to be
open to the story contained in the Christian narrative. It further fulfills the goal of the
story as the Christian community appropriates the meaning of the story for its daily life
situation. This notion of appropriation affirms and strengthens the narrative theology in
the context of the Christian truth and life and takes precedence over the dissemination of
doctrine.

Further, in line with the explication on narrative theology, narrative rationality
can be interpreted to correspond to the opening of the story of the biblical narrative to
offer a medium for religious community members to share in the epiphany of God
through the sharing of our stories, as Booth represents them in Modern Dogma and the
Rhetoric of Assent, when he notes: “Not only do human beings successfully infer other
beings’ states of mind from symbolic clues; we know that they characteristically, in all
societies, build each other’s minds. This is obvious knowledge – all the more genuine for
being obvious.” 

The contention surrounding the perspectives on Revelation among the different
religious groups is not so much about the content but about custodianship of revelation,
and invariably the contention stems from the notion of Traditional rationality which
would conceptualize revelation as a normative construct that requires a community to
maintain its stability and interpretation. According to several authors in the field of
Brooks, 1959, Fowler, 1977; Hayakawa, 1964), traditional rationality posits the way
people think when they reason truly or with certainty. Alasdair McIntyre has noted that “To call an argument fallacious is always at once to describe and to evaluate it.” 102

Further, traditional rationality implies a hierarchical system; a community in which some persons are qualified to judge and to lead and some other persons are to follow.103 The notion of biblical revelation as understood in the Catholic Church fits the expressions of traditional rationality because of precedence given to the doctrinal systems over narrative theology. The formulation of doctrines by the hierarchy illustrates a system in which traditional rationality takes over narrative rationality.

In light of this contextual explication of traditional rationality, law of thought and normative reasoning are taken to be the fundamental principle of the Church’s interpretation of biblical revelation because it enunciates its teachings in accordance with the teaching office – the Magisterium – guiding the theological and biblical scholarship in the Catholic Church, and which, according to the Second Vatican Council, forms one of the major components of biblical revelation because the Magisterium resuscitates Sacred Scripture as a written record that needs constant interpretation and commentary in succeeding ages.104 The Council affirmed that Sacred Scripture as a written record is a dead letter, noting that “It cannot of itself answer new questions, or explain what was once clear and has now become obscure.”105 The Council further noted:

But the writings transmitted in a living community, from one generation to another, are accompanied by a continuous tradition of understanding and explanation, which preserves and re-expresses their meaning, and which
applies them, from time to time, to the solving of new problems. If this tradition were only human, it would be liable to grave error. But such a consequence is by the Church’s Magisterium, which, however much exposed to human vagaries and mistakes in secondary matters, is preserved from going in essentials by the indwelling presence of Christ’s spirit.\textsuperscript{106}

However, from a traditional rationality perspective, the Council added that the Constitution of revelation emphasizes “the coordination and interplay of Scripture, tradition, and the Magisterium, maintaining that the theoretical interpretation of the values inherent in the two separate documents – Sacred Scripture and Tradition, do function together to strengthen the Magisterium – and are necessary for the Church’s life.”\textsuperscript{107} The question that arises from the Council’s standpoint in opting to structure its work upon a paradigm of traditional rationality to interpret Sacred Scriptures situates the Council’s work outside a model of Praxis Religious Dialogue. Arguably, while traditional rationality as a paradigm that adopts normative construct to describe and evaluate an argument in arriving at certainty cannot be entirely dismissed from the Council’s laborious work, it can be argued that it takes that line of argument with the view of upholding the fidelity of the narrative for the sake of the Church. However, while narrative rationality offers an account of any instance of human choice and action, including even science, Fisher notes that as a radical democratic paradigm, the narrative paradigm does not deny the legitimacy of a hierarchy for “History records no community,
uncivilized or civilized, without key story-makers/story-tellers, whether sanctioned by God, a “gift,” heritage, power, intelligence, or election.” However, the narrative paradigm encourages people to “judge stories that are told for and about them and that they have a rational capacity to make such judgments.” The narrative paradigm is thus inherently participatory.

b. Vatican II and the Narrative of Revelation

The Aristotelian argument that the “people” have a natural tendency to prefer “the true and the just” frames well the revelatory narrative paradigm because it also advocates the tendency of the hierarchy to be wrong in matters pertaining to social, religious, and political trends. Significantly, the work of the Second Vatican Council on the entire biblical revelation cannot be dismissed as not comprehensive; however, it must be accepted as an attempt to insert the narrative in a postmodern framework in which revelatory discourse maintains a minimal causality with other cultural discourses, openness to multiple competing stories, and abandonment of teleological and finalizable trajectories. This insertion is important because it helped the Council to represent more accurately the purposive clutter and unpredictable successions of the polymorphous past history of the Church, especially its definitions and mission. Essentially, while Vatican II reclaimed revelation as a religious story that guides the interpretation of the ongoing lived experience of the community of believers conceived as a living community, but it also summarily passed over the significant notion of the ethical demand that the story enunciates, which the significance of otherness implicit in the story of the Good
Samaritan. Indeed, a similar point is made by John in his first epistle concerning the revelation of God as a testimonial story of the faith community:

We announce to you the eternal life which was with the Father, and has appeared to us. What we have seen and have heard we announce to you, in order that you also may have fellowship with us, and that our fellowship may be with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ (1Jn.1:2-3).

John’s view in the excerpt announces a phenomenological and anthropological reality that reveals the symbolic nature of God becoming man and adopting a communicative praxis within a social setting. The “seeing,” “hearing,” and “announcing” confirm the nature of the narrative event as a story of human encounter that searches for a dialogic presence of the other. Revelation in this context becomes a communicative praxis taking place in time and space and told by a living community.

The presuppositions underlying the Traditional rationality which the Church still maintains as a yardstick for measuring the legitimacy of conformism, adherence, obedience, and subservience even after the laborious work of the Council does not encourage others to become sharers of the dialogue initiated by God. While the Church’s hierarchy endeavors to preserve the “narrative probability” and “narrative fidelity” of Revelation in accordance with being faithful adherents to sacred tradition, sacred scripture, and the Magisterium, it is encouraged also to embody the ethical dimensions of
revelation which is fully embedded in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke. 10: 29-37),
that is, accepting the challenge of ethical responsibility demanded by the Other whose
very presence challenges the Church to stand as the “accusative me” before the Other
because it is the explication of the revelation story,\textsuperscript{111} and it frames the notion of Praxis
Religious Dialogue which calls the Other in the encounter to responsibility, which
according to Levinas, is a radical alterity in the face of the Other which questions our
self-attention.\textsuperscript{112}

Levinas points the Church to a dialogue as “face education” especially in a
postmodern age where there is moral crisis as rightly noted by Alasdair McIntyre
(McIntyre, 1988, p. 264), a face embedded in a responsive ethical sense. As Arnett
contends, “Radical alterity reminds us to live life beyond self-occupation,”\textsuperscript{113} a life that
seeks the Other in order that the “self” may be transformed because it is through our
encounter with the Other, who is radically different from us that transformation is
possible. Responsibility, in this context involves a burden and calls attention to the
weight in a phenomenological sense, pointing to ethics in a primordial world: “I am my
brother’s keeper.” Praxis Religious Dialogue, in this context, encourages the Church to
accept the burden of responsibility as contained in the story of the Good Samaritan, a
responsibility which carries the weight of a burden, which is ethics, according to Levinas,
as a way of lessening the weight of the burden of the Other.\textsuperscript{114} Praxis Religious Dialogue
recognizes within the context of responsibility, the primordial call to responsibility: “ethics
as first philosophy” which precedes ontology. Arnett argues in this framework that
responsibility for the Other “registers a trace, a reminder of a primordial message or call
that ethics as first philosophy, “I am my brother’s keeper,” trumps the weight of Being.\textsuperscript{115}
The Praxis Religious Dialogue model thus points the Church to a selfless life of renouncing one’s very self in order to be available, through dialogue, for the Other because the “I” becomes “authentic” only in the recognition of the Other as an “authentic human being” and not an object. As Levinas notes:

I am responsible for the Other without wanting for reciprocity, were I to die for it. Reciprocity is his affair. It is precisely insofar as the relationship between the Other and me is not reciprocal that I am subject to the Other; and I am “subject” essentially in this sense. It is I who support all. You know that sentence in Dostoyevsky: “We are all guilty of all and for all men before all, and I more that the others.”

Further, Praxis Religious Dialogue encourages and points the Church to the notion of responsibility for the Other, a responsibility that moves away from the abstractions of religion which has influenced the Church’s way of dialoguing with the Other.

In the main, religion is a free response to bind oneself to an invitation by a deity whose existence powerfully overshadows one’s own existence. It is a free act. Nicholas Lash has argued that the abstraction “religion” is a moment in the development of Western thought that arose with the Enlightenment and Peter Harrison has also contended that the abstract category “religion” developed with the methods of reason designed to illuminate it and in a similar vein, Flood offers a definition of religion as
“value-laden narratives and behaviors that bind people to their objectives, to each other, and to non-empirical claims and beings.”\textsuperscript{118} The various definitions and characterizations of religion by Lash, Harrison, and Flood, envision religion as having developed within the realm of epistemology, idealism, and existentialism which of course are in consonance with Thomistic theology. However, Flood’s definition brings religions into the domain of the narrative paradigm and aligns it with temporality which Richardson characterizes as peculiar to religious narrative because of its contingent nature.

However, within the revelatory narrative, religion immediately assumes a paradoxical meaning because of the fusion of the divine and human experience. The experience is a communicative event embedded in historicality which permits each to accept the other as a recognized participant. It is a view embodied in the Praxis Religious Dialogue model which seeks to enrich human experience through a dialogic process which foregrounds the importance of the historical moment in which communication departs from the ethereal and walks with others through the mud of everyday life. In the revelatory experience, dialogue moves from the mystical to the existential to address limits, flaws, and difficulties presented by everyday concerns of reality.\textsuperscript{119} The Praxis Religious Dialogue model invites the Church to respond to the Council’s deeper and inner concerns by interpreting the Council’s work within the historical moment rather than clinging to the old understanding of dialogue within the context of unrealistic hope. The model further encourages the Church to engage in serious dialogue with its members in the hope of helping them to understand their rightful place in the community of believers where they are not only accepted as mere believers but as sharers of the divine story of which they are full members.
c. The Significance of the Praxis Religious Dialogue Model for Narrative Theology

The Praxis Religious Dialogue encourages the Church in enriching the dialogic process within the community of believers because it points to the notion of the Christian story as dialoguing with other cultures to enhance and promote the formation of Christian identity. This process is significant because religious narrative affects both the individual and the community’s identity since they become expressions of their human experience, giving meaning to and making sense of, while organizing the experiences into a format that is passed from one generation to another. Religious narrative further offers a long view of history and temporality and searches to locate human meanings within the larger and broader cosmic historiography by reconfiguring them in the light of the present. It joins the past and the future to a proximity that drives the human thirst for the transcendent. It joins the divine with the secular through the re-enactment of rituals, prayer, and meditation so as to heal the present in order to embed religion within the social and cultural context. This notion is the goal of the Praxis Religious Dialogue as it seeks to point the Church to the direction of bringing the full meaning of the biblical revelatory story to create an identity and construct a world view that can be shared by other faith traditions through dialogue. Praxis Religious Dialogue therefore departs from parochial vision of the revelation narrative and it encourages a dialogic inclusiveness that also respects other competing world views.

Within this context, Ricouer notes the tendency for protectionism to be extended to some narratives because of the identity and unchangeability they assume over a period of time and invariably they come into conflict with other narratives that are dynamic
and are in constant process of evolution. Those narratives that are “unalterable” and “transhistorical,” assume a superior posture over others to preserve their identities. 121 Praxis Religious Dialogue affirms the Council’s call to dialogue considering that the coherence of narrative does not depend on its unalterableness but on its capacity to dialogue with generations after generations by engaging them within their specific historical moment. Ricoeur has noted in this connection that the ancient lives on in scraps and pieces of present day pieces and a good and lasting narrative creates meaning and gives examples for life, not within the text itself, but at the “meeting of text and the reader.”122 The interpretive hermeneutics inherent in the Praxis Religious Dialogue calls for openness and transparency as the community of believers, as pilgrims, journey towards their goal with the revelatory narrative as their guiding principle.
ENDNOTES

1 Vatican II Documents: *Lumen Gentium*, footnote 1


3 Ibid. p. 6.


7 Ibid.

8 See *Forward* to the Lyotard’s work: *Postmodern Condition*. p. x.

9 Ibid. p. x.

10 Jungen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 105ff. There is also a more recent work by Habermas, *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981). In this work, Habermas contends that the transformation of society must be understood in terms of Piagetian evolutionary stages. He argues against Lyotard’s notion of information as embedded in multinational corporation and confronts the such monopolization. See the endnotes in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, p. xxi.


15 Hegel, *The science of logic*, p. 83.

16 Hegel, *The phenomenology of the mind*.


18 Ibid. p. 105ff.

19 For further readings in the Germanic and Hegelian traditions, see Gilles Deleuze’s celebration of schizophrenia in *Anti-Oedipus* and the works of Adorno. For the relevance of this work, see p. viii-ix of “Forward.”


23 See the introduction to *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, by Fredrick Jameson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), p. ix


25 Ibid, 102

Ibid. p. xi-xii

Ibid, p.4


Ibid. p. xxiv.

Ibid. p. 37.

For Lyotard, who reflects Alasdair McIntyre in his view of postmodernity (see *After Virtue*), the loss of the old master narratives is a blow to contemporary societies because postmodern societies have lost the spirit of the meaning of the “historic mission” which, to my mind is the definition of the mission as not a “substitution with” but the evolution of a dynamic process of the human spirit in the definition of humanity directed toward an ethical responsibility through the revelation of the face of the other. See p. xxiv of *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.*

Lyotard departs from the traditional notion of the power of narrative and metanarrative and substitute instead its primacy with the power of scientific knowledge evolving in postmodernity from the pragmatics of language. The work truncates sociology and anthropology while slanting philosophy and ethico-political discourses of legitimation, p. xxv.


40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.


47 Ibid.

Fowler. *Linguistics and the Novel.* (London: Methuen, 1977), and S. I. Hayakawa. *Language in Thought and Action.* (New York: Harcourt, 1964). The field of Narrative, Narrativity and Narratology is one of the most contentious academic discipline which offers too numerous competing voices as to what constitutes a narrative, the novel, fiction. Some scholars in the field have grouped the concept into two, the “Grand” and “Small” (Lyotard, 1979) and others conceptualizes narrative as constituting the novel and the fiction.


50 Ibid, p. 4

51 See Plato’s *Republic*

52 See Aristotle’s *Poetics*


55 Ibid, p. 13

56 Ibid, p. 13

57 Also see Hamon Philippe: “Narratology: Status and Outlook.” *The Nice Conference* 26, no. 3.


63 Ibid. p. 242.


65 See P. Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative*. Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 3. Ricoeur adopts the most commonly accepted nomenclature to account for the characterization of the subset of narrative and gives the term a narrower extension than that adopted by many authors who equate it with narrative configuration.


71 Ibid, Vol. 64


73 Ibid, Vol. 64

75 See David M. Boje’s analysis of Disney, 1995.

76 See Boje: http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/qm/2_grandnarrative.htm p. 4.

77 Ibid. p. 4.

78 Documents of Vatican II, Dei Verbum (Revelation), Chapters I & II.

79 The Council noted as a footnote to the formula of sacred tradition and sacred Scripture that by expressing such an opinion, it does not mean that it is excluding the notion that all revelation is contained in sacred Scripture. It points out however, that in some way sacred Scripture alone may not suffice for certitude and therefore the Church has always understood to interpret sacred Scripture in light of her continuous tradition (see footnote 21 of # 9). The Council also emphasizes in # 12 that the interpreting of Scripture is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God. But of course, this assertion is a direct affirmation of the constitution of Vatican I on Catholic Faith on Revelation. See Dezinger 1788 (3007).


83 Ibid. p. 65.

85 Ibid. p. 3

86 See Fisher, p. 295.

87 Ibid. p. 295.

88 Fisher accepts the existence of other forms of paradigms. He introduces this new metaphor – *Homo narrans* as an afterthought in order to embark on an investigation of new moves that can enrich our understanding of our own communicative interaction in creating a meaningful life-world (see p. 295). There are other forms and insights provided by Lucites, 1981; Sillars and Ganer, 1982, and Zaresfsky, 1981).

89 Ibid. p. 296.


91 Ibid.

92 Ibid. p. 94-97


96 See Bormann, 1972, p. 398 for a detailed analysis of “fantasy themes” and “rhetorical visions.”

97 The biblical references are taken from “The New Jerusalem Bible. © 1985 and Printed by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd. And Doubleday in the United States of America.


100 Tilley et al. “Narrative Theology.” In *The New Dictionary of Theology*.


103 Ibid.


105 Ibid. p. 109.


107 Ibid. p. 109


109 Ibid. p. 299.


111 Levinas sense of the ‘subject’ before the Other implies a complete kenosis of the subject for the sake of the Other. He calls the subject before the Other as the ‘accusative me’ because he is called to responsibility.


119 See Arnett & Arneson. *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age*. p. 32

120 Ibid.


122 Ibid. p.240
Chapter 10
Revelation as Foundation for the Voice of the Other.

I. Background to the Concept of Revelation within Catholic Theology

Roman Catholic theologians have over the centuries labored to deal with the issue of God’s revelation from different fields ranging from philosophy and psychology to theology. In accordance with the definition from *The New Dictionary of Theology*, “Revelation is now understood fundamentally as God’s self-revelation. It is first of all the gift of God’s own being, and only secondly is it the illuminative or propositional unfolding of the foundational event of a divine self-giving.”¹ The definitional approach connotes a gnostic notion which does not encompass the totality of the intentional act of God’s self-giving. Instead revelation means God’s self-unveiling and self-gift. In fact, Karl Rahner has noted that God’s revelation is revelation is fundamentally the communication of the mystery of God to the world. The author notes

This divine self-communication influences the world at every phase of its coming-to-be, and not just within the
confines of the biblical world alone. Revelation is the
ongoing outpouring of God’s creative, formative love into
the entire world. In this sense it has a “general” character,
and it is even constitutive of all things. Thus the idea of
revelation in contemporary theology tends to converge with
the biblical theme of creation. Creation itself is already the
self-revelation of God.²

On account of the influence of biblical themes on creation as part of God’s self
manifestation, contemporary theologians have worked toward the understanding of the idea of
“historical revelation,” which points to the history of Israel and the definitive presence of Jesus
of Nazareth in the world. For many of these scholars in the field, historical revelation tends to
diminishing the notion of mystery that is implicit in God’s self-disclosure and which is commonly
understood as surrounding the sphere of human existence. In fact, Rahner contends that those
who do not see the need to include the special and decisive historical revelation as possessing a
mystery of God’s presence do not do justice to the entire concept of revelation. The exclusion of
the mystical nature, he argues, leads to the temptation of hanging on to the notion of
triumphalism that will be a misconception of the idea.³ Triumphalism in this sense is understood
as a dramatization of God’s intervention into human history as march of God to conquer human
freedom against the human will.

Combining both the historical and the mystery-nature of revelation, Thomas Aquinas
defined revelation as the “saving act by which God provides us with the truths necessary for our
salvation.”⁴ The definition offered by Aquinas embodies the “cognitive” interpretation together
with its “accent on propositional truths” which influenced both subsequent scholastic and neo-Scholastic theology and was operationalized at the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. It is worthwhile pointing out that the Councils of Trent and Vatican I were not interested in developing a comprehensive and insightful theology on revelation but rather were intent on fighting off the attacks perpetrated by the Reformers and against rationalism and fideism. Both Councils believed in the objective nature of revelation (not depending on the believer’s faith) and the accessibility through reason of some of the propositional truths enunciated by Aquinas, which are witnessed to through the natural order of things and from biblical themes. Thus, for the two preconciliar Councils, the concerns were, in their terms, to correct erroneous understanding of revelation and for that reason to offer propositional believes based on the cognitive explanation of revelation as noted by Aquinas.

The Second Vatican Council, on the other hand, offers a new theological approach to the definition of revelation which is representational of the theme of the Council, namely, an aggiornamento, a renewal. In the “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation” (Dei Verbum), the Council adopted a contemporary view by “emphasizing the promissory nature of revelation and the notion of God’s self-communication.” The Council’s notion underscores the inherent gem of the revelation and it inserts the whole notion of revelation in a dialogic process. It treated revelation from the perspectives of salvation history, bringing it down to our human level rather than maintaining it on a cognitive plane. In the main, the Council understood revelation as the Word of God (theological) and as directed to our Christian life. The Council departed from both the Council of Trent and Vatican I regarding the notion of revelation as mere propositional truths that support dogmatic positions but advanced further the notion that revelation must be seen in
the context of an enlivening embodiment of God’s word that can enlighten and change the
dynamics of our situation in life.\textsuperscript{8}

Building upon the work of Thomas Aquinas, many modern theologians employed
carcepts such as transcendence, Immanence, existentialism, and Idealism in an attempt to
capture the meaning and make sense of the “God made man” story (Dulles, 1983; Niebuhr, 1941;

With time, theological research became a separate treatise within the broader academy of arts
having its own methodology for further research. The implications of this turn by many of these
scholars were to endeavor to explain the nature of revelation and bring it to our level of
conceptualization in order to make sense of the mystery. In order words, the scholars intended to
situate revelation within the context of our own hermeneutical situatedness, that is, the questions
we project toward revelation. Through such symbolic exploration, we are able to appreciate the
mystical nature of our being for as Paul Ricoeur has noted: “An appreciation of the “symbolic
life” is a necessary condition for the reception of revelation.”\textsuperscript{10}

Postmodernity too takes a different view on theology by departing from the faculty
psychology to a more anthropological perspective. In 1970, David Tracy, after studying Bernard
Lonergan’s work on \textit{The Subject} and \textit{Method in Theology},\textsuperscript{11} noted that Lonergan has sketched
Catholic theology from Thomas Aquinas to the present, revealing a new understanding in the
application of theological methods which move from the foundational Aristotelian concepts of
reason and Thomistic theory of faculty to the perspective of Intentional phenomenology.\textsuperscript{12} For
many theologians, this attempt was a breakthrough in Catholic theological education. Lonergan’s
work on \textit{The Subject} prompted him to follow up with \textit{Methods in Theology}\textsuperscript{13} which demarcates a
shift from the Thomistic theological notions that have characterized theological education in the
past.
It is important to include a brief discussion of the Aristotelian concepts of faculty psychology,\textsuperscript{14} which served and still plays a significant role in philosophical and psychological research. Aristotle maintained that human beings possessed five faculties, namely, sense (common sense), imagination, memory, active mind, and passive mind. These faculties influenced most of the medieval philosophical works that we have come to know, especially Thomas Aquinas’s scholarly works, for the Church was greatly influenced by these Aristotelian notions of human faculties. However, Aquinas collapsed these five senses into two, \textit{intellect} and \textit{will}, as characterizing human endeavors.\textsuperscript{15} From the Thomistic period until the twentieth century, theological education was based on the works of Aquinas, a study that focused on the disembodied subject – the soul and the body,\textsuperscript{16} both Platonic and Aristotelian until Lonergan wrote his \textit{Method in Theology}, which was a departure from the disembodied notion of the human person to a composite being whose articulations emanate from his whole being.\textsuperscript{17} Michele Saracino has argued that Lonergan “eschews the language of faculty and essence because such rhetoric fails to account for the dynamic development of the subject.”\textsuperscript{18} Instead, Lonergan sketches human knowledge as characterized by time, decision, choice, and destiny. This conceptualization led him to formulate his theological perspectives of the dimensions of the human person as both intentional and existential.\textsuperscript{19} Lonergan explains his intentions about the shift from faculty psychology to Intentional Analysis in Bernard Tyrrell’s book \textit{Bernard Lonergan’s Philosophy of God} noting the following:

> Where faculty psychology leans to a priority of intellect over will, intentionality analysis has to conceive questions and answers for deliberation as sublating questions and
answers both for reflection and for intelligence. There
follows a fuller and happier apprehension of the human
person and, in particular, of the human person’s approach
to God.\textsuperscript{20}

With this new perspective, Lonergan established within Catholic theological method
highlights that pointed to how the subject appropriates meaning and how he becomes human
through knowing.\textsuperscript{21} Employing Edmund Husserl’s theory of intentionality,\textsuperscript{22} Lonergan goes
further to articulate the subject as involved in rigorous pursuits of understanding external objects
in \textit{toto}, including its minute details encompassing the affective nature of the subject.\textsuperscript{23} In this
way, Lonergan departed from the intentional objectivization to intentionality that transcends
cognition and will and which understands the human person in terms of rational, existential, and
affectivity.\textsuperscript{24} Saracino has argued that Lonergan adopts this posture in explaining his new
understanding of the human person in order for him to develop the subject who demonstrates
most fully his authenticity in knowing, in decision, and in responsibility.\textsuperscript{25} With this posture,
Lonergan encapsulates for theologians a new understanding of human subjectivity and his
relationship with God and neighbor.

Saracino again points out that by rewriting of subjectivity, Lonergan articulated for us an
analysis of the human person as a \textit{developing subject} whose \textit{consciousness flows} and becomes
\textit{differentiated} as s/he opens for \textit{God} and \textit{others}.\textsuperscript{26} Underlying subsequent theological works in
Catholic theological education is the foundational method that Lonergan sketched pointing
theology to the direction of the subject as a unitary corporate being whose articulation of his
intentions involves every aspect of his being and whose relationship with the other becomes
necessary through his religious experience and conversion. Revelation, therefore, becomes a
significant concept in understanding the human person, his knowledge of himself, and his
relationship with God and others for all these perspectives involve his internal and external
experience, his dialectical nature and the symbolic mediation through which he creates new
awareness of his surroundings.

In his article “A Roman Catholic perspective on the offense of revelation – response to
William Abraham,” Francis Schussler Fiorenza has made a claim that “the tract on revelation
becomes the “foundation” of the rest of theology”\(^{27}\) and argued that a comparison of Thomas
Aquinas, whose *Summa Theologiae* does not have a separate treatise on revelation, with John
von Drey (founder of the Tubingen School) and Karl Rahner (the most influential Roman
Catholic theologian of the twentieth century)\(^{28}\) clearly illustrates the difference in foundational
theology. In the main, Roman Catholic theology has made revelation the principle of theology,
and the works of many contemporary theologians such as Karl Rahner along with Cardinals
Dulles, Kasper, Ratzinger, including Fiorenza have made great strides in the area of theology of
revelation.\(^{29}\)

Avery Dulles, for instance, has divided revelation into models, frameworks, and
paradigms. He argues that in the context of models, frameworks, and paradigms, the concept can
be understood either as a doctrine, history, an internal experience, dialectical presence, new
awareness, or as symbolic mediation,\(^{30}\) and each of these models understands revelation
differently. As a doctrine, it is understood as the formulation of a revealed Christian doctrine in
clear conceptual form while the historical type discovers revelation as a historical event
demonstrating God as an active intentional agent in the cosmos.\(^{31}\) The inner experience model of
revelation places revelation within the perception of the divine presence, and the dialectical
conception understands revelation in terms of the utterance of a word with divine power, a point which Karl Rahner (1984) strongly argues in his work: “Revelation,” pointing out the Christocentric and Incarnational understanding of revelation – that which brings divine transcendence and human acceptance into a dialectical unity.\(^{32}\) The new awareness model describes revelation as the divine stimulation of the human imagination to restructure human experience in a new horizon, while the symbolic framework defines revelation as neither an inner experience nor an unmediated encounter, but as mediated through symbols, metaphors, and signs, an understanding that points to the prophetic model.\(^{33}\)

This symbolic understanding of revelation, according to Rahner, expresses and mediates God’s self-communication to humanity.\(^{34}\) Also, the complexity of the diverse notions of revelation has been amply displayed by Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutical emphasis on the interrelation between form and content. Ricoeur laments that an interpretation of revelation based solely on the prophetic model does not do justice to the complex nature of revelation.\(^{35}\) Thus, he points out that the Scriptures contain not only prophetic writings, but also historical writings, legal writings, wisdom, and proverbial literature, as well as poetic and hymnic literature. Each of these genres, according to Ricoeur, differs from an understanding based on the prophetic model. In this vein, Ricoeur’s argument points to historical writings which place no emphasis on the agency of the speaker, but rather on the founding historical elements. Second, wisdom literature points to the relation of life as related to the patterns of God’s cosmos and universe. Third, the praise of God in biblical prayers and hymns reveals the glory of God in a different way than the Torah. Fourth, legal writings of the Bible reveal God’s significance for community practice. Significantly, Ricoeur maintains that the genre of history points outside the
text to a historical people and to new community to which scriptures testify. Likewise, the genre of wisdom displays that God’s creative Wisdom permeates the cosmos and the patterns of life.\textsuperscript{36}

Therefore, any analysis of revelation that focuses simply on the prophetic model must demonstrate a profound attention to the diverse literary genres of the bible and indicate the socio-cultural and religious practices behind the biblical context and the interpretations given to them in order to show a more variegated and universal understanding of revelation.\textsuperscript{37} Appropriating Dulles and Ricoeur’s models and work for a deeper understanding of revelation, Fiorenza argues that there are distinct models or frameworks for understanding revelation and each of these models or frameworks has its distinct advantages and disadvantages—that is, understanding revelation through the variegated models of interpretation and not to limit it solely to the prophetic model. From the Church’s viewpoint, revelation can be considered as Sacramental, Salvific, Ecclesial, and within this paradigm, Rahner defines revelation as primarily in terms of God’s grace-given self-communication in history. Thus, God’s self-gift through a revelatory event is mediated through history and operates in history.\textsuperscript{38} According to Christian understanding, revelation in creation and history culminate in the God man Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{39} From the Catholic interpretation, and the whole treatise on Revelation by the Second Vatican Council, revelation is God’s gracious revelation in Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{40}

Vatican II’s interpretation of revelation hinges on the historicity, Salvific and ecclesial model, and within this model, revelation is understood as a dialogue in which God communicates with the human person. The Council wrote, \textit{inter alia}:

\begin{quote}
It is basic to Christian belief (as to the tenet of Judaism) that God is a personal God who has spoken to men. He
\end{quote}
has initiated a dialogue with them, in which they are invited to listen to his words, and to respond.\textsuperscript{41}

Rahner demonstrated the dialectical nature of Revelation by emphasizing the Christocentric and incarnational understanding of revelation which points to the notion of a divine self-communication and human response and involvement in the communication. The interpretations employ the “unity of contraries”\textsuperscript{42} in defining and interpreting the notion of revelation,\textsuperscript{43} which implicitly points to the danger of extremes. The notion of “unity of contraries” in the context of revelation also encourages the Church to understand that life is full of complexities and that it is lived out “in the confusion of contradictions, not the certainty of “yes” or “no.”\textsuperscript{44} This notion points the Church to the direction of God’s intervention in human history as one of those unexpected events that is seen as a violation of the normal order of things but necessary for the Church to meet the historical moment so as to permit the story of the faith community to unfold and be nurtured. What Catholic theologians have not paid attention to is the ethical dimension of revelation that underlies the very core of God’s gracious self-gift and communication and man’s availability to the conversation, which calls for an ethical response within a religious experience and conversion.

The self disclosure of God to man as a means of communication reinforces the Praxis Religious Dialogue focus in the sense of strengthening the notion of dialogue in the Church. It affirms the call to commitment by the Church to encourage its members to engage in dialogue with the hierarchy regarding matters of mutual concern and especially ensuring the constant interactive communication within the community of faith. Vatican II dared to emphasize the notion of commitment of one’s being in the communicative event with God and neighbor, a
notion that spells out the idea of faith of the Christian. While the Council does not embark on a detailed exposition of the engagement between God and Man, it ensures the unfolding of the process of dialogue which was began by God in his self disclosure to man and man’s commitment to respond to the invitation. This notion forms the crux of the Praxis Religious Dialogue in the sense of moving the Church away from a primarily intellectualist conception of revelation and dialogue to a more existential ground. The paradigm of Praxis Religious Dialogue also points the Church to the notion that God’s self disclosure to man involves the confusion of everyday life and the complexities of human life and that life is to be lived on a narrow ridge so that the dialectics inherent in revelation are not denied. Vatican II included other elements of revelation in order to broaden the meaning within the context of the Church’s doctrinal teachings to help Catholic Christianity to come to terms with a broader notion of the concept.

II. Revelation as a Doctrine

Dulles had argued that according to the official Roman documents, revelation, authoritatively taught by the Church, is a body of doctrine that derives from the apostles, who received it from the mouth of Christ himself, or by the dictation of the Holy Spirit. This doctrine is fully contained in the written books and unwritten traditions that have come down from apostolic times. According to Vatican I, all those things are to be believed with divine and catholic faith which is contained in the Word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church, either by a solemn judgment, or by her ordinary and universal Magisterium, proposes for belief as having been divinely revealed. This, according to Dulles, represents the institutional aspect of revelation and from this perspective, Vatican I compelled Catholics to assert, in the Oath Against Modernism, the following:
I sincerely accept the doctrinal teaching, which has come down from the apostles through the faithful Fathers in the same sense and meaning down to our own day. . . . Equally I condemn any error which proposes to replace the divine legacy left to the Bride of Christ and to be faithfully guarded by her by any invention of philosophical thought or by any creation of human conscience which should by human effort improve itself and perfect itself in the future in unlimited progress.\textsuperscript{47}

This institutional notion of revelation also established the Church as infallible, a teaching that corresponds to the Church’s highly juridical, authoritarian, and propositional understanding\textsuperscript{48} of the concept of revelation. In fact, Vatican II, according to Dulles, rejected this notion and adopted a more inclusive perspective of the Church as constitutive of the People of God because it is through the community’s \textit{sensus fidei} that the Church acts and fulfills its mission.\textsuperscript{49} The Praxis Religious Dialogue model, while maintaining a grounding in existential dialogue, also includes within its perspective the complete orientation of the believer to the Word of God through which the bond of faith shared with the larger community is fulfilled. This perspective is significant for the understanding of the model because it affirms the notion of “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn.1:14), and it is through his presence among us that the Christian story receives its texture.

The texture of revelation derived from lived experience is defined through our socio-cultural, historical, religious, and political view of the world and through these anthropological
and sociological foundations, we are able to embody revelation in our human experience. The story demands openness, selflessness acknowledgement, and a complete orientation towards the other in order for it to make sense. Revelation does not rest on the cognitive factors alone but on human experience which is both rational and affective.

The Praxis Religious Dialogic model understands revelation as a community narrative that guides the experience of the believer and thus involves the dynamics of the human person who identifies with Jesus’ story. The story of the community centers on the revelatory event which is communicative because the whole event is a daily invitation to the community to respond to the story of revelation through their interaction with one another in their desire to live out the implications of the story. Thus, I argue in this work that the content of the revelatory event also points to the parable of the Good Samaritan, a story which Jesus told to open the way for each person to look out for his brother – “I am my brother’s keeper.”50 It begins with curiosity that transforms into an encounter which results in dialogue and finally reaches an unfolding of compassion. The whole process takes a form of dialogue that is not instructional but engagement on the narrow ridge. In Buber’s view, the “between” in the encounter is a third party which is not named but is present and aids the unfolding of the story. In the work, the between is the God who reveals himself in different ways through Jesus, the embodiment of compassion.

While revelation is understood by some as simply a supernatural event beyond human experience, Dulles has challenged this view by noting that an understanding based solely on revelation as supernatural only induces an oppressive silence about God. Further, he points out that to accept revelation only on supernatural level, imprisons one in one’s own soul because of the proposition of the story as a doctrine that culminates in complacency, triumphalism, and disdain for the Other.51 From this standpoint, the dialogic praxis model posits that an
understanding of revelation based solely on supernatural view impedes dialogue with the Other especially within the Church because as a doctrinal teaching, it imposes an authority from beyond human reason that is contrary to the Gospel’s dictates. Contrary to the Christian view of revelation as absolute and the corresponding commitment to faith that cuts off any discussion with science and philosophical branches that continuously maintain a critical attitude of research, there is a caveat as regard the Enlightenment position of a non-incarnational view of reality. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model challenges the notion of the Enlightenment as well as the Christian view of revelation as both simply epistemic and absolute respectively because the very nature of revelation is incarnational in content: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (Jn 1: 14). Understood in the metaphorical sense, incarnation, according to the Praxis Religious Dialogue view, assumes an existential reality, incorporating all the necessary contingent elements of reality and transforming them into an authentic existential phenomenon. Lonergan accurately raises the issue when he notes that it is through our religious experience of God that enables us to fall in love with him and subsequently with the other.52 Thus, Lonergan argues:

It [conversion] is not merely a change or even a development; rather, it is a radical transformation on which follows, on all levels of living, an interlocked series of changes and developments. What hitherto was unnoticed becomes vivid and present. What had been of no concern becomes a matter of high import. So great a change in one’s apprehension and one’s values accompanies no less a change in oneself, in one’s relations to other persons, and in one’s relations to God.53
Therefore, our religious experience within a praxis religious dialogue is not limited to the “mystery” nature of the experience alone but our ability to interpret otherwise, that is, our ability to articulate that experience within our existential vision of the world around us in order to make sense of it in our encounter with the Other.

Further, the notion incorporates both scientific views of the world as well as the branches of philosophy to enhance and facilitate human understanding of God’s presence in our midst. The notion expressed in the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue is reinforced by Dulles, concerning the belief that anything emerging from the scientific realm is natural or as Dulles puts it as “merely human.” The understanding of revelation as mere propositional has shifted to a more “personal” one; it is now understood fundamentally as “God’s self-revelation,” a gift of God’s own being, and only and it is “secondary in its illuminative process of the foundational event of revelation. God’s self-gift to mankind affirms both human and spiritual dimensions of man, revealing the intrinsic nature of his being-ness. As Paul Tillich has noted: “revelation is the manifestation of the mystery of Being.”

In view of this fundamentalist notion, belief in revelation as a doctrine tends to ideologize the notion of revelation and it diminishes the encounter within the conversation initiated by God with his people. Unfortunately, the different explications of revelation formulated by some Church Fathers and other early Church theologians in the past centuries have established a standard of absolutism of the notion and it raises a lot of questions regarding the place of revelation within the ground of dialogue between God and his people. Vatican II understood revelation in part as a dialogic process between God and man in which the narrative of the revelatory event calls the subject to religious experience and conversion for the sake of the Other
within the narrative tradition. Further the Council affirmed the essence of revelation, noting that
in revelation, “God confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed: that God is
with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death and to raise us up to life eternal.”\textsuperscript{57} The
Praxis Religious Dialogue model recognizes in the view of the Council that God initiated the
ethical call to responsibility which Levinas contextualizes as “I am my brother’s keeper.”\textsuperscript{58} Thus,
the idea of focusing more on the doctrinal nature of revelation rather than its essence amounts to
notion of reductionism.

III. Revelation as an Organic Union of God and Human

Attempts to formulate a systematic and coherent understanding of the value of Revelation
have invariably resulted in the construction of a neo-Thomistic view of the concept as a self-
transcending entity that removes the proximity of Revelation from ethics. Historically, divine
revelation has been understood from the perspectives offered through natural knowledge of God
(Wis. 13: 1 Rm. 1: 20). John Paul in \textit{Fides et Ratio} has argued that human beings are capable of
a “natural knowledge of God.”\textsuperscript{59} A minimalist approach to the interpretation of the natural
knowledge of God, according to the \textit{Magisterium} of the Catholic Church, speaks of a “capacity”
in terms of a “possibility of reason”\textsuperscript{60} but which never was realized because of the presence of
sin in the world. Both Vatican I and II have made a reference to this understanding in line with
the Thomistic doctrine of “moral convenience” in relation to divine revelation.\textsuperscript{61} Moreover, Pius
XII argued in his encyclical \textit{Humani Generis} (1950) that divine revelation could not be known
through natural knowledge by all men because of the existence of profound psychological and
existential weight of divine revelation and the lack of the necessity of proper intellectual
formation.
From the first Vatican Council to the Second, the approach to understanding Revelation has always been interpreted from a philosophical ground, coining words such as “hermeneutics” and “exegesis” and employing numerous biblical quotations to support its view on the event of revelation. The Second Vatican Council especially pinned the interpretation of Revelation to the Church as the sole interpreter of revelation with the bishops as the custodians. The Council noted:

The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church whose authority is exercised in the name of Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously, and explaining it faithfully by divine commission.

First, from the Council’s standpoint, Revelation is entrusted to those who hold office in the Church to teach it to the faithful. Second, in all its exposition, the Council enunciates the transmission to their successors in the teaching role. It notes that sacred tradition and sacred Scripture of both the Old and the New Testament “are like mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God from whom she has received everything.” Throughout the chapter on revelation, nowhere did the Council consider at the ethical implication of the event of revelation which underlies the very mission of the Church and which departs from modernity’s interpretation of the subject as cognitive. The standpoint taken by the Council in its interpretation
of Revelation leaves out the necessity of the Other as demanding the presence of the subject because of the inevitability of human suffering in the world. It is in light of these lacunae that Emmanuel Levinas’s work becomes paramount particularly in our postmodern context.

Levinas’s understanding of revelation is a complete departure from the Thomistic and Scholastic vision of Revelation in the sense that Levinas raises the issue of ethical responsibility for the Other as he grapples with the Hebrew notion of revelation. He situates Revelation within the context of the “Other” by removing it from the Western philosophical theological traditions which interpret Revelation in the context of empiricism, idealism, and existentialism. By rejecting the Western philosophical shroud around the event of Revelation because of its unavoidable relegation of the interrelational sphere of the other to a secondary position, thus giving it a derivative status, Levinas not only operationally defines Revelation but also essentially and sufficiently raises an argument of definition of the Other for Western Philosophy that has had so much influence on theology. He posits the question whether it is “not possible that human being itself requires a prior relational and hence ethical context? More radically perhaps, I question the advisability, . . . of continuing to assert the primacy of ontology over ethics as the appropriate conceptual point of departure for the Christian theological anthropologies upon which Christian spirituality is based.”65 By displacing alterity within society, the Other possesses neither freedom nor dignity before his neighbor.

Thus, in his book Legitimation Crisis, (1975), Jüngen Habermas postulates that any structure is free from constraint when there is a “symmetrical distribution” of opportunities for members to make their own choices about the kind of speech acts that would guide their shared experiences and “an effective equality of chances to assume dialogue roles.”66 The implicit assumption of this thesis is directed toward the chance to initiate and perpetuate discourse,
critique, explain, interpret, and justify one’s actions within an organization or a community. Furthermore, the thesis advances the chance to express “attitudes, feelings, intentions,” with the purpose “to command, to oppose, to permit, and to forbid” such things that may be called for or serve as impediment to the discourse. In short, what the thesis enunciates is the provision of conditions favorable for an ideal speech situation that ensures not only discussions but also deliberations that are free from all constraints of domination directed toward the release of the other from mere subjectivity and subjectivization.

The proponents of the behavioral theory within an organization, for instance, have constantly maintained the argument of Habermas’s thesis noting that communication techniques are essential to attaining the organization’s goals and discovering the source of problems in the organization. The critical theory of Habermas and Barnard’s behavioral theory assume a critical posture in analyzing organizational structures and the inherent ideal speech situation that fosters a Praxis Dialogue within the organization or a community in the hope that the Other is not annihilated into an object. Thus, the application of critical posture in a discourse is not to destroy or challenge the other in the discourse but to reveal the conditions acceptable for an ideal discourse, which furthers the interconnectedness of the conditions necessary for the involvement of the other to define his place within the discourse. Habermas has argued that such conditions provide an ideal form of ideas of freedom and justice and thus “truth, therefore, cannot be analyzed independently of freedom and justice.” The argument made from a critical posture seeks not to undermine the foundations of dominant culture but to arrive at the truth, which is the anticipatory goal of every act of communication and which fosters community building and the recognition of the narrow ridge upon which a conversation can be engaged between people.
Therefore, within the understanding of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model, revelation, as a theological and an ecclesiological concept, can find its voice within the arguments of Habermas and the Behavioral theorists. God’s self-communication to humankind is based on the freeing of discourse from the constraints of action characterized by an empirical and idealistic posturing which forbid the possibilities of pure interaction. In order for God to interact with human beings, a harmonious union with their world of existence was necessary. Dulles points to this notion when he argues: “If people accept the Church at all, it is because they find in it a way of communion with the God who freely emerges from his silence and discloses himself to men.”

The self-disclosure of God to man provided an ideal speech situation in which God and man found their freedom to communicate with one another without any constraint and such union afforded man the opportunity to become part of God’s revelatory process to seek after freedom and justice, which as Habermas maintains is “Truth.”

Thus, from a model of dialogic praxis, Revelation of God is understood as a self disclosure of God to man in which the availability of God in discourse is made possible and in which man receives an invitation to dialogue and whereby each partner maintains a level of freedom to question, give reasons for or against statements, explain, and interpret with a goal to reaching a consensus while respecting each other’s freedom. In this context, revelation opens channels for the partners in dialogue to respect the between which involves all the concomitants of the crisis of events taking place on a narrow ridge. The event of Revelation therefore hangs on two axes – the vertical and the horizontal. The vertical, according to Dulles, is “Christological,” and the horizontal is “Sacramental,” concretized in Jesus becoming man and taking part in the spatio-temporal shared experiences that opened horizons of possibilities for the partners to interact.
However, Revelation is not limited only to the idea of Jesus becoming man because prior
to God’s self-disclosure in Jesus in the New Testament, according to some authors, God has
revealed himself in different ways through creation to different people. In the Old Testament,
God’s encounter with Abraham ends in a mutual covenant culminating in the incarnation of the
Word in the New Testament. The covenantal process which in the Old Testament takes the form
of a discourse reveals a God whose presence in the world speaks to every person and is
symbolized in the Judaic religion through which the invitation is given to all– Jews and
non-Jews– to partake in the conversation. In a lecture delivered at the “Jubilee for Men and
Women from the World of Learning,” Tanzella-Nitti (2000) argued on the topic “The Book of
Nature and the God of Scientists according to the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio,*” that creation itself
is the beginning stage of Revelation because of its direct relation to the Word, by which creation
came into being. He further maintained that if creation can be asserted to be the Revelation of
God, then it must have the capacity “to appeal, to bear meaning, to incarnate an end and that man
cannot simply look at the aesthetics inherent in creation but must posit questions about the author
of beauty” (Wisdom 13: 5).73 In the same light, Jacques Derrida, in discussing “writing” as
possessing a pneumatological nature from a Platonic view, notes the following:

> It was as if nature had spread out all her magnificence
> in front of our eyes to offer its texts for our consideration. . .

> I have therefore closed all the books. Only one is open to
> all eyes. It is the book of Nature. In this great and sublime
> book I learn to serve and adore its author.74
God’s revelation is therefore profoundly inherent in his creation where man and woman behold his presence. While this understanding of Revelation seems to be understood as a religious hermeneutic, it is also an anthropological, phenomenological and existential hermeneutic for within the created world, a transcendent reality is comprehended within historical events. In its orientation toward a comprehension of history as a living process of self-disclosure of God, Revelation becomes a concrete event in which individuals are propelled to enter into a dialogue. It is this concrete process that gives Revelation its legitimacy as individuals begin a search for the Truth. Within the context of the search for the Truth through the encounter with God in Revelation, religion ceases to be a mere transcendental medium and becomes a “a series of historical expressions grounded in a foundational event and directed to discrete actions by individuals” and articulated through religious experience that is embodied in a story.

IV. The Historicality of Revelation: The Church as a Hermeneutical Implicature in the Revelatory Story

The Church, in this context, remains the hermeneutical “implicature” of the revelation narrative, ensuring lasting and “endless reinterpretations in always new cultural contexts.” The thrust of the possibility for reinterpretations calls for an openness to dialogue not only with other religions but with the very community of believers whose identities evolve from the shared interpretations of the revelatory event. The dialogue that emanates from the revelatory event encourages both the individual and the community of believers as a whole not only to tell their story within other competing stories, bringing along with them that which makes the revelatory event ever new and always relating to the present, but also to redefine their identities within the historical moments that engages them in the dialogic process. The historicality of revelation
therefore needs to be encouraged among members of the Church who are made conscious of their “otherness” through their religious beliefs.77

Walter Buckert has noted in this context, pointing us to the direction of story and life, that the interpretation of narrative changes as the world changes, but it always remains a story about life, a life charted with contours yet following the same sequence.78 The coherence of the story is its redefinition and reinterpretation in light of other competing stories, for reading the narrative within a given historical moment reveals the inherent dynamic activity (especially religious narratives) implicit in the narrative and which provides it with the timelessness truths that are opened to the members who live in a pluralistic world,79 a world that is made of history. In fact, within the context of religion, the horizon of history was opened up through the revelatory event. The Church therefore exists in history, sensitive to the unfolding dynamics of the revelation that form the central ritual of the lives of the People of God. The contributors of the article on Revelation in *The New Dictionary of Theology* have argued that “History is the result, and not just the medium of revelation,” because “History is itself what is revealed or “unveiled. History as such is the horizon of human existence and action bequeathed to us by a revelatory promise.”80 It is the redefinitions and reinterpretations of the revelatory narrative that enrich the faith of the community of believers and at the same time point the community in the direction of dialogue.

The Christian is therefore called to live the dialogic life in both worlds of now and the spiritual realm and of course raises the issue of the Christian’s relationship with the spiritual realm. How does the Christian articulate the religious narrative and his identify with it in a manner that thrusts him into a dialogue that can reveal his significant identification? The conversation points to three renowned persons, Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Buber, and Bernard
Lonergan, whose works are from different philosophical and religious traditions and yet they enrich the dialogic world of the religious believer because they enunciate their reflections on the coherence of the biblical revelatory narrative as a story of life situated within human interconnectedness (Levinas, 1981 1979, Buber, 1947; Lonergan, 1958).

Levinas engages the issue from above (ethical metaphysics) with his focus on the affective presence of the Other while Buber, as a philosophical anthropologist, deals with the existential ramifications of the encounter and thus, argues from what transpires between man and man. Lonergan, on the other hand, argues from both above and below as a theological anthropologist who attempts to reveal the religious experience that a person undergoes in his encounter with the divine. Their works set them apart from the traditional apophatic theology based solely on intellectualist perception which understood the revealed God (*Deus revelatus*) as a hidden God (*Deus absconditus*), which characterized the theology of Martin Luther, who took the *sola fides* position, and some of the Catholic theologians like Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx who regarded reason as primacy to the assent to revelation in order to bring it in line with science and philosophy. There is also a third system that dates back to the medieval Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, and the Christian scholastic theologian, Thomas Aquinas, who also asserted the primacy of faith without completely abandoning the dignity of reason. For these theologians, the tensions between faith and reason propelled them to make sense of the revelation story but in their attempt to bridge the tensions, they departed from the existential meaning of revelation, that is, human beings in dialogue with a God who intervenes in their history. According to the Thomistic theory, for instance, human reason can discern the credibility of revelation because of the external signs by which God has authenticated it, and reason makes
it possible for the believer to understand, to some measure, whatever is revealed by God, which Thomas considered “mysteries.”

Dulles thus notes that the intellectualist tradition continues to dominate most parts of the Christian theologies of our time. Other theologians also contend that the intellectualist theology overlooks the qualitative differences that lie between faith as assent transcendentally of the unknown while scientific knowledge operates within the categories of objectivity. From these philosophical and scientific traditional interpretations and standpoints a new critical look at revelation as a narrative that immerses the human being in constant praxis dialogue emerged as a significant way of embedding the subject neither as a Cartesian, Kantian nor Nietzschean depersonalized and disembodied subject but as a subject involved, called to respond to fall in love with the Other because the third party who is the between impinges on the relationship with the Other. This notion underlies the works of Levinas, Buber, and Lonergan which blend both the divine, human, faith, and reason –phenomenology, philosophy, and anthropology– together and explicate the subject as a coherent understanding human being capable of interacting through reason and faith and who is constantly searching for the unknown. I will therefore briefly look at the convergent grounds of these three scholars and appropriate their work to the revelatory story.

V. The ‘Other’ in Levinas as a Revelatory Experience

Levinas takes, as his point of departure, the ethical relation as revelatory of God. It attempts to define the relationship between the God and man from a diachronic perspective. Attempts by other authors to articulate Levinas’s scholarly works have terminated with new definitions, each attempting to understand those works situated within the realm of “transcendence,” the other (hostage), and “the same.” Daniel Helminiak, for instance, defines the
ethical relation between God and man underlying Levinas’s work as a spirituality that characterizes Christian spirituality in part as “human living insofar as it is geared toward integration of the intrinsic human dynamism toward authentic self-transcendence, as created by God and reaching fulfillment through the Holy Spirit in Christ.”

In an article, “Divinity and the Other: The Ethical Relation as Revelatory of God,” Marie Baird argues that the definition by Helminiak is very complex and notes that “Since human living occurs in the unavoidable sphere of sociality, the experience of life in relationship to God and others is surely implicitly present….”

It is this presence which permeates through the revelatory story – the idea that God invites man into dialogue and which Jesus directed towards the presence of the other in the saying: “Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do it unto me” (Mt. 25:40). This New Testament maxim underlies the Christian spirituality and it reconceptualizes the definition offered by Michael Downey when he defines Christian spirituality as “the experience which actualizes or realizes the human capacity to be in relation with another, others, and God.”

Within this context, Baird notes that Downey’s definition seems complex because it assumes four levels directed towards “a fundamental dimension of human being, the full range of human experience as it is brought to bear on the quest for integration through self transcendence, the expression of insights about this experience, a disciplined study.” In disagreeing with both definitions, Baird asserts the position of Levinas as displacing ontology as first philosophy in defining man and his relations, and notes that by assuming human subjectivity and self–transcendence as individual affair, the individual is ultimately understood as a unique soul which roots the individual solely in ontology. This notion depicts the ground from which Levinas departs from western philosophy. In Totality and Infinity, Levinas affirm the philosophical
priority of the idea of infinity. What underlies Levinas’s option for transcendence as “infinity” and a departure from philosophy as ontological based reflection is the notion

. . . of the namelessness of that by which we are addressed,
. . . the il of illeity which enables the name of God to be uttered divested of its divinity. Divinity is the nominalization of the noun insofar as it “participates” in being. “But name outside of essence or beyond essence, the individual prior to individuality, is named God. It precedes all divinity, that is, the divine essence which the false gods, individuals sheltered in their concept, lay claim to.”

For Levinas, therefore, a word becomes a nomination, a consecration of this as this by a saying which also understands and listening that is absorbed in the said. In fact, on this ground, Levinas understands a saying as an ascription of meaning to something. He argues that “entities. . . are not first given and thematized, and then receive a meaning; they are given by the meaning they have . . . in an already said.” Thus, he contends that God is ultimately accessible, not within Being, but as the counterpart of the justice I render to my neighbor because in the opening of illeity one finds the trace of God. This notion sums up Levinas’s position and option for ethics as first philosophy and not ontology.

Levinas displaces the philosophical narratives on ontology, phenomenology, psychology and the sciences upon this principle by privileging and acknowledging the primacy of metaphysics, but even then, Levinas stretches the notion of metaphysics to the extreme to focus
on Infinity of the Other. He reformulates ethics as that which “disrupts ontology and logocentrism and posits the question as “How does being justify itself?” As a point of departure from the medieval and Victorian philosophical and theological formulations, Levinas traverses the fields with a completely new horizon that transcends both transrational and transhistorical narratives and allows him to conceptualize philosophy as ethics. He recognizes that “primacy” has traditionally been accorded to ontology and Immanence and argues that philosophy has been understood through Western lenses as “the bearer of the spirituality of the West, where the spirit is taken to be coextensive with knowing, but knowing – or thought, or experience – should not be understood as any kind of reflection of exteriority in an inner forum.”

In Catholic theology and spirituality, the self-transcending impetus based on ontological concepts that by which Thomistic and neo-Thomistic, scholastic and neo-scholastic treatises define the human being invariably disregards the interrelational aspects of the human. This approach or influence backgrounds its understanding of the revelatory event with the primacy of philosophy as the founding assumption of its view of dialogue, while relegating to second place the significance of interhuman relations which sums up the revelatory event – I am my brother’s keeper. Here again, the story of the Good Samaritan takes on a significant role, pointing us to the direction of both Buber and Levinas. The ethical context within which these two authors found their voices is seemingly missing in Catholic theology and spirituality for the primacy of philosophy completely overshadows the ethical dimension of the revelatory narrative. More appropriately, is it not possible to go in the direction of the interrelational sphere rather than relegating it to secondary nature? The model of praxis religious dialogue would suggest so.

The praxis religious dialogue model encourages the Church to move from its understanding of subjectivity as a depersonalized “self” and fragmented to a subjectivity that is
capable of making judgments between what is good and just, a stable condition where the human being is capable of ethically being responsible for the Other (Levinas), engaging in praxis dialogue with the Other (Buber) and able not only to know but feel, experience, understand, judge, and make decisions emanating from a unified subjectivity (Lonergan). The works of these three persons become the bedrock of the story of the Good Samaritan, articulated by Jesus to confirm the grounding of human person in his call to responsibility.

The story articulates two different strangers, each coming from a different culture. One becomes the keeper for the other— the wounded. The subjectivity of the Samaritan transcends the hierarchical rules and doctrinal systems and norms of his society and cuts across the racial and religious restrictions of the society of the Other. The call to responsibility by the Other becomes an invitation that negates the barriers of race, ethnicity, color, religion, culture and status and opens a horizon of responsibility that emerges from the interaction with the Other through the face, which Levinas calls the “rescuer” and Rahner terms philosophically as “mystery.” The wounded becomes the other for (to use the Levinasian untranslatable term) the Samaritan. The narrative depicts a witness to responsibility, which Levinas terms as “a cry of ethical revolt bearing witness to responsibility.” The interaction between the Samaritan and the stranger rises above moralistic injunctions and canons and assumes a new paradigmatic dimension that constitutes a relationship guided by a middle ground inter human relations.

Accordingly, Levinas sees the mystery on the relationship as not a contemplation but as ethics that confronts the other in witness to the fact that

there is meaning testifies to in interjections and outcries

before being disclosed in propositions, a meaning that
signifies as a command, like an order that one signifies.

Its manifestation in a theme already devolves from its
signifying as ordering; ethical signification signifies nor
for a consciousness which terminates, but to a subjectivity,
wholly obedience, obeying with an obedience that precedes
understanding. 99

Within the paradigm of the Good Samaritan, the wounded considered in the eyes of
Western philosophy as an object is understood as “the infinite,” “the transcendent,” “the
Stranger,” in the Levinasian paradigm of the Other whose very presence calls the “I” to
responsibility. Even though Levinas precedes the agency of the “I” with the “Other,” he does not
dismiss the notion of the “I” but rather rejects the premise of beginning agency with the “I”
because as Arnett notes it is only in “response to the Other that the “I” finds a home.” Levinas
thus contends:

In the face to face the I has neither the privileged position of the
subject nor the position of the thing defined by its place in the
system; it is apology, discourse pro domo, but discourse of
justification before the Other. The Other is the intelligible, since
he is capable of justifying my freedom. 100

The understanding the ethical responsibility owed to the Other as an ethical being is what
underlies the narrative of the revelatory event and which Jesus invites his followers to attend to.
It is the infinitely other that captivates the Samaritan and solicits and appeals to him. It is the process of that solicitation that the proximity of the wounded expresses itself and which as Levinas notes as, “his very epiphany consists in soliciting us by his destitution in the face of the Stranger, the widow, and the orphan.”

The coherence of the narrative of revelation is therefore the openness to the trace of the God in the Other because the Other is the very “locus of metaphysical truth” and thus indispensable for any relationship with God and the openness is summarized for us in John’s first letter: Anyone who says ‘I love God’ and hates his brother is a liar, since no one who fails to love the brother whom he can see can love God whom he has not seen” (4: 19 -20), and the assertion is affirmed and actualized in James, when the apostle writes : How does it help, my brothers, when someone who has never done a single good act claims to have faith? Will that faith bring salvation? Levinas thus takes a radical approach to philosophy, departing from the transhistorical and transrational approach and adopting a diachronic relational interaction that characterizes human relations and relationship with the transcendence.

Levinas argues that Transcendence does not find its meaning within an ontological framework; rather it discovers it in ethics, for signification is contained in the ethical structure of the “one-for-the-other,” which is a structure of relation in which a subject relates to what always and already exceeds the logic and meaning of being.” Levinas’ understanding of ethics as prima philosophia complements Martin Buber’s notion of dialogue emanating from an ontological perspective, precisely from an anthropological foundation, for within the narrative of revelation both divine and human natures meet at an undefinable point where the God and man engage each other in religious experience. In this consummation of both divine and human natures, Levinas argues that the condition of possibility of a relationship with the other person is
through the face of God, who becomes the excluded third. Thus, Levinas contends that “The
illeity of alterity is sustained by the trace of the Other (Autre) of the other (autrui). In such an
ethical relationship with the Other,

God is drawn out of objectivity, presence and being. He is
neither an object nor an interlocutor. His absolute remoteness,
his transcendence, turns into my responsibility – non-erotic
par excellence – for the other. And this analysis implies that
God is not simply the “first other,” the “other par excellence,”
or the “absolutely other, “but other than the other [autre qu’
autrui], other otherwise, other with an alterity prior to the
other, prior to the ethical bond with another and different from
every neighbor, transcendent to the point of absence, to the point
of possible confusion with the stirring of the there is [il ya].
In this confusion the substitution for the neighbor gains in
dis-interestedness, that is, in nobility, and the transcendence of
the Infinite arises in glory.103

Understandably therefore, Levinas departs from the Cartesian notion of consciousness, which he
considers the world as an object and especially the Other. Consequently, Levinas introduces a
new paradigm, that is, the idea of a “non-intentional consciousness” that is “duration itself” or
less an act that a pure passivity.”104
The non-intentional consciousness attributed to the other, notes Levinas, has “no intentions, or aims, and cannot avail itself of the protective mask of a character contemplating in the mirror of the world is a reassured and self-positing portrait. It has no name, no situation, and no status. It is thus passive and accused, a conscience that is open to question and called upon to respond.” Underlying the Good Samaritan’s story is this very idea being raised by Levinas, even though he writes from the Old Testament perspectives. The action of “being there” for the other, and stepping into his world, sums up the confrontation that Levinas expresses as non-intentional consciousness, which further departs from Philosophy’s failure to highlight the ethical experience of subjectivity that characterizes the Samaritan’s choice to make himself available to the wounded stranger. The essential interest in the Samaritan’s availability to the stranger lies not in the immanence of a transcendental subjectivity, but “in a cry of ethical revolt, bearing witness to responsibility . . . in prophecy” which, when put in Christian language by Rahner, would point us to the direction of the incarnation as a positive response, and a possibility of commitment, to alterity and not simply a return to self (consciousness).

In the Christian sense, the incarnation becomes the “face” which Levinas argues signifies the Other in his or her distance and strangeness. The Other becomes the pure whole whose very face, which Levinas conceives as the trace of the absolutely absent of the transcendence, “the utterly bygone, utterly past absent,” withdrawn into what Paul Valéry calls “the deep yore, never long ago enough.” The Samaritan’s story depicts an engagement in which the face of the Other (in the wounded) enters into a relation beyond any representable time, a relation which Levinas embeds in what he assumes as “diachronic” relationship, a relationship that goes beyond the human imagination, which according to Purcell, is a departure from Husserl’s phenomenological method. It is from the diachronic transcendentalism that the relationship of
the “Other” assumes a characterization that simply effaces the “I” in me, holding me captive in the presence of the “Other.” Levinas understands this characterization of “I” as passivity, without predication. Thus, Levinas writes

> The active source of this passivity is not thematizable.
> It is the passivity of a trauma, but one that prevents its representation, a deafening trauma, cutting the thread of consciousness which should have welcomed it in its present, the passivity of being persecuted.\textsuperscript{110}

Levinas further clarifies this passive relationship when he notes that in such a relationship, “the subjectivity of a subject is responsibility of being-in-question in the form of the total exposure to the offense in the cheek offered to the smiter.”\textsuperscript{111} It is a responsibility “prior to dialogue, to the exchange of questions and answers, to the thematization of the said, which is superposed on my being put into question by the other in proximity.”\textsuperscript{112} Even though Levinas works from the Jewish perspective, his perception of the relationship that transcends our human understanding cuts across the whole biblical narrative both old and new, and reveals continuity among the collection called the New Testament. The incarnational aspect which forms the basis of the Council’s work on Revelation becomes a foundational theme for Levinas’s work and further embraces Buber’s notion of dialogue on the narrow ridge which surfaces through the “between.”

For Levinas, the relationship with the other has no designation; there is not ethical “I” but an ethical “me” in the accusative that stands accused\textsuperscript{113} before the other. Levinas sees this accusation before the other as a trauma; it is transfer, other than interested, “otherwise than
essence,” that turns the cheek to the smiter in order to pass from the outrage undergone to the responsibility for the same persecutor,\textsuperscript{114} so that the “me” through the suffering may expiate for the other; it is the accused who bears the guilt of the other: “a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, “Yet ours were the sufferings he bears; ill-treated and afflicted (Is. 53: 3, 4, 7), he offered “gifts and sacrifices for our sins” (Heb. 5: 1). Within this framework, Jesus’s discourse on renunciation points the Church to a total transformation demanded by the presence of the Other without any designation of canons and dogmas that may stand in the way of “turning the cheek” to the other in dialogue which erases any philosophical subjectivity. Levinas notes that this kind of responsibility is prior to any dialogue and thematization; it is a radical three-hundred-and-sixty degrees turn toward the Other who welcomes us into a Recollection and representation . . . concretely as habitation in a dwelling or a Home,\textsuperscript{115} a home that welcomes us to a our primordial dwelling replete with existential meaning, ethics, and responsibility. Levinas’s view also reinforces the injunction in the New Testament: “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, he must renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Mk. 8:34).

Therefore, for Levinas, the diachronic transcendentalism that characterizes the relationship of the “Other” is in reference to the unseen interlocutor, that which necessitates the relationship.\textsuperscript{116} In light of this framework, the Samaritan’s story portrays a face that obliges the “accusative me,” the accused, to go beyond his being and stand as an expiator for the other; it is a relationship that is otherwise than being, a face that is for Buber an ontological necessity and for the Christian an incarnational response and an imprint in the very being of those who believe in the Christian story. It is the absolute command of the face through its invitation in a cry of revolt that the dialogue begins; the unintentional, unconscious, and the letting-go of the self, (the subjectivity or the “I” in Western philosophy) which becomes the basis of dialogue. It is both
divine and human in its incarnate presence. The meeting point of the divine and the human
encounter forms a vertical and horizontal axis that has eluded many researchers who understand
both Levinas and Buber’s works as two separate entities. While Levinas and Buber take a
completely different approach in method and style in their understanding of dialogue, they have
also charted for us a middle ground where the dialogue begins and continues in perpetuity.

Further, the middle ground has eluded many scholars in their attempt to hermeneutically
separate and isolate the works of these three authors. For religious discourse, the works of the
authors conjunctionally provide an access to the meeting point of the vertical and the horizontal
axis where the dialogue begins. Levinas provides the vertical axis with his notion of ethical
responsibility towards the other within context of transcendental phenomenology while Buber
provides the ontological basis for the dialogue while Lonergan confirms the subject in his
conversion toward letting go of his subjectivity and falling in love with God in order to reach out
to the Other in love. This ethical transcendence, the ontological between, and the existential
phenomological significance of the other form the basis of the revelation narrative in which both
the divine and the human encounter takes place. The complementarity of works of the three
authors – Levinas, Buber, and Lonergan– provide a synthesis for the understanding for the
revelatory narrative which reveals the trace of the infinite and which forms the basis of the
subject’s vocation as inherent in an ethical responsibility. The synthesis of their work also
creates a middle ground for the dialogue that takes place on the “narrow ridge.”
VI. The Middle Ground of Levinas’s “Face” of the Other, Buber’s “Between,” and Lonergan’s “Authentic Subject”

In both secular and religious dialogue, the encounter divulges a mid-point on the vertical and horizontal axis where the ethical subjectivity in the accusative stands before the other in responsibility. It is a point on the narrow ridge where the dialogue begins, and where the search for authenticity of being leads to a meaningful significance of responsibility embedded and discovered through service to the other – “I am my brother’s keeper.” Buber defines the human life as situated within dialogue. He argues, “Life is best lived between extremes on the narrow ridge (Buber, 1965/1966a, 110) and he constantly points us to the direction of the metaphor of the between as that which sustains dialogue, that is, dialogic life is lived between Man and Man (Buber, 1947/1965a). For Buber, the accused in the reality of dialogue are the two, three, or the group involved in the dialogue who are encouraged to meet life relationally where meaning is not a possession of neither those engaged in the dialogue but constituted between them in cooperative transactive interaction. Coming from an anthropological school of thought, Buber situates his understanding of man and his interaction within an ontological perspective grounded in concrete historical moment that is not estranged from life’s events that define our experiences. The ontological experiences also define for us our cultural systems which are made of myths, stories, and eventually textured as narrative.

Thus, the story that guides our human experiences underlies our cultural systems out of which each human being derives his/her identity. Buber is a philosophical anthropologist who casts his interest in an interpretive task of pursuing, through renunciation, the aliveness of human experience. He argues that whatever the meaning of the word “truth” may be in other realms, it means that in the interhuman realm human beings communicate themselves to one another as
what they are and the communication does not depend on one saying everything that occurs to him/her but, as Buber notes, “letting no seeming creep in between himself/herself and the other.” The dialogue does not depend on one letting himself go before another but each one granting to the other a share in his being. For Buber, the notion of not monopolizing the occasion for the encounter but upholding the presence of the Other with respectful recognition defines the authenticity of the interhuman. Within this context, Levinas’s notion of “standing accused” before the other where the cry of ethical revolt is heard as a call to responsibility to reach out to the other is defined in ontological terms. The meeting of the two worlds- ethical transcendence and the ontological between become meaningful in religious experience because of the nature of the Christian narrative of revelation as a story of God and man’s encounter in dialogue on the narrow ridge where each struggles to maintain the dignity reposed in passivity of the trace that commands the subject to respond ethically.

Within this context, Andrew Tallon, in the Forward to Purcell’s book Mystery and Method, recognizes that “for both Rahner and Levinas, the infinite is never present as an object but always as the ground or horizon of finite subjects, perpetually escaping all cognition and profoundly activating the only other kind of consciousness we have as our way to volition and action, affection. In awe and humility we feel our finitude, and the ethical and mystical awaken in the presence of others who cannot be known as objects, who defy our attempts to do so. . .” However, the difference between Rahner’s cognitive theology deeply intermingled with metaphysical psychology and Levinas’s distinct affective consciousness lies in Christian theology that dwells on spiritual dyad of intellect and will and its eventual attempts to “reduce” human affection in its concrete meaning.
Levinas thus departs from Christian theology by demonstrating the significance of human value, which Tallon again contends is “accessed through feeling” and in such a departure, Levinas, says Tallon, “opened up consciousness to the ethical, to a triadic model, to the affective as equal – indeed superior – to the Gnostic error of rationalism and intellectualism.”120 It is within this context that Buber’s work is located. Buber understands dialogic expression as situated within the study of the wholeness of man, a recognition defined in terms of “man’s special place in the cosmos, his connexion with destiny, his relation to the world of things, his understanding of his fellow men, his existence as a being that knows it must die, his attitude in the ordinary and extraordinary encounters with the mystery with which his life is shot through . . .”,121 and culminating in his view of man as a being who shares in finitude and also infinity.

Therefore, according to Buber, therefore, the meaning of man’s being is inherent in the recognition of his finitude and his participation in infinity. These two essential elements are not separate entities but as twofold nature of the processes in which man’s very existence becomes meaningful.122 Thus for both Levinas and Buber, the meaning of man’s existence is defined through his relationship with the other, which within the Praxis Religious Dialogic model accounts for the Church’s nature and thus encourages the Church to work toward the maintenance of dialogue which underlies the revelatory event and forms the cultural system out of which the Christian receives his identity. In the same vein, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model reveals the implicit significance of the value of the story of the Good Samaritan in which the presence of the infinite in the face of the Other commands the very ground from which responsibility emerges as the horizon of significance for the “I” subject to recognize the Other. The recognition does not emanate from philosophical underpinnings and analysis but simply
from turning inside out in conversion to respond and engage the other in dialogue. The other in both Levinas and Buber escapes the totalizing cognition prevalent in Catholic and Protestant theology in which consciousness plays the role of totalizing cognition. Rahner’s transcendental metaphysics for instance is not devoid of philosophy and psychology and the holdover of medieval metaphysics and philosophy which limits its proponents to a dyadic soul “constituted by the only two faculties considered intellect and will.”

The middle ground (der grund), which forms the raison d’etre of the engagement as articulated by Levinas and Buber offers the Church an avenue to extend to its own members within the Church the opportunity to dialogue with the hierarchy on issues that may be controversial but necessary for the growth of the Church. Further, the middle ground also departs from Husserlian rethinking of Intentionality and the resultant substitution of it with faculty psychology and intentionality analysis that attempted to break through a dyadic soul and inject affection into philosophy and theology as a spiritual foundation. In the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue, the middle ground offers a genuine dialogue that does not dwell on intentional cognition or individuation but regards the other as the Other whose face cries out in revolt for ethical response to his presence. Buber emphasizes that in such a dialogic context, “I become aware of him, aware that he is different, essentially different from myself, in the definite, unique way which is peculiar to him, and I accept whom I thus see, so that in full earnestness I can direct what I say to him as the person he is.”

From the middle ground, Bernard Lonergan’s work also becomes meaningful for not only Christians but for an ontology of humanity. Lonergan has noted that the Enlightenment articulations developed in the work of Decartes failed to address crucial matters of experience, understanding, and judging and has insisted on a fragmented subjectivity whose vision of the
world is conflated with the notion of cognition. Michele Saracino notes that Lonergan’s view of Descartes’ work is that of a truncated subject who “assumes what is seen as real, upholding the commonsense logic that to see is to believe.” Lognegn does not only address the Cartesian subject immersed in empiricism but directs his attention to the Kantian Immanent subject who is encapsulated within himself and understands the world of sense as representation of reality. Lonergan thus relates Kant’s understanding of the subject to Nietzsche’s notion of the subject as an existential being whose view of himself is built upon the idea of his will to power. Nietzsche noted, “By his own acts the human subject makes himself what he is to be, and he does so freely and responsible; indeed, he does so precisely because his acts are the free and responsible expressions of himself. Such is the existential subject.” Even though Lonergan accepts the existential position of Nietzsche, he rejects the autonomous independent subject who exists for himself. The subject in question interprets the world from a confused state of options which eventually isolates him and makes him an alienated subject. The pitfall in Lonergan’s rejection of Nietzsche’s subject lies in the dogmatic passivity of the subject which befits Christian theology. For Nietzsche, the subject understands his world as made up of multiple perspectives which are contesting for power and truth and within this context, it is the powerful who wins. It is this understanding that leads Nietzsche to proclaim the Death of God in his dismissal of God and morality.

These empiricist, Immanentist, and existential reflections lead Lonergan to develop a theological anthropology that has as its foundations the openness of the subject as not only a cognitive being but also as an acting, seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceptualizing, judging, evaluating, deciding, speaking, writing and deliberating being who posits questions in his search for authenticity. The subject involved in
the multiplicity of operations experiences his being as not alienated but called to emerge from his egocentric state to religious experience and conversion. By feeling for the Other, the subject lets him/herself fall in love with God. Thus for Lonergan, it is through the affective state that the subject, intuitively and without objectifying the Other, falls into relationship with the Other to discover his/her authentic human nature. This position is a complete departure from both Catholic and Protestant theology. Within the context of revelation as history, salvific, and ecclesial, the very notion of ethics streams across the field of the conversation between God and man because of the new understanding of theology and philosophy that have emerged.

Emerging from a Thomistic theology and neo-Scholastic philosophy, both Catholic and Protestant theologies placed emphasis on both the mystery and the ontological nature of the encounter between God and man, while avoiding the issue of “ethical responsibility” that underlies the between of parties involved in dialogue. Unfortunately, in their pursuit of knowledge to interpret revelation, knowledge itself became the “god” term in which self-transcendence became an expression for Christian Spirituality. Against this medieval and the Enlightenment apogee, Marie Baird (1999) has noted that the notion of the rescuer which Levinas points to us has interpreted for us that self-transcendence is an expression of a far more primary experience, that of ethical responsibility for the other. She challenges Christian Spirituality that has taken self-transcendence as a point of departure in Christian understanding of revelation by maintaining that ethical responsibility in the history of this turbulent century should become a locus in which God’s self revelation in Christ demands a hopeful enactment. Moreover, the necessity of the ethical responsibility in postmodern era calls for a deeper understanding of the encounter between God and man, a relationship that Jesus, the Christ has initiated. Baird thus reinforces this call to responsibility by arguing that the concept of the
“rescuer,” as argued by Emmanuel Levinas, strongly demonstrates that ethics maintains a primacy over ontology as first philosophy, that is, ethical responsibility for the other is prior to the representational consciousness that thematizes being and experience. Levinas himself points out that ethical responsibility is prior to the ontologically based conceptual categories that structure any specifically Western theological anthropology and spirituality.

For Levinas, God’s revelation calls each of us to ethical responsibility to the other, a summons which reveals the face of the other to me, “calls for me, begs me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question.” The underlying signification of Levinas’ work on “Ethics as First Philosophy” is a movement away from Edmund Husserl’s (1973 and 1982) transcendental idealism and Martin Heidegger’s (1962) hermeneutics directed towards the ethical meaning of being. For Levinas, the essence of one’s being is not the Husserlian understanding of being as absolute consciousness itself which makes possible an adequate perception deviates from and does injustice to the whole existence of being. Husserlian understanding of consciousness is a primary domain which alone renders possible and comprehensible an object and a subject and it is precisely this understanding that Levinas departs from Husserl.

VII. The Church as “Subject” Called to Ethical Responsibility

The emergence of the subject from the fragmentation of modern narratives must be understood as a milestone in the context of religious narrative especially in an era of postmodernity which struggles amid complex metanarratives which defy ethical responsibility that calls for openness to dialogue. The subject, through the perspectives of Levinas, Buber, and Lonergan, is reposed in his proper place and is rendered his utmost essence which opens him to
the Other while resisting any act of thematization or objectification. Through the revelatory event, the Christian reveals himself through his vocation to be the Other’s keeper while allowing him to be possesses his freedom. In this vein, Levinas notes: “The nudity of the face is a destitution without any cultural ornament” and which further points to the opening allocution given by Pope John XXIII at the first session of the Council that the Church should be exhibited by the Council Fathers as the “loving mother of all,” spreading everywhere the fullness of Christian Charity. Charity which marks the Christian vision expands and overflows the limits of philosophical empiricism and idealism. It embraces what Lonergan calls ‘letting go of oneself in order to fall in love with God so that one is open to the relationship with the Other. It reinforces Levinas’s vision of the subject as the accused one before the Other and allows the subject to engage the Other in dialogue that seeks no authority but respect for the ‘between.’

The Praxis Religious Dialogue therefore argues that the legitimation of Revelation is not embodied in the concept of manifestation per se but in the event that is embedded in a historical experience of the human person. Furthermore, the historicality of the revelatory process does not render the actual event of revelation nontranscendent for it is assumed that the act of revelation itself is genuine and therefore can be reciprocated through genuine dialogue between God and man.

However, it is important to note that as an event embedded in historicality, Revelation is also dialectical because it is a dialogic story that competes with other stories and is hence capable of change. Change, according to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), is inherent in contradictions because the consequence of the interaction inherent in any unified opposition is a system that is perpetually ongoing. To argue therefore that Revelation is inherent in the shared experiences of the interactants is to pontificate stability because stability and change form a dialectical unity.
Baxter and Montgomery emphasize this point by noting that dialectical change is the interplay of stability and flux. These two elements also form the structure of Revelation because the event gives stability to human existence and perpetuates the conversation between God and man. The conversation embodies a dialectical change which guides the interplay of the partners. The authors have argued that the evolving story of the conversation comes from the communicative life which the actors give to the contradictions inherent in the social life of the actors. The unique events emanating from the contradictions are what perpetuates the conversation and gives it the praxis, that is, the concrete practices through which new patterns of interaction surface from their past.

Further, Baxter and Montgomery argue along these lines when they point out that every interactive event is a unique moment while at the same time that each is informed by the historicity of prior interactive encounters the events point to the future. Thus, the praxis nature of every discourse “focuses attention on the concrete practices by which social actors produce the future out of the past in their everyday lives.” The dialectical theorists who study communication in relationships situate the interplay of opposing tendencies in symbolic practices of the partners in conversation and argue that communication is a symbolic resource through which meanings are produced and reproduced and through the interactive processes and communicative choices they make, they respond to dialectical exigencies that have been produced from past interactional history together (see Benson, 1977; Israel, 1979; Rawlins, 1989).

The dialectical nature of Revelation is implicit in the fact that God draws us into a story in which human possibilities and limitations are encountered and each conversationalist stands accusative “me” before the other in an attempt to let go the “self” in order to dialogue and
grapple with the crisis that may emerge to create a middle ground. As Burke points out, “The
conversation began long ago...” with Abraham through whom a covenant was made and
each partner revealed the possibilities and limitations through series of events (12: 5ff) that
eventually culminated in the self-disclosure of God in the man Jesus. In light of this situation,
Caroline Schroder has observed that in the address initiated by God, He broke through our
human expectations and in that way suspended our imaginative figments and drew us into a
conversation that hinges on ethical responsibility.

For Dulles, the event of Revelation is gracious event that opens humanity to one another;
for Levinas, the story calls the subject to ethical responsibility toward the Other which is
exemplified in the face, that is, it is God who sustains the “between” of the subject and the Other
to reveal the ethical responsibility underlying the foundations of being human. The “between”
becomes the foundational ground of dialogue for Buber, whose notion of the ethical
responsibility is expressed as “I am my brother’s keeper” which is revealed in dialogue on the
narrow ridge where the subject is called upon to accept the crisis that emerges from the
conversation. Lonergan, on the other hand, embraces the revelatory event as a religious
experience and conversion culminating in letting oneself fall in love with God in order to be
there for the other in compassion.

Subjectivity becomes the authentic subject only when the subject is can articulate his
definitions in the context of Otherness in the hope of lifting its fragmented experience of
empiricism, immanentism, and extreme existentialism. For Lonergan therefore, the narrative of
Revelation is authentic and commonsense when it is understood as God becoming man in Jesus
so that in him, the face of God can impinge on the “knowing,” “acting,” and “loving” of the
subject in accepting the responsibility through which his authentic nature is defined. Lonergan’s
standpoint on the human being as an authentic subject in relationship is outlined by the subject’s attitude toward his history and culture. Saracino has noted that this historical and cultural experience underscores Lonergan’s theology which anticipates many of our contemporary concerns about historical context, difference, and cultural diversity. In effect, Lonergan’s account of subjectivity points to the postmodern vision of a deconstructed subject, “someone open and attentive to otherness.” However, Lonergan directs our attention to the difficult task inherent in being “attentive to the experience” of the other because of its illusory nature.

Thus, Lonergan directs our attention to the patterns of experience, namely, the biological, aesthetic, intellectual, dramatic, social, psychological, and religious attitudes, and explains that whenever we encounter another person, it is through our own dramatic pattern of experience that we become fearful, loving, jealous, angry and attentive and invariable we are not able to handle these feelings properly. These sensations could be alluded to our own historical and cultural systems that shape our perception of Otherness. Lonergan therefore points us to the direction of questioning our own feelings toward Otherness and turn from those negative feelings in an attempt to move to a position of dialogue. He demonstrates this shift from conflict to dialogue as “from a conflict of statements to an encounter of persons.” Saracino notes in this light that the conflict of dialectic that may surface in an encounter should not result in interpersonal estrangement or violence, because “behind every statement and proposition, there is a concrete, embodied person who has dignity and demands respect.

Lonergan’s position on Otherness in an encounter differs from Levinas’s view of dialectic which destroys alterity in that Lonergan reads the subject as struggling with otherness during dialectic, for it is within the challenge of questioning and answering that the authentic subject for the other emerges. As he notes in “In Natural Right and Mindedness,”
For every person is an embodiment of natural right. Every person can reveal to any other his natural propensity to seek understanding, to judge reasonably, to evaluate fairly, to be open to friendship. While the dialectic of history coldly relates our conflicts, dialogue adds the principle that prompts us to cure them, the natural right that is the inmost core of our being.\textsuperscript{148}

In this context, Lonergan does not downplay the complexity of the subject’s involvement with the larger society. He views him as a being meandering his way through complex processes of engaging his environment – politic, economics, and technology.\textsuperscript{149} Lonergan notes that these complex realities can either positively shape his perception of Otherness or destroy his view of the world., thus He explains that through the transcultural, human being have the capacity to know and through the appropriation of the transcultural structure to the cognitional processes, human have both the potential obligate themselves to be open to the various insights, feelings, and values of different people. Lonergan’s can be appropriated to the Church to encourage her operate in the midst of a world that is grappling with the notion of subjectivity is depersonalized and disembodied with a sense of optimism that emerge from her sense of a religious experience that calls her to conversion for the sake of the Other. The mission of the Church implicitly rests on the fact of accepting herself as the accusative “me” before the Other whose very presence commands and demands from her to accept the bruises coming out of the responsibility to which
she is called to shoulder – “to be the mother of all,”¹⁵⁰ as John the XXIII expounded in his inaugural address to the Second Vatican Council.

As a Church called to perform such a great task, there is no alternative to simply being there for the Other through whom the Gospel being preached comes to light. While it is no denial that the Church has greatly been influenced by Western philosophies, it even makes the task greater in the face of a Gospel that admits no compromise. As Edward W. Said (1978) argues in *Orientalism,* the West has structured and constructed a fictional and hegemonic image of the Other which up till today characterizes the intellectual power of the west of which the Church is not different.¹⁵¹ Said maintains that the notion of the ‘Orient’ which of course has influenced the theology of the Church, is opposite of everything that the ‘west wants to be and this perception is projected onto a faraway locale or a distant time. It is this fictional notion which has characterized the definition of the Other that Levinas, Buber, and Lonergan deem as thematization and conceptualism which has further influenced the Church in its structure and governance and is appropriated in the way it dialogues with its members and other religious denominations. In this light, Said has noted

> In a sense, the limits of Orientalism are . . . the limitations that follow upon disregarding, essentializing, denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographic region. But Orientalism has taken a step a step further than that: it views the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed but has remained fixed in time and place for the West.¹⁵²
It is this static notion of the other that Levinas, Buber, and Lonergan depart from, constructing a view that flows from a religious experience that borders on spirituality. In their view, any religion that locates differences in a distant location and then demonizes it frees itself from any relationship with the other and avoids the responsibility that goes with such relationship. The Church is called to humble acceptance of herself as reflecting the wounded, the disfigured one whose transgressions are a source of expiation in the sense of becoming the “servant.” Dialogue with Church members and other religious denomination should be done in a humble manner without the religious cultural adornment of dogma and doctrine. In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus does not invoke doctrinal reasons in attending to the wounded but calls for a complete denial of self. Jean Baudrillard makes a similar point by arguing that the West stabilizes its power by conjuring suffering:

We know better than they do what reality is, because we have chosen them to embody it. Or simply because it is what we – and the whole of the west – most lack. We have to go and retrieve a reality for ourselves where the bleeding is . . . we go to convince them of the ‘reality’ of their suffering –by culturalizing it, of course, by theatricalizing it so that it can serve as a point f reference in the theatre of western values. 153

By calling into question the rituals of other denominations, the Church obscures the reality of oppression and suffering in its own Western context. By classifying its own ordained
priests from other cultures, the Church diminishes its own sacrament of ordination; by imposing
doctrinal restrictions on members of the Church in their membership and especially in their
participation in the sacraments, the Church refuses to listen to the suffering of the members
whose harrowing of everyday life is characterized by struggles, fear, and inferiority. The parable
of the Good Samaritan calls for a mission that is guided by a sense of humility and courage to
stand before the Other as the “me’ and not as “I.” The narrative of revelation stands as a source
of contradiction for the Church in a world that is crying in revolt against the inferior label it bears
from a hierarchical Church that looks down upon the Other. The Council has ended but the
renewal must be encouraged to continue to reach the hearts of all peoples; its pronouncements are
still to be articulated in a new light of ethical responsibility towards the Other in order to become
the Good Samaritan whose presence to the wounded defied race, religion, ethnicity, social,
cultural, and political barriers.
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid.


4 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 2a2ae.


6 See Ibid.

7 The Documents of Vatican II, W. M. Abbott, Ed. (Chicago, IL: Associate Press & Follett Publishing Company, 1966), Dei Verbum, no. 2. In article 5 of the document, the Council argues that God’s self-communication to man requires a response to be made by men, and describes in general terms what that response, made in faith constitutes. By faith, the Council noted that it is “by which a man commits his whole self.” In describing faith in these terms, the Council desired to get away from the definitions of revelation as given by both previous councils of Trent and Vatican I which were too intellectual and Thomistic in content. For the Council, Christian faith is not merely an assent to theological propositions or statements but a personal engagement with God, a continuing act of loyalty in the engagement first offered by God as an invitation to man.

8 See article on “Revelation” in The New Dictionary of Theology.


See B. Lonergan’s *The Subject* (Milwaukee, WI: University Press, 1968). In this work, Lonergan explained that both philosophy and theology have insufficiently treated the question of being human and he uses the word ‘neglect’ to capture his aversion for the disparate notion of the human person as philosophy and theology have articulated. He therefore embarks analyzing the operations of cognitive theory involving how the human person comes to ‘know.’ For further readings, see the *Collected works of Bernard Lonergan*. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert Doran (Eds.), Vol. 3, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

Ibid.

B. Lonergan. *Methods in Theology*. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1971). This work of Lonergan became a thrust for theological education especially as it established the formulations for doing theology and demonstrating the parity between understanding and embarking on theological inquiry in the area of cognitive theory.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid., p. 12.


24 Ibid.


26 Ibid. p. 63.

27 See Harvard Theological Review, July 2002, p. 251 for the response of to William J. Abraham’s article “The offense of divine revelation. (Aversion toward appeal to revelation) in the same issue. Abraham in the article dwells on the prophetic role of the prophet in being the recipient and mediator of revelation, with God as the agent of revelation. He maintains in the article that “If truth be told, the contemporary academy does not find the appeal to divine revelation at all attractive. Outside theology, and often within theology itself, the appeal to revelation is simply not permissible.


29 Ibid.


31 Ibid.


33 Ibid.

34 Ibid. p. 1461.


36 Ibid.


40 Ibid. The introduction to the document, *Dei Verbum* and Chapter 1 details the view and understanding of Revelation by Vatican II.


44 Ibid.

45 Council of Trent, Fourth Session. 1546, NR. 80, D.S. 1501.

46 Ibid, NR 90, D.S. 3011

47 Ibid, Nr 68, D.S. 3541. Italics in original

48 Ibid. 168.


51 Ibid. p. 168.


53 Ibid.

54 Ibid. p. 168.


57 Vatican II Documents, *Dei Verbum*, no. 4.


60 See the Talk delivered at the Jubilee for Men and Women from the World of Learning. (Vatican City, May 23, 2000).

61 Ibid. Jubilee for Men and Women.


63 Ibid. *Dei Verbum*, no. 10 See also the encyclical of “*Humani Generis*,” August 12, 1950 and Denzinger Shoemetzer 2314. The teaching Office as used in the text of Vatican II denotes the *Magisterium*. In its broadest sense, it includes all those who proclaim the word of God with authority in the Church. Collectively, the word refers to the Pope and the bishops.

64 Ibid. *Dei Verbum*, no. 7

thought which appeals to religious experiences allegedly independent of philosophy already, inasmuch as it is founded on experience, refers to the ‘I think,’ and is wholly connected on to philosophy. The ‘narration’ of religious experience does not shake philosophy and cannot break with presence and immanence, of which philosophy is the emphatic completion.”


67 Ibid. p. xvii.


69 The ideal speech situation can be understood as an unavoidable element in discourse. It is, as Thomas McCarthy (Boston University) in translator’s introduction argues, “a reciprocal supposition,” that is, the assumptions which the partners in discourse suppose to be the goal of their discussion and which they strive to reach a consensus.

70 See a summary of his application of the Critical theory on Marx’s work on Social Theory in *Legitimation Crisis*, 1975, p. xvii.


72 Ibid. p. 173.

73 See G. Tanzella-Nitti’s lecture on “The Book of Nature and the God of Scientists according to the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, delivered at the Jubilee for Men and Women from the World of Learning. (Vatican City: May 23, 2000). Tanzella-Nitti reflected on John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ration* in which John Paul II for the first time presented a dialogue between science and theology (faith and reason) and emphasized creation as the first stage of Revelation, a term used until now to indicate only historical and supernatural revelation.

See Robert Bird. “Understanding Dostoevsky: A Comparison of Russian Hermeneutic Theories.” In this paper, Bird takes issue with Bakhtin’s condemnation of Viacheslav Ivanov’s principle of “Thou art” and the related concept of “penetration” which according to Bird might have served well as a basis of Bakhtin’s theory of dialogic novel. Bird’s paper written on September 7, 2003.

Ibid. p. 240.

Ibid.


Ibid. p. 58-59.


http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=117213

Ibid.


Ibid.

Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae*. 1a2ae, q. 106, art. 4, ad 4

Ibid.


92 Ibid. p. 94.


94 E. Levinas. Otherwise than being or beyond essence. (Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 190, n.38.

95 E. Levinas, 1987, p. 172

96 Ibid.


104 Levinas Reader, p.80.

105 Ibid. p. 81-82.


108 Ibid. p. 159.

109 Ibid. p. 159.


111 Ibid. p. 111

112 Ibid. p. 111.

113 Ibid. p. 110 – 112.

114 Ibid. p.111.


116 For further reading on the concept of ‘diachrony,’ see Michael Purcell’s book: *Mystery and Method: The Other in Rahner & Levians* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998). Purcell explains that Levinas work departs from Husserl’s because Levinas’ approach is more a style that a method in the field of phenomenology and which sets Levinas apart also in the field of philosophy, giving it a new branch – the fourth branch in philosophy.

118 Ibid, p. 67.

119 M. Purcell. *Mystery and Method*. See Forward by Andrew Tallon, p. ix. Tallon explains Rahner’s position as emanating from his metaphysical anthropology through which Rahner conceives the finitude of the finite spirit of being as needing the dual otherness for all of its operations, “including its self-presence (cognition) and its free self-appropriation (volition).

120 Purcell, p. x.


122 Ibid. p. 3.

123 Ibid. p. x.


128 Ibid.


131 Ibid., p. 95.


135 Ibid, p. 38. For Husserl, the term transcendence means everything which is not a constitutive part of the flux of consciousness and therefore means material objects or things.


138 Ibid. p. 10.

139 Ibid. 13-14.


145 Ibid. p. 282.

147 Saracino. p. 141.


152 Ibid.

Chapter 11
Conclusion
The Church in the Twenty-First Century

I. A Vision of Possibilities: The Praxis Religious Dialogue as a Model for the Church
   a) Web of Metaphorical Significance: Unity in Diversity, Dialogic Transaction, Legitimation of Diversity, and Unity within Diversity
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IV. Theological Dialogue within the Story of Revelation

V. The Historicality of the Narrative of Revelation for the Church in the Twenty-First Century
I. **A Vision of Possibilities: The Praxis Religious Dialogue as a Model for the Church**

The vision of John XXIII to ask the Church to take its rightful place in the world signified that the Church has to become the Church of today, *aggiornamento*, meaning “to bring up to date”\(^1\) and it implies that the Pope’s call was not meant for mere external structural change but a change that transforms the totality of the Church, both internal and external and affecting the entire people of God. As Schillebeekx has argued, implicit in the Pope’s vision was also that “she must free herself from all anachronisms.”\(^2\) For John XXIII, the Church had to function within the historical moment of present day image of the human person in order he may share in the significant experience of the Church as a sacrament of grace, love, compassion and healing.\(^3\)

This notion of the Church as sacrament underscores the content of the Church’s missionary activity reflecting the dynamism of the revelatory narrative from which the Church derives its evangelical authority. The missionary activity of the Church, as Schillebeekx consistently maintained is “nothing other and nothing less than the revelation of epiphany of the completion of God’s plan of salvation in the world and in the history of the world, in which God, through the mission, visibly completes the history of salvation”\(^4\) Thus, the Church’s missionary activity which expresses her nature also points to its dialogic nature inherent in its encounter with peoples of different cultures. In fact, Vatican II laid the foundation that the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation. This definition for both the ordinary believer in the Church and the world at large calls for a common bridge to be built between faith and one’s daily lived routines. This call points to the eradication of the notion of a Church that confronts the world as a strange entity. But rather, as Schillebeekx has noted, this new understanding presents “the Church . . . as the sacrament of the world of men,”\(^5\) a world in which men have already experienced, “in tentative search and without being able to express it, . . .”\(^6\)
The metaphorical significance of the Church in the world is part of the process of aggiornamento as the Council envisaged for the Church. On one hand, the encounter with the world may seem strange to the Church because of the variety of secular elements that may be alien to the Church and the fear that these elements may tarnish the Church’s image. On the other hand, the encounter serves as a fertile ground for the Church to experience the strangeness of revelation as something peculiar and yet adaptable to the historical moment as the Church seeks to touch the face of the world and sanctify it. For the Church, this peculiarity of revelation in the context of renewal could be seen as resistance to its ancient mode of reaching out. Instead it is a ground of appreciation, reminding the Church that the contemporary Church is not bound to any particular culture and that God’s self disclosure is not limited to any one place but embraces the whole world in a dialogic sense, unfolding according to different cultural systems. Indeed, it is an event that transcends both secular and spiritual borders because it expresses an enduring ontological reality bearing an existential salvation for peoples.

First, the Praxis Religious Dialogue serves as a new ground for the Church to engage its own members and the world in dialogue in order to fulfill its mission. As it encounters different cultural systems in which the revelatory narrative takes on a different metaphorical significance, the concept of aggiornamento attains its highest definitions tied to the notion of people and ideas within the given historical moment which opens the Church to new horizons of possibilities.

The metaphors of grace, healing, compassion, and authenticity connect with other secular narratives to open channels of communication for the Church to fulfill its missionary activity. Transitions can be difficult phases for an organization or society to pass through. Here the Church is not so different. However, as a Church that embodies within itself the story of God’s disclosure to the world, it is not immune to the transitory phases which impact the experiences
and enactment of the faith of both Christians and non-Christians. It is through these different phases that the Church challenges itself to reach out to heal the wounded by bearing the gift of grace, compassion, and authenticity while framing the implicit reason (der Grund) of its existence in the world.

Second, because the Church is so many things—organization, community, interpersonal relationships—a dialogic formation is needed from different theorists in the field to help bring together into focus the intent of the Praxis Religious Dialogue for the Church. The model has many elements: “dialogue,” the “between,” “responsibility toward the Other,” “unity of contraries” in community, and the notion of the “revelatory narrative as an event of the historical moment.”

This paradigm encourages the Church to free itself from the old way of subjecting its members to obedience and authority, the intent of viewing dialogue with Christians of other denominations as a way to convert them because the Catholic Church possesses the “truth,” instead of dialogic engagement in order to adapt to the new view expressed by the Second Vatican Council as Aggiornamento, a term that embodies within itself the notion of “metanoia.” From this new view of the world, the Council pointed the Church to a new phase of existence that calls for renewal that does not happen once in the life of the Church but remains to become a continuous and dynamic process as a sacrament of salvation.
a. Web of Metaphorical Significance: Unity in Diversity, Dialogic Transaction, Legitimation of Diversity, and Unity within Diversity

The presence of a web of metaphors revealed in the work of Pottmeyer in his view of the Council’s direction for the new Church, points to the notion of “unity in diversity,” “dialogic transaction,” “legitimation of diversity,” and “unity within plurality” points to the idea of renewal underscoring the direction and importance of the historical moment for the Church. These metaphors also demonstrate and confirm Freire’s view that “. . . if the knowledge of yesterday necessarily does not make sense today then I need new knowledge. It means that knowledge has historicity. That is knowledge never is static.” Freire’s ideas have significance for the Church pointing to the necessity of being dynamically engaged in the historical moment. In this vein, while not condemning the preconciliar Church, John XXIII readied the Church for an overhaul, a task that the Council performed admirably.

Unity in diversity was a departure from the old Church structural communicative process because it emphasized equally the significance of the local Church and the universal. The local Church fosters and facilitates “face-to-face communication” with the office holders in the community. The religious beliefs of the people of God are not limited to doctrines; these doctrinal beliefs intermingle with their cultural, social, political and economic experiences driven by their involvement in their environment. The significance of this emphasis on the local Church also reveals that it is within the local Church that mutual cooperation and communication are fostered. Here, people share their day to day experiences guided by their religious narrative.

While the Council emphasized the unity in diversity within the Church, it also ensured that there would be no compromise regarding the official authority of the office holders; however, it required the pastors to “exercise their authority in dialogic fashion.” The
development of the dialogic thought in the Church seems to be eroding because of the introduction of the demand for obedience from members of the Church concerning the full submission of “intellect and will”\textsuperscript{12} in accordance with the tenets of the Magisterium.

Departing from the old notion of the Church as an institution and a “perfect society” in which members of the hierarchy were seen as “engineers”\textsuperscript{13} in God’s house, this interpreted vision of hierarchy in actuality was different from that which Jesus preached. Jesus saw this tendency as dangerous in the community of believers and thus emphasized the charism of servanthood instead of ranks of princes and kings. St. Paul also came face-to-face with it in the Galatian ecclesia when he pointed out to the community that among them “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor freeman, male nor female—for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”\textsuperscript{14}

In fact, the Council alluded to this demand for obedience in its document \textit{Lumen Gentium}, article 5. Consequently, one is denied any channel or access to dialogue on matters that concern the faith, especially when these matters originate with the hierarchy. In fact, the Church applies Canons 752 and 753\textsuperscript{15} to reinforce the demand for religious obedience of the intellect and will in order to curtail any dialogue. Pottmeyer notes that “this development concerns many Catholics. It makes dialogue in the Church more difficult and it can hardly be reconciled with the following recommendation of Vatican II: Let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful, and charity in everything.”\textsuperscript{16}

The larger Church (universal) assumes that it has the knowledge of the daily concerns of the community of believers, when in actuality it cannot. Evidence of this assumption is demonstrated in the mode in which the Church formulates pastoral letters and encyclicals that invariably have no bearing on the lives of the members of the Church. They are either too vague or written in an old Roman style, dancing on the edge of the razor that is difficult for the ordinary
member of the Church to understand. On account of this mode of communication, which isolated the Church from the rest of the world, John XXIII was propelled to ground the Catholic Church in dialogic civility. Dialogic civility calls for the Church to show concern for its members, thus enhancing the dignity of the human person through mutual respect and cooperation, and to make life livable for all peoples in its desire to bring the Good News to the world. John XXIII also grounded the Church in historicity, directing the Church to be always concerned with the ontological dimension of the human person, a theme that Paul VI would later take up.

b. The Praxis Religious Dialogue Perspectives within the Recommendations of the Second Vatican Council

The recommendation of the Council also points to the whole notion of the narrative of Revelation which is constitutive of dialogue—God in communication with man—and therefore the call on the Church to be dialogic is a fulfillment of its very nature as dialogic. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model of communication in the Church facilitates the challenges that permeate the lives of the ordinary lay people who bear the brunt of daily concerns in everyday life. It encourages face-to-face dialogue with their local ordinary and their priests in order to bring their religious beliefs to bear on their secular public lives. Furthering the mind of the Council, Praxis Religious Dialogue attempts to encourage the Church to embrace the dialectics and ambiguities of dialogue and the hope of “praxis” of everyday life that the community of believers experiences with others. The experience of living out one’s religious convictions coupled with the experience of secular public life puts a good deal of stress on the community of believers in their interpersonal encounters and beliefs. There is a constant questioning of both the Church and the Church’s public discourse by people of this age that stems from their experience
of revelation as it confronts the numerous presuppositions of life in the world that they face in their everyday encounters. It would therefore be out of place for the Church to sideline any individual who expresses his opinion on a theological or doctrinal issue that may have emerged through his daily experience of the Church through which he receives his sustenance of grace and his encounter with the public domain where discourse is more open-ended, for it is through the questioning of emerging ideas that a more moderate articulation and formulation are found. Questions in the community by theologians and the ordinary voices point to a historical appropriateness of the religious community’s vision of the world where they spend a their lives and the questions brought from the public domain into the Church further propel the community to constantly review the privatized emotive approaches of individuals within the context of the larger religious narrative – the narrative of revelation. As Arnett and Arneson have noted, “Such a communication style [privatized emotive approaches] is no longer appropriate for the public arena [or the religious community] and is perceived by some as simply dysfunctional.”

Thus, to move the Church away from such dysfunctional approaches to dialogue, the Second Vatican Council introduced the Church to “renewal, compassionate dialogue with modern men, to peace, to social justice, to whatever concerns the dignity of man and the unity of mankind.” The new vision for the Church in dialogue with the world was unexpected by many, but for the Council, it was a reinforcement of some of the most famous encyclicals published by previous Popes, namely, Leo XIII (Rerum Novarum), Pius XI (Quadragesimo Anno) which celebrated the fortieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum, and John XXIII (Pacem in Terris) which was addressed to “all men of good will,” and which introduced the Church to new ideas for engagement in the areas of political structures, solidarity among nations, human dignity, and the inalienable rights of all human persons. The new Church envisaged by John XXIII was to seek
understanding, compassion, and mercy in line with the Gospel message being proclaimed. In the introduction to the Vatican II documents, the Council noted:

In a positive and optimistic speech, . . . Pope John gently chided the prophets of doom within the Church and spoke of the world’s need for the medicine of mercy.20

The representation made by the Pope ought to be understood within the context of a new definition of the Church as “The People of God”21 whose vision is embedded in dialogic encounters. The Council itself employed the concept of dialogue when it emphasized that the foundation of the Christian belief points to God as “a personal God” because He has initiated a “dialogue” through his revelation with his people and invites his people to listen and respond.22 It is from this notion of “a personal God” (God in revelation) that the Council emphasized dialogue as constitutive of the Gospel message which forms the guiding narrative of the people of God, that is, bishops, priests, religious, the laity, and Christians of other faith traditions.

Implicit in the notion of call to dialogue is the idea of openness which underlies the invitation to dialogic by God. It is clear from the expression “to listen and respond” that the interaction is not a one way communication model but a call to “engagement, an encounter demanding selflessness and renewal.” Each subject within the Church is implicated in the renewal process and consequently is given the task of responding to God’s self communication. The idea of the implication also points to Schrag’s view that the conversation hinges on the idea of self-implicature, that is, the subject himself is not the center of the conversation but is involved in the
entire process of the conversational activity which for the believer is the story of God’s self disclosure.

The implicit assumption of the concept of self-implicature in the field of dialogue moves the subject away from the notion of a decentralized subject understood as “heterarchical self” and “a mental substance” that dwells in a transcendental ego. In Schrag’s view, the subject is moved from the idea of the Cartesian monadic sphere of being that was considered a mere consciousness to the texturing of everyday life. In this understanding, the metaphors of life can be applied to the disclosure of the subject’s own life in order to permit an engagement in the unending conversation among the members of the community of believers. Willshire refers to this notion of utilization of the metaphors of life as Role Playing and Identity which is more effective in relationships than the maintenance of a monadic transcendental ego situated within an agency of an “I.”

In the same vein, Lonergan’s understanding of the subject in a religious sense opens the subject to the Other through his religious experience and conversion (Lonergan, 1988). Levinas situates the subject as “the accused standing before the Other” not as a monadic ‘I’ but as the compassionate ‘I’ who discovers his identity in response to a call from the Other. In this context, the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue seeks a communicative praxis that encourages members of the faith community to be open to the Other as it seeks to allow the various horizons of the revelatory event to open up through a process of dialogue. Embedding their sense of catholicity in the tradition of the Church which in itself is dialogic, members of the faith community are enabled to avail themselves of the religious narratives which give them their identity and define their understanding of themselves and their religious prejudices. Nelson Foote affirms the notion
of openness, noting that through identification as the sharing of identity, individual motives become social [community] values and in turn social values become individual motives.29

c. The Values of the Good News within the Context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue

The religious values of the Gospel message emerge as members of the faith community dialogue with each other in the hope that they will be challenged to help one another to discern the signs of the times. Further, it is through the communitarian encounters within a dialogic process that members of the faith community share their religious interests. Burke is often quoted as saying: “Insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so.”30 The religious identity of the individual within the community of believers does something radical to the existential phenomenon of the individual because it immerses him in a story that calls for a total appreciation of the existence of the Other and allows him to embrace the challenges emerging from the outpouring of “self” which serves as a crisis to the social identity of the subject. It also reflects the value of the parable of the Good Samaritan who saw the Other as calling him to responsibility. Thus, through a Praxis Religious Dialogue, the individual as both religious and social being is enabled to bring his experience of the Christian story embedded in the revelatory event to bear on the call to responsibility and in so doing, identify with the message of the revelatory event.

It is worth noting that in the context of the Praxis Religious Dialogue, individual identity is removed from politicization (Harold Lasswell)31 and contextualized within the Christian social, cultural, and celebrated story of the Good Samaritan. Here Burke reminds us that the individual as a subject does not begin from nowhere but from a tradition embedded in a story in
which he assimilates, if not all, some of it and uses that as a ground for pursuing his identification process. He notes: “However much the individual . . . may transform language for his special purposes, the resources with which he begins are “traditional,” that is: “social.” Over the years, the Church seemed to have reinforced its own Christian identity apart from society at large and other faith traditions. Until the Second Vatican Council, this situation created a wedge between Catholics and non-Catholics, a situation that resembles the notion of “identitarian” – a tendency to justify and reinforce one’s own self-gratification both as individuals and as collective homogeneous people. Catholics were seen as ‘the Christians,’ believers who possessed the truth of the Christian message. The new name of the community of believers in the Church- the “People of God”- as the Council called it, constitutes the “body of Christ” and by this definition, broadened the concept to include “other non-Catholic Churches.” Thus, for the Christian, his identity was defined as embodied in the story of God’s events that culminated in the event of Jesus, and whose message constitutes the Christian vision of society.

In order to help nurture this unique identity of the Christian, the Church is more and more encouraged to make use of all available avenues both in the Church and in the world to develop the personal humanity of the Christian that is reaching out to the story of God implicit in the revelatory event. This will mean, as in any organization, that the Church will endeavor to coordinate the interests of individuals within the Church to mobilize the energies towards their selective goals both in the Church and in the society in which they live. For the Christian, the goals are directed toward defining the Christian narrative within the Church to meet this historical moment. This idea points to the meaning of the Praxis Religious Dialogue, which is being made for the Church in order that it may attain its dialogic nature inherent in its mission.
The inherent crisis that emerges from the Church’s missionary activity cannot be understood as a negative element because it is to encourage the members in the community to reexamine themselves in the light of the Christian narrative within their present historical moment as they face their limitations. The reexamination of the metaphor of “self” in this context of the Christian story moves away from the subject as monad to a state of intersubjectivity to where the individual Christian grounds his being in events of revelation, that is, engaging God and each other in conversation. This nurturing is important in the life of the Church because even after the Second Vatican Council, some Catholics still feel alienated from the experience of the Christian story [because of the inability of the Church’s hierarchy to avail itself to the contemporary historical world of experience of the numerous Christian whom they are to shepherd]. As Schillebeeckx notes, “There can be no experience of revelation without socio-historical mediation . . .” and “Contemporary experiences have a hermeneutical significance with regard to the content of Christian experience and knowledge: that is, they help us to understand the content”,36 which in this work is the revelatory story.

The life of the Christian is neither completed nor defined by how much he embodies doctrinal teachings in his Christian life. The Christian life must be embedded in the experience of God’s self disclosure to him through the Church. In his experience with God through the Church, the crisis of life mediated through the Christian story opens a horizon of possibilities for members in the community to challenge themselves and each other through the articulation of their opinions as they keep the dialogue in process. Also, the challenges afford members of the believing community the opportunity to ask important questions such as “why” and “how” in reference to their finite nature so as to confront their daily dialogic encounters with their biblical narrative. This ground of engagement becomes, as Arnett and Arneson have noted, “the act of
real people in real life who are constantly making real choices that have concrete and importance for their own lives and the lives of those around them.”

When the Council initiated a process of dialogue within the Church, it was attempting to encourage the Church to examine its problematic dialogic nature and move away from an ecclesiastical culture grounded in unexamined communicative practices. The significance of this new process in the Church can be found in the work of Arnett and Arneson on community, who note that whenever a community recognizes the inappropriateness of their communicative practice within a given historical moment, it is time for it to move to a new ground of communicative praxis, which they term as *theory-informed action*, which is sensitive to the historical needs of a given era.

d. The Hierarchy and “Difference”

In the praxis context, people within a given era search for a new ground of communication, constantly guiding their interaction through questioning. Baxter and Montgomery have noted in this regard that praxis always involves social actors, a genuine situated social life, a historical moment, concrete practices, and knowing choices. However, these choices involve, according to the authors, dialectics, which point to some difficulties that may emerge within the interactive process with both metanarratives and the emerging crisis of the new evolving narratives. It is important to understand the emerging crisis as composed of both “fusion with” and “differentiation from” both centripetal and centrifugal forces in which the inherent competing voices reveal a crisis but a crisis that is eventually grounded in the search for acceptance and understanding. Frequently, the Church’s hierarchy silences individual theologians for their perspectives on new questions, but as Gregory Baum points out, “When
new ideas emerge, they are often articulated in an overstated manner, until a more moderate formulation is found.\textsuperscript{42} The dissecting and analysis of new ideas within any theological context always assumes some measure of \textit{la différence} but it does not mean that that theology is in opposition to the Church’s tradition. With time, as Baum points out, new theological grounds are opened in line with the Church’s teachings to further a more comprehensive and intelligible theological conversation. In the face of a theological crisis, it is hoped that the conversation will be continued to narrow the gap that usually surfaces so that partners in the conversation will willingly maintain openness toward one another. Buber reminds us that this relational gap which is potentially the ground, serves as the “between” that propels the conversation\textsuperscript{43} and it further serves as the real place and “bearer of what happens between men”\textsuperscript{44} who continuously construct their world view and which Clark and Holquist also term as “the world in between consciousness.”\textsuperscript{45} The Praxis Religious Dialogue understands this world of the between as a moment of communicative crisis because of the constant search for mutuality, understanding, and appreciation of both agreement and disagreement. Unfortunately, there are moments when one or a group may artificially create the crises but even when such artificial crises do happen within the Church, they must be dealt with in the context of compassionate dialogue rather meting out punishment.

In fact, Arnett and Arneson have argued that the problematic inherent in this communicative crisis can at times manifest itself when “one begins to manufacture crises where they do not really exist” and consequently could prompt meaninglessness in the situation being faced because people end up constructing their own life drama.\textsuperscript{46} The significance of the Praxis Religious Dialogue lies in its encouragement of people to make appropriate choices through dialogue whenever they are faced with communicative crisis by coming together in their
concrete historical situation. The community provides a counterbalance for the self. In a time of metanarrative crisis, it is important too that the Church not put too much emphasis on the “self” alone but on the self and other, a notion that underscores Buber’s notion of the between.\textsuperscript{47} The inherent dialectics of the “between” should be encouraged in the Church because it permits the interactants to adopt an interpersonal ethic that is informed by \textit{biblical story-informed-dialogue} because it responds to the ontological significance of an ethic of responsibility and mutual cooperation propelled by the habits of the heart and derived from the memory of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 29-37). Further, the explanation given by Arnett and Arneson regarding our communicative practices point us to a direction which Robert Bellah has also pointed out: that there is a need to meet the challenges involved in the relational struggle\textsuperscript{48} which the unforeseen crisis that may emerge in the relations in order to accommodate the flawed dialogic narratives which in the Church come from the old vision of dialogue. Bellah reminds us to have courage to assist in meeting and addressing our flawed narrative\textsuperscript{49} because they assist us in mending our broken covenants— which is acquired through our baptism in the Church – so that we can broaden our narrative horizons in the process of considering some of the significant questions that may arise from our struggles and which may be appropriate for the historical drama of our time\textsuperscript{50} as we seek the appropriate moments in being present for the Other.

Implicit in the Praxis Religious Dialogue model is the basic presupposition that the revelatory event calls us to be responsible for the Other amidst all the challenges we face in our day-to-day life experiences. The assumptions further remind us to sustain ourselves with the energies derived from the celebration of our communal re-enactment of the Eucharist so that we are capable of repairing and re-establishing the broken covenantal dialogue with each other in the faith community and the world around us. Dogmas and doctrines are important in a religious
community but they do not assist in the dynamics of the hermeneutics of everyday life and in a
given historical moment. Though they help to bind the community together as a people with a
common goal, they do not foster the historicality of the proclamation of the Gospel. Further,
doctrines may offer to the Christian a sense of privatized emotional feeling of salvific hope, but
they do not determine the unfolding of the revelatory event that possesses the content of hope
and salvation. Thus, for the Council, the old notion of a community’s sense of hope grounded in
dogmas was renewed to focus on the community’s sense of diverse interpersonal voices in which
the challenge to their Christian existential hope is brought to the test as they work toward the
sanctification of the world. The Council noted concerning the task of the People of God:

Established by Christ as a fellowship of life, Charity, and truth, it
is also used by Him as an instrument for the redemption of all, and
is sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the
salt of the earth.⁵¹

The progress of the Church, according to the Council, is how much it is willing to invest
in dialogue with the world to try and heal the broken experiences of humanity. Further, for the
Council the significance of the existence of the Church is not defined in its structure but in its
desire to avail itself to engage the world in dialogue, because as the Council noted, “she [the
Church] is firmly convinced that she can be abundantly and variously helped by the world in the
matter of preparing the ground for the gospel.”⁵²
e. The Church as the “People of God”

Pope Paul VI endeavored in his encyclicals and pastoral letters (Populorum Progressio, Octagessima Adveniens, Justice in the World, and Evangelii Nuntiandi) to confront the Church’s private conversation with the secular public discourse by inviting the world to share the unboundless dialogic riches buried in the Church over the centuries. In Populorum Progressio, for example, he addressed the economic disparities between the East and the West and especially in the developing countries, calling for equity in the distribution of the world’s wealth, noting:

We must repeat once more that the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the disposal of the poor nations. . . Besides, the rich world will be the first to benefit as a result. Otherwise, their continued greed will certainly call down on them the judgment of God and the wrath of the poor, with consequences no one can foretell.54

In this public engagement, the Pope criticized capitalist democracies because of the inequalities they create among the peoples of the world and called for equitable development across the board. In this call to charity, the Pope articulated Levinas’ notion of taking responsibility for the Other whose “very epiphany consists in soliciting us by his destitution in the face of the Stranger, the widow, and the orphan.”55 In a more significant way, the Pope in Octagesima Adveniens, further emphasized the importance of dialoguing with each other, especially among Christians, in order to construct genuine structures of dialogue that will be proportional to their situation for their development, charging that all had to be done in light of the gospel.56 The
implicit assumptions of this address point to the notion of solidarity and subsidiarity, which has been taken up in both encyclicals on the Social Teachings of the Church by Leo XIII and John XXIII. These assumptions became a beginning of dialogical ground for the Church to engage the world on matters that concerned humanity and relationship with different institutions. The encyclicals reinforce the fundamental assumptions of the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue, that as a Church that proclaims the Good News, it cannot estrange itself from the its inclusive mission of reaching out to all peoples.

The principles of solidarity and subsidiarity state *inter alia*, that we are all responsible for one another and that the idea of political and social decisions should be taken at the lowest level possible, consonant with good government. Paul VI’s encyclicals—*Progressio Populorum* and *Octagesima Adveniens* helped to throw light on the idea of solidarity, pointing out our duties and obligations in community, to society, and to the global community. However, the Pope did not spell out the “how” of bringing about the structuring of the duties and obligations, rather, the modus operandi was left to the various nations and dioceses around the world.

The explications of the Pope’s dialogue with the world and the Church can unfold when the performance of duties and obligations is driven by a sense of engaging each other in dialogue that fosters cooperation. The modalities of the Praxis Religious Dialogue model emphasize that dialogic engagement demands meeting each other in the historical moment of crisis. Viktor Frankl has noted that the only way to seek meaning is to listen; otherwise, we remain on the level of ontological blindness, that is, unable to recognize what is present or hear meaning in the existential moment. By listening, we discover meaning and by recognizing and understanding meaning, we learn to appreciate the existential moment of the Other. Otherwise, we will only seek security in the meaning of our routines which have the power to blind us to the existence of
the Other and the truth,” a thought he terms “an ontological blindness.” The Church as a People of God has the onus of responsibility in availing itself to interpersonal engagement as it engages the world in dialogue without certainty but with humility.

It is through the listening to the stories of others that we will understand the meaning of our own engagement with God in conversation. Nel Noddings (1991) and Robert Bellah (1985) also remind us again and again to listen attentively to the stories of others. The insight of Viktor Frankl calls the Church, especially the hierarchy, to be open to listening not only to those around them that they feel comfortable with but those who confront them on issues that the Church perceives as controversial, for it is through the crisis in the confrontations that existential meaning becomes meaningful and it enables “life to be lived in a particular circumstance with thoughtful and meaningful” attention. The Praxis Religious dialogic model calls attention to the reality that life must be lived at times through crisis and becomes meaningful when it lived both in action and thought.

Some members in the Church may be caught in a crisis because of the movement made by the Vatican II in its call to renewal because they have accepted the previous patterns of the Church’s preconciliar position on dialogue. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model invites persons with that view to embrace the new horizon through a sense of uncovering the meaning of life. In the market place of the Church where the revelatory story is constantly unfolding, one needs to be flexible in one’s manner of “seeing” through encounter with many diverse voices. The notion of a “sense of place” that offers security can be misleading and must be interpreted within the context of the dynamic process of a guiding narrative that sustains a more complex and meaningful life. The Praxis Religious Dialogue offers a message embedded in Vatican II’s work by encouraging the Church to understand disruption of the status quo as a process of
transformation directed toward the improvement of some structures in the Church. It encourages a message of hope and compassion which are relevant to the growth of the Church and needed because they afford an opportunity for the Church to cast away the old “blinders that have confused routine and power with genuine meaning” of life lived through crisis.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue model seeks to offer a renewal within the historical moment driven by the onus of our daily reflections on life and its responsibility that points us to our dialogic engagement with the Other forty years after the Second Vatican Council and especially in the twenty-first century. The perspectives on dialogic engagement laid down by the Council go back to the periods when the Social Teachings of the Church were published as expressions of the Church’s willingness to engage the world in dialogue by laying down the principles of “solidarity” and “subsidiarity” (Leo XIII, Pius XI, and John XXIII). These teachings opened a conversation with national governments, communities, and further promoted and facilitated dialogue between employers and employees, but further pursuance of the modalities of the conversation fell short of a real praxis dialogic engagement as the Church returned to unreflective practices appropriate for an earlier historical moment. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model invites the Church to a new historical moment driven by the onus of our daily reflections on life and responsibility involved in our dialogic engagement with the Other in the Church.

The Church needs the understanding of the given historical moment as permitting a constant renewal of the Church through constant religious experience and conversion, so that members in the faith community can accept the crisis inherent in the conversion process as they attempt to define their daily experiences through biblical wisdom, guided by the signs of the times. The definition of their daily experiences is made possible through their sense of corporate
religious narrative, the revelatory narrative depicted in one of the most powerful parables, the
parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 29-37). To remain in the assumption that ‘good life’ is
lived only for me solely is a therapeutic way of avoiding tension which is also an illusion that
invites problems for the Church. The recent crisis of pedophilia in the Church, especially in the
West, is a clear indication of a life lived for “me” alone. Viktor Frankl argued against this kind of
comfortable therapeutic living, noting that “we discover meaning [life] in suffering, love, and
work”\(^{67}\) and “we each have a responsibility to look for meaning in the daily acts of life.”\(^{68}\) The
neglect and isolation of priests and religious contribute toward isolationism that leads to selfish
life-style.

Further, the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue calls for the acceptance of competing
stories within the Christian narrative because each of these stories points us to a part of the same
ontological and existential meaning within a given human story. This acceptance takes as its
point of departure the biblical story that enables a believing community to avail itself of the
possibility of minimal agreement on values (Bok, 1995), especially in the area of dialogue. By
adopting a minimal agreement stance in order to engage in a transparent dialogue, the
community of believers will be calling into memory the acceptance of the Other whose presence
in the dialogic encounter calls for our attention as exemplified in the parable of the Good
Samaritan. This dialogic paradigm also offers a counternarrative to the narrative of monologic
dialogue that has been practiced by the Church over the centuries. In contrast, it is the dialogic
paradigm that allows itself to be driven by the baseline principles of the gospel which point to
the notion of ‘compassion and healing’\(^{69}\) which also permit dialogue as we avail ourselves
willingly to the other as exemplified in the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 29-37). The
unfolding story of revelation calls each member of the community to responsibility, and in this
vein, the hierarchy of the Church is called upon to intensify its search for the silent sufferers because it defines their authority as that of service.

f. The “Tripod of Meaning”

The notion of power inherent in the episcopate and the presbyterate derives its meaningful exercise in what Viktor Frankl calls the “tripod of meaning” which is tied to concrete everyday action. He argues that “life can be made meaningful in threefold way: first, though what we give to life (our responsive responsibility towards creation); second, by what we take from life (our ability to see make difference between virtues and vices and the values we attach to our positive choices); and third, through stand we take toward the unfairness of life which may stare us in the face (an curable disease). For Frankl, these three components are necessary for a complete meaningful existence and though we may not approach each with the same fervor, we may experience one or all the three in life. In the life of the Church, this tripod of meaning is inescapable. The Praxis Religious Dialogue thus reminds us to forge ahead as a community whose life events are not static but embedded in the unfolding events of the revelatory story. We need to be attached to a particular goal or success not to the point of diminishing our performance, but rather in order to focus on the task of giving, receiving and standing against the inevitable.

The irony of the Church’s dialogic practices is embodied in its inability to transform its own administrative structures, an issue addressed by the Second Vatican Council when it called on the Church to institute different commissions and councils to engage in dialogue with the outside world. Many of the commissions and councils were constituted but were not allowed to be actively involved in the deliberations of significant issues from parish to diocesan levels.
Christopher Lasch (1979) reminds us that such a notion leads to exclusion and the irony of exclusion leads to an intentional protection of the elite’s status which further creates a culture of narcissism.\textsuperscript{72} Lasch notes that the culture of narcissism terminates in protectionism of the interest of the few who dominate the others without regard to the voice of the community.\textsuperscript{73} While the Church’s central administration constantly seeks to protect the Church from outside interference, it has greatly diminished the Church’s ability to be involved in a praxial engagement with its own members and Christians of other faith traditions. Within this culture of protectionism, Lasch reminds us that this kind of culture of protectionism is derived from a closed-up culture typical of a Western culture driven by men of upper-middle classes whose concerns are limited to their own narrow interests which are extended to the larger community.\textsuperscript{74} This “middle class” concept characterized the preconciliar Church, described as a “perfect society” and marked by clericalism, juridicism, and triumphalism.\textsuperscript{75} Its remnants still persist in the Church after forty years of Vatican II, pointing to a narcissistic behavior which Vatican II sought to replace with a more inclusive Church.\textsuperscript{76}

The Praxis Religious Dialogic paradigm reminds the Church of the significance of adopting maintenance of “minimal values” as a way of maintaining the roots of the conversation. Arnett points out that in a world of competing narratives, it is important while maintaining one’s ground to limit the errors of a rigid narrative and the roots of self-centered decision-making in which there are no greater criteria than “me.”\textsuperscript{77} Praxis Religious Dialogue thus seeks to permit openness in dialogue that has a hallmark of sincerity and authenticity based on the ontological and existential values of the gospel being preached rather than on the interest of the elites whose narrow protected interests are extended to deprive the dialogic expressions and interests of the sensus fidei. Building a community of dialogue on the values of the gospel requires working out
the onus that the “Other” places on each member, for when the notion of the inclusion of the
other is forgotten, we place on ourselves an innocent form of treachery which eventually calls
into question the foundational truth of a community. Glen Tinder reminds us that “In truth, the
idea that human beings are fundamentally good and innocent is surprisingly treacherous. . . We
do not simply experience frustrations in searching for community. We come face-to-face with
our finitude, our mortality, and our radical imperfection.”78

Prior to Vatican II, the Church hardly admitted its fragility as a human institution while it
laid emphasis on its divine component, always believing in itself as an indestructible structure
that has weathered the tide over the centuries. The recent crisis of pedophilia by ordained
ministers in the Church, especially in the United States and Europe, unveiled the weakness of its
superstructure, revealing the inherent misnomer which has remained hidden over the bygone
years. The voice of the ordinary Christian, unheard from a formal perspective over the years,
suddenly found a public forum to articulate its standpoint by calling for a resignation and
conviction of the ordained.

g. Vatican II and the Notion of “Community”

The “Mystical Body” concept inherent in the work of Vatican II reminds us that the
notion of “Church” embodies the idea of the “People of God” who form the sensus fidei of the
Church. It is therefore important that the focus of the Church not be displaced to exclude the laity
but rather integrate the faithful in the collective existence as we all search to develop our abilities
within the revelatory event, because whenever a few excludes the larger community from which
they derive their authority and voice, the whole community fails to achieve its dynamic growth.
R. H. Wiebe has described for us the potential destruction inherent in the practice of a
community when it is unaware of the dark side of exclusion. Inclusion is necessary for insights of multiple voices. Praxis Religious Dialogue thus focuses on the requirement of the Christian story that calls for a deep religious experience and conversion in order to for the Church to allow grace to be at work in each community member. The struggle to allow the other to “be” always remains a challenge, but it is within the challenge that the values of the gospel as demonstrated in the story of the Good Samaritan come alive. As Bonhoeffer once pointed out, ignoring the demand or the cost of community is nourished by “cheap grace” which warrants false hope, and which Arnett terms “a painless ideal unlikely to survive the inevitable difficulties that confront a people.”

Praxis Religious Dialogue does not diminish the discourse of the Church but attempts to move it from a solely private discourse to the public domain in order to encourage the Church to accept diversity in its interaction with members of the faith community. It is in the Church’s interest as it strive to grow in the dialogic field to realize that the movement from an esoteric private discourse to a public discourse helps it to welcome views that may be contrary to its own. It is a way to humility for the Church; otherwise it remains in “bad faith” because it will remain focused on itself. J. Paul Satre frames for us that there is significant humility and magnanimity in accepting both sides of our claim, that is, the constructive as well as the destructive, for the simple reason that there are ontological dangers inherent in lying to oneself. Such self-deception is a dangerous stance in any community. Thus, Sartre reminds us in Being and Nothingness that “bad faith” acts as an unknowing lie to oneself that forms the unity of one’s belief system and Arnett reminds us that both secular and religious authors call us to lessen “bad faith.”

Praxis Religious Dialogue thus points the Church to the importance of aspiring to achieve transparency and lessening of “bad faith” while it embraces discourse with what it may
understand as opposing views. Both Sartre and Bonhoeffer offer us two warnings, that is, the demands of community are high and therefore care must be taken to open it to a wider context of other perspectives in order to allow it to grow and accept others. In light that a community both “includes” and “excludes,” these two metaphors are important elements in the Praxis Religious Dialogic model. In his Essay, “Existential Homelessness: A Contemporary Case for Dialogue,” Arnett argues that the feeling of emptiness in a community is real especially among white middle class men, and Dolores Tanno also has noted that being on the outside of someone else’s idealistic project is the reality of outcast people in many different times and places. The Church is surely no different; indicators of concern among members of the Church in the United States points to the need for greater inclusion. In fact, in recent letter addressed to the Sixteenth Annual Dinner of American Cardinals, the “One Catholic Voice for Action” addressed the Cardinals besieging them to adhere to the recent address by Pope John Paul II to the American Catholic Bishops in which John Paul maintained that the both bishops and priests should observe a measure of “appreciation of the distinct gifts and apostolate of the laity that will naturally lead to a strengthened commitment to fostering among the laity a sense of shared responsibility for the life and mission of the Church.” In the same vein, Thomas P. Rausch has argued:

Though the council rediscovered the dignity of the vocation of the baptized, the Church is still struggling to find ways to fully express the laity’s share in the mission of the Church. The scandal of sexual abuse by clergy has made clear once again how little input they actually have in the Church’s decision-making process. The idea of the autonomous, monarchical bishop, accountable only to Rome, has more to do with developments in the late Middle Ages than with
anything intrinsic to the office. Donald Cozzens’ expression, a “still feudal Church,” is too often accurate. Finding effective ways to give laity and clergy some participation in the Church’s decision-making processes are clearly one of the crucial issues the Church faces today.88

Rausch argues that the lay faithful in the Church must take a longer view of how decisions are ultimately made in the Church’s life and embrace a gradualist approach in their search for a dialogic process. “Structural change, observes Rausch, “takes time; it does not happen in a moment.”89

Rausch’s observations points to the old prevalent situation in the Church whereby those who see themselves as being inside the community are often people of influence and power. They are often the elite, who govern according to their dictates and what they deem appropriate and what does not measure to their standards of their notion of community. For those who “assume this privileged position, the term community is a shield of protection for their elite standards and viewpoints.”90 Thus, Rausch proposes three models of inclusion in the Church by the laity, maintaining that first, the lay faithful should “call for dialogue with the bishop on local levels,” and he calls this approach the “Parallel Structures.”91 He conceives that this approach will lead to the idea that in each diocese bishops would enter into dialogue with them. Second, he argues that the lay faithful should “function in local dioceses along the lines of an advocacy group, . . . like a political action committee,” that is, “sponsor lectures, seminars and public meetings for interested Catholics . . .,” and terms this model the “Advocacy Group Model.”92 Third, he notes that members should strive to become actively involved and engaged at every level of the local Church, making themselves available at parish councils and diocesan offices, render their service to diocesan committees and advisory boards and asked to be delegates to
diocesan synods and pastoral councils. Through these pastoral engagements, they would have a hand in shaping policy from within. While the Praxis Religious Dialogic model admits that a community involves both the elite and the non-elite, the elite according to Arnett, on one hand, speak of the community in terms of “my” and “our” in order to exclude those who are not considered as outside the elite community. M. Parenti has also maintained that the elite have the “material, institutional, and ideological resources” that keep “us” in power and give “us” a cohesive sense of community. On the other hand, those outside the plentiful resources of the elite are often unable to be part of the community and participate in it as members because the elite excludes them from becoming part of it in order to keep them where they are and from securing power that might disrupt their way of life and their privilege position in the community hierarchy. J. Ober, too, examines the way in which elites supported by resources of wealth, education, status, and most often the nobility of birth and behavioral style, attempt to maintain power by downplaying the notion of achievement. What is being expressed here by the author is maintained in the Church where the notion of the “faithful” lives at the behest of the hierarchy in the Church where they are at the receiving end of the command and instructions concerning the ethos of the Church.

II. Conceiving Dialogism and Dialectics in Community

a. Inclusion and Exclusion

The Second Vatican Council conceived the *communion fidelium* as constitutive of the Church, that is, the “new People of God,” and by designating the Church as “new,” the postconciliar notion advanced the image of the Church to emphasize the human and communal view of the Church, a community that is no more enclosed but open to the world. Focusing on
this image, the Council departed from the old notion of an institutional and hierarchical Church as perfect society and at the same time mystical in its spiritual sense and yet was dominated by clericalism and triumphalism. Further, the emphasis placed on the concept of “new” implied a call for an overall mutual inclusion of priests and the faithful within the decision-making process of the Church.\textsuperscript{97} The inclusion of a few (bishops and usually a few priests) in the Church as pertained to the old understanding of the Church has created a chasm between the hierarchy, priests, and majority of the faithful.\textsuperscript{98}

The metaphor of a community offers a conceptual challenge because of the notion of “identity,” which Cheney argues embraces the idea of “similarity and difference” existing in an ongoing dialectical tension.\textsuperscript{99} We are thus charged, from this conception, with building our differences out of unique combinations of “samenesses,” and linking ourselves with particular groups.\textsuperscript{100} Within the Church, members are asked to derive their sense of self from the Church’s identity. The bureaucratic image associated historically with the Church, according W. J. M. MacKenzie, from the Enlightenment to the Italian Renaissance periods,\textsuperscript{101} emphasizes the dialectical “pole” of sameness in the sense that the individual who assimilates the Catholic identity is called upon to surrender his “will and intellect.”\textsuperscript{102} This understanding shows how too much emphasis on sameness, when located within a context of control and submission, brings about a sense of exclusion rather than inclusion. Tinder describes these metaphors of “inclusion” and “exclusion” in the sense that “a community is often a tragic ideal, embraced by many and inclusive of few.”\textsuperscript{103} He further notes that “The unattainability of community seems to me a crucial and neglected truth. It accounts for the dangerous character of the idea.”\textsuperscript{104}

Thus, the notion of the inclusive few derailed the sense of community and in the context of the Church, it an unwarranted idea because of the sense of “Church” as community which,
according to the notion of Vatican II, possesses divine element that propels it toward a goal beyond history. The Council situates the Church as a community within the orientations of pastoral, Christocentric, biblical, historical and eschatological. The sense of the Council’s understanding reminds us of the importance of discouraging exclusivity within the larger Church while it strives to draw attention to involving every community member in its mission. In fact, the Council noted among other things that it is important to draw attention to the general picture of the Church’s mission and within this context “authority is therefore viewed in terms of service rather than domination.” This notion expressed by the Council points to the underlying impetus for the Praxis Religious Dialogic model, which observes that the shared meaning from which a community makes sense is through the emergence of concrete happenings that take place within the interactive process of the people who form the community.

The task of the community of People of God is therefore to uncover the meaning present in the events of all the people rather than the few. Our task as a religious community is to focus on the events that are right for the community as a whole so as not to miss the meaningfulness of the sense of community and human life in general. In the face of the inevitable, it is the sense of community that drives members to stand together with equal intensity to the inevitable challenges. Within this perspective, Frankl challenges the Church to respect the human freedom embedded in each member of the community because it is through the vitality of human agency and the ability of a member of the community to choose a standpoint that enhances the implications of the event of life. Praxis Religious Dialogue calls for a community that seeks to uncover its finiteness in order to discover freedom within the inevitable, for as Frankl again reminds us, “we can [together] join the search and “discover” meaning that is particular to a
given existential moment.” It is through the discovering of the meaning in a given historical moment that the community begins to lend support to each other through caring and nurturing.

b. The Dialectical Nature of the Praxis Religious Dialogue and the Notion of “Community”

The Praxis Religious Dialogic model recognizes the frictions inherent in the struggle to uncover the finiteness of the community’s existence. As communities strive toward the “good,” the realities of coexistence challenge “unsubstantiated optimism” and “utopianism” because it is through the messiness of life that meaning is given to human experience. This view portrays an ironic view of a community and reveals the “unity of contraries” embedded in the sense of community. Buber offers a communicative view that focuses on the “unity of contraries.” He frames for us a communication ethic that rests on the contrary nature of life; an ethical dimension capable of holding high a community’s moral claims about the significance of “human togetherness” while concentrating on a political realism that is capable of acknowledging the inclusive and exclusive nature of human community. The Church possesses this symbolic nature of the community, the divine and the human, and thus it makes sense to bring to bear on the whole community the religious realism of acknowledging the essence of the Church as the “mother of all.”

It is also important in acknowledging the realism of a sense of community to recognize that those who form the Church (the People of God) have gone through a diverse historical experience since the birth of the Church (Acts 2: 13), and that history has gone through different communicative experiences. These three central metaphors of the agrarian era, industrial, and postmodern or information era inform us how our sense of community has changed.
Communities in the agrarian era had a sense of place, a locale. The metaphor of place ties the members of the community to the land (Bruggermann, 1977, Arnett and Arneson, 1999) where their myths, stories, and narratives grounded them in their historical, traditional, and cultural beliefs which gave them a sense of belongingness. The transition into the industrial period disintegrated the agrarian community and sent members off to far distant lands into the urban areas, displacing the homeland and their sense of belongingness with a sense of self. The reality of myth, story and narrative was lost to a sense of emotivism because of loss of security.

In the information era, structures of metanarrative have declined and in place of narrative, we see a primary focus on the self. Arnett and Arneson have explained in this context that while the search for wisdom in all three periods took different turns with different perspectives, there is still the need to assist the postmodern era with dialogically informed stories that we tell one another. They note that in working to bring dialogue especially to the postmodern decline of metanarrative, our efforts must be guided by our sense of the historical moment that invites dialogic civility. The Church as a community therefore can help to communicate a sense of place, self, and the sharing of the stories emerging from our biblical faith. For these stories to carry meaning for community, they must be dialogically informed stories. When people are constantly informed in a one-way communication formula, they have no chance to offer their own stories for comparison and to contribute to the community’s ongoing story, and thereby lose the chance to engage in serious religious conversation.

Further, considering Tinder’s notion of community, the task for the Church is to nurture and nourish the community of the People of God and recognize that there are always dialectic elements in community relations. Though these dialectical tensions often lead to mistakes, these inevitabilities should not lead to ignoring community members through silence or neglect. Such
response stands contrary to the encouragement that is to characterize our attitude toward one another as Christians. In fact, the Church is reminded of this notion as exemplified in Jesus words to Peter “Simon, . . . I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and once you have recovered, you in turn must strengthen your brothers” (Lk. 22: 32 – 33). This idea of encouragement through care is what gives the community a sense of hope and drives it to focus on the mission of the Church.

The missionary activity of the Church is therefore to form a community that looks ahead with a sense of hope that enables the members to grapple with the emerging difficulties and demands of everyday life in order to depart from the often “oxymoronic tension” inherent in the false notion of commonality, optimism, difference, and idealism. Buber calls our attention to the unification and vivification of the community’s life through the “unity of contraries” which admits different voices and opinions in the Praxis Religious Dialogue. Buber explains in a piece concerning the dialogue between Israel and the Arabs:

I do not make a basic distinction between what is right morally and what is right politically. . . One has to sacrifice temporary benefits for future existence.

Buber therefore recognizes that dialogue rests on allowing the other “to be” through the sacrifice of the self.

In this context, the community should be encouraged to nurture their Christian beliefs in the sharing of their biblical story which permits mutual nourishment and support for growth into maturity with the biblical narrative as the guiding principle. The onus does not rest only on the
laity (the faithful) but on all those who are baptized into the Church, which includes bishops, priests, religious, and laity alike.

The task inherent in the sharing of the biblical story reflects the intense dialectics which also calls for a multivocal participation, for through the dialectics, that the Church finds its voice among the many competing biblical stories and metanarratives in this historical moment. The Church will encounter difficulties as it struggles to find its voice within a concatenating, polyphonic world. Dialectics accepts the existence of multiple voices; Mikhail Bakhtin points out that this inevitability within dialogism should be understood as a way of engaging the other in a conversation that opens up a wide variety of issues that can lead to a consensus ground.117 In explaining the notion of dialogism, Bakhtin notes that the notion of our relational dialectics has been “gradually and slowly wrought out of”118 the foundational and imagined dialogues because of postmodernist idea of metanarratives.

However, Bakhtin does not dismiss the postmodernist’s stance of seeing all the “mishmash” in social life but steers towards a multivocal interplay of centripetal and centrifugal voices. This notion points us to the direction of the difficulty the Church is experiencing with postmodernism because the postmodernist dismisses the autonomous and totalizing view of metanarratives. The Church does not admit other views, a standpoint which points toward Stewart’s idea of a monadic, rational subject, contrary to the understanding of humans as ‘beings-in-relation’119 which involves dialectic voices. Thus, Bakhtin understands dialogue as an enactment of communication, which admits both centripetal and centrifugal flux of interaction. He terms this understanding as a chronotopic which is distinct from monologue.120 Monologic dialogue commands, objectifies, and demands a subdued voice in the relational encounter, attenuating the dialectic flux which can open other avenues in the conversation. The type of
dialectics that Bakhtin argues for is not reduced to simple and mechanistic dialectics experienced in relationships like openness versus closedness, autonomy versus connection, certainty versus novelty.

Both Bakhtin and Stewart contend that dialectic contradictions must be understood in terms of “complex overlapping, domains of centrifugal forces juxtaposed with centripetal forces.” Further, they point out that in every relationship, there is a dynamic opposing association that promotes an ongoing conversation and consequently permitting change. In addition, their observation is highlighted by the notion that social interactions always admit polyphones that involve multiple, valid voices that represent different perspectives, no matter the issues being engaged. The views of the authors are significant for the paradigm of Praxis Religious Dialogue because the missionary activity of the Church encounters and invites cooperation of diverse cultures and their varied cultural systems for interaction.

Praxis Religious Dialogue admits the various complexities of opinions inherent in any dialogue, especially in religious dialogue that seeks mutual cooperation on scriptural definitions and doctrines formulated by theologians. It seeks to depart from monologic type of dialogue which approaches communication from a one-sided univocal process. The departure from monologic dialogue rests on the assumption that monologic dialogue focuses on “sameness” and centripetal elements. The Praxis Religious Dialogue, however, involves the admission of multiplicity of competing voices and both centripetal and centrifugal elements which propel the dynamics of the ongoing conversation to encounter other opinions as an exploratory ground for mutual consensus. It also considers the monologic univocal dialogic practice of the Church as a practice that impedes progress within dialogic interaction. The monologic unidirectional consistency of dialogic process constitutes a fixation with the individual as the centre of analysis.
to the neglect of the other. In fact, Bakhtin emphasizes that a unidirectional stance in dialogue reduces the other to “merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness” whose involvement “could change everything in the world of my consciousness.”

By emphasizing the significance of multivocal inclusion within a dialogic encounter, Bakhtin points to the direction of a Praxis Religious Dialogue which calls for a multivocal inclusion in dialogue, a stance important within the Church, which is commissioned to heal through dialogue. The metaphor of healing in dialogue rests on the injunction that the Church is called to bring sight to the blind, freedom to captives and announce the Good News to the poor, and announce the year of favor (Isaiah 62). These activities are not achieved through a unidirectional unitary mode of dialogue but through the recognition of the other as the wounded, the captive, the poor (Lk. 10: 29 - 37) whose voice needs to be included in the religious dialogue.

Within this context, the story of the Good Samaritan becomes all the more imperative for the Church’s missionary activity because the metaphor of the voice of the wounded calls on the Church for recognition and responsibility. The monologic practice of dialogue is evident in the Church’s dissemination of encyclicals and pastoral letters which assumes a unidirectional formula with an intense determination to proclaim the Good News. This practice does not encourage dialogue. John Shotter reminds us that a monologic practice only promotes “deafness to the interplay of voices” because no other voices are included.

It is plausible to point out that the paradigm of Praxis Religious Dialogue does not completely invalidate the practice of monologic dialogue in the history of the Church. Rather, it takes into consideration the different aspects emerging from the different counterpoints. The permeating of countervailing voices, according to Baxter and Montgomery, points us to the fact that the emerging of countervailing voices underscore the dualistic thinking necessary for
dialogue because of the acknowledgement and the expression of simple and the static polarities anchored in single dimensional voice. The characterization of dualistic dialogical practice has not been the stance of the Church’s relational and hierarchical structure in its interactive encounters with members of the Church.

The Praxis Religious Dialogue suggested by this work affirms the shift from the dualistic expressions in which one polarity overrides the other emanating from an objectification to an interplay of all the opposing forces inherent in the dialectical nature of dialogue. Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism is foundational to the paradigm of Praxis Religious Dialogue in its relational aspects because it calls for an acceptance of the individual within a relational dialectics which drives the Praxis Religious Dialogue. The individual as a socially constructed and ecclesially formed person is a subject of multiple interplay of relationships within the dialogical process.

c. The “Messiness” of Dialogue

It is in light of these assumptions that the Praxis Religious Dialogue invites the Church to appreciate and understand the multiple perspectives of communicative events within the community called the People of God. Praxis Religious Dialogue also involves situating the life of the believing community within the larger definition of life as an ongoing and undeterminable chain of events, always becoming, changing, and transforming itself and its environment while not allowing ossification of its vital fabric. The process is explicated by Baxter and Montgomery: “There are no ideal goals, no ultimate endings, no elegant end states of balance. There is only an indeterminate flow, full of unforeseeable potential that is realized in interaction.” They point to the messiness of dialogue which never emerges as a methodological process, but as a process that is constant motion in an unceasing swing, like a pendulum, through time and history. It is
within this notion that the model Praxis Religious Dialogue understands itself. The Praxis Religious Dialogue is offered to the Church as a model of dialogue with its members and Christians of other faith traditions because it points to and affirms the Church’s very existence as involved in a “messier” missionary activity that calls for a kinosic attitude for the sake of the Other.

In the past, theologians, historians, canonists, and other Church members have been silenced for criticizing the Church but later some of these prominent academics have been called back to perform their duties. In his most famous study of individual responses to organizational problems, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Albert O. Hirschman, has noted that the challenge of voice, or open criticism of an organization is favored or accepted when (a) the dissenter has some degree of loyalty to the organization, and (b) when the dissenter is perceived as being very loyal to merit a hearing. “Voice,” as the articulation of a special interest requires a “blending of apparent contradictions” on one hand, the dissenter must express his or her view so that organizational leaders know and can be responsive to what the person or group seeks. . .” 129

The Catholic Church as transnational and bureaucratic organization has over the years been successful in engaging in the management of multiple identities but it has fallen short of allowing the community members to dialogue with its management team. In fact, in the year 1150, St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote to the Pope by emphasizing: “Your power is not in possessions, but in the hearts of men,”130 which in the fullness of time and within this historical moment, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model is reminding the Church. The metaphor of power in the biblical sense is about service which in turn calls for the humility to prostrate itself for the sake of the weak.
III. The Church and the Face of the Other

The event of the awakening of the Church, pointed to by the Second Vatican Council, invites the co-presence of the Other in whose face is the trace of the God proclaimed by the Church. The Church, by virtue of its very existence, has no other choice but to recognize and accept its subjectivity not as the supreme consciousness of the Cartesian tradition in which the identity of “I” gains primacy over the identity of its object, but rather as in constant transformation into an accusative “me” in order to hear the cry of the Other, who invites the Church to accept him in dialogue and to take responsibility for him. The invitation departs from the usual understanding of paternalism which characterizes the relational encounters between bishops, priests, and the laity and thrusts the Church into a sphere of Praxis Religious Dialogue in which the dialectics emerging in the conversation take place on a narrow ridge and opens a horizon of dialogic possibilities, embedding the relation in the historical moment. The missionary activity of the Church designates the depth of the Church’s subjectivity not as an “I” but as a “me” because of the comprehension of the infinite as the basis for the Church’s missionary activity that is encapsulated in the parable of the Good Samaritan, a search for the metaphorically wounded member of the community. The wounded, whose presence commands the Samaritan to break the barriers of culture, race, ethnicity, and religious inhibitions, transcends traditional religious barriers to the emerging self of the Other. The social and religious faith of the Samaritan calls for a reformulation of the principles of practice of dialogue within the Church. Both elements invite the Church to retrospective reinvention of its structures to embrace a well informed dialogic structure that allows freedom in the conversational process.

Arnett points out, “Stories need to guide us as we listen and respond to their insight as well as responding to the needs of the historical moment between us.” The Praxis Religious
Dialogue invites the voice of the Other whose presence actually calls the subject to responsibility. Within this model, the Church is invited to move from the stance of “a technician of goodness” who follows the logical stages of performing duties toward the stance of an “engineering” organization that adapts to change on behalf of its members. No one is born a Christian but one becomes a Christian through the learning of religious processes that engage others in constructing each other’s religious identity in the likeness of Christ. Anna Marie Aagaard succinctly explains:

Such reconstruction of community “carries with it the vision of a human belonging more comprehensive than any existing form of human connectedness, race, kindred or imperium. It neither competes with nor merely blesses existing relations, but relativizes them all.”

Rowan Williams, in On Christian Theology, has also observed in the same light that “[i]ts relevance [reconstructing Community] lies precisely in its difference from existing patterns of human relations and power. . . . The Church, in other words, proclaims and struggles to realize a “belonging together” of persons in community in virtue of nothing but a shared belonging with or to the risen Christ.” As a community, therefore, the Church cannot maintain a lineal division of members and at the same time refers to itself as a community of believers. What make the Church distinct is not its doctrines and dogmas but the struggle to transcend the boundaries of secular structural realisms that often become hindrance to both human and spiritual development. This process takes place through dialogue. “Among the gentiles it is the
kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. With you this must not happen. No, the greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves” (Lk. 22: 25-26). The metaphor of the servant points to each member of the community of believers who form the community of the People of God. It is the servant who serves as an example to the others; and it is the servant whose rights ought to be recognized just as the others.

By affirming the other’s rights and recognizing the ground of dialogue, the philosophical commitment to a “dialogic oxymoron” comes into play because the notion points the Church to the recognition of the significance of the biblical story and the awareness of the limitations of its jurisprudence. In this regard, Arnett and Arneson explain

A narrative guides; a technician follows a snapshot, a static picture, failing to understand the lived tradition and story.

As we work to assist persons in communication, my hope is for an understanding of narrative that (a) calls more for cautious conviction than ideological certainty, (b) calls more for accountability rooted in compassion than the assurance of the “true believer,” and (c) calls more for a willingness to see the person as necessary not sufficient, recognizing the complexity and ambiguity of the narrative guiding one’s actions. The hope is that the person in dialogue with a substantive narrative would not fall prey to what Jacques Elul has called the danger of the 20th century – a technique mentality.
Arnett and Arneson point out in the above argument that there is a need for personal, communitarian and institutional understanding of the guiding narrative of a community based on the conviction that people’s lives would be rooted in hope. The same conviction runs through the argument in the Lonerganian assertion of religious experience and conversion which is also a lifelong process of struggle to understand the guiding narrative that prompts the believer to live in the conviction of hope and not despair. The call for religious experience and conversion is also in line with the Council’s direction to the Church to be in constant renewal in the sense of opening up to a more holistic view of the human person who becomes a Christian in order to belong to a religious community called People of God. The Praxis Religious Dialogue model therefore seeks to invite the Church to understand that as new and more adequate insights of the human person unfold, theological formulations would have to be adapted to the emerging dynamics of human understanding. This model also attempts to reclaim the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and proposes a conception of dialogue worthy of new understandings of the human person that stem from different philosophical narratives that move away from a strict Thomistic and Cartesian understanding of “being.” Furthermore, the Praxis Religious Dialogue formulates its conceptions in conjunction with the understandings from Lonerganian view of the Council’s motivations for the Church to engage in an informed praxial religious dialogue.

While the Second Vatican Council did not spell out the kind of dialogue that the Church should adopt, it emphasized that bishops need to “approach men, seeking and fostering dialogue with them. These conversations . . . ought to be distinguished for clarity of speech as well as for humility and gentleness so that truth may always be joined with charity and understanding with love. Likewise they should be characterized by due prudence allied, however, with that trustfulness which fosters friendship and thus is naturally disposed to bring about a union of
The call is made on the grounds of the biblical narrative which evolves from the narrative of Revelation, which grounds, as the guiding principle, the proclamation of the gospel and underscores the significance of the nature of the Church as dialogic in character. Thus, in the document on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio), the Council asserted that the call to dialogue with Christians of other faith traditions “is more than the opening of a door; new ground has been broken” which also implied a call to action. In fact it stressed that . . . all are called to dialogue according to their ability . . . This is a call to action. And one is always to remember the essential thing: a change of heart.” The call to action and a change of heart is driven by a religious experience and conversion in order to fall in love with God and the Other, a notion that runs through Lonergan’s theological anthropology and which is also driven by the Praxis Religious Dialogue model. The praxis religious model grounds the call to dialogue in new hopes and promises of transparency driven by respect and cooperation embedded in dialogic civility which Arnett and Arneson, arguing from a Buberian tradition, asserts as finding “meaning between people”. The test for an authenticity within the call to dialogue by the Council can only become a reality when the Church situates its invitation within a Praxis Religious Dialogue that admits “a willingness to be in communication with the other in the given historical moment.”

The Praxis Religious Dialogue takes the Church away from faculty psychology toward a more holistic approach of the human person in view of the narrative of revelation which forms the foundations of the Gospel proclaimed by the Church. In order for the Church to rediscover its intrinsic nature and maintain credence with its own members and the outside world, the Praxis Religious Dialogue model invites it to embrace its call to responsibility by becoming open to other competing voices and challenging itself to discern the signs of the times in order to focus
its attention on the development of the human person. Further, by becoming open and moving towards the totality of development of the human person within the dialogic engagement, the Church departs from the notion of “cheap grace” to the demands of community that are nourished by the narrative that fosters the between of the historical moment and the Church.

IV. Theological Dialogue within the Story of Revelation

In light of the historicality of the narrative of revelation, the effectiveness of theology in the Church must be directed toward what Saracino has pointed out as “otherness and justice.” In this sphere, the Church needs to rely on the spirit of discernment through the sensus fidei of the People of God. The intent here is not to deny the great efforts made by the Church over the centuries, particularly in the areas of social teachings. Such efforts are seen in Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical Rerum Novarum (The Condition of Labor) which engaged the Church in dialogue with primary social, political, and economic issues; Pius XI’s encyclical Quadragesimo Anno (On Reconstructing the Social Order) that commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the Rerum Novarum; John XXIII’s famous document, Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) that was addressed to “all men of good will”; and Vatican II’s document, Gaudium et Spes (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).

Expanding on these ideas, the Praxis Religious Dialogue attempts to invite the Church to be open to the Other, through an engagement based on freedom, compassion, understanding, and love. The intramural self renewal process (aggiornamento) initiated by the Second Vatican Council was an attempt to propel the Church to seriously consider its own jurisprudence and ethical relationship with its members (communis fidei), so that it will be open to engage them in dialogue and then when renewed itself within its own walls, by extending to dialogue with the
outside world. Since the Council, there has been an increasing politicization between the Church
and the world began by Paul VI. In his apostolic letter, Octogesima Adveniens released for the
World’s Synod of Bishops’ Second General Assembly in Rome, the Pope explicitly called on the
Church to politically engage other nations. While recognizing the risks involved in such
encounter, the Pope wrote:

In order to counterbalance increasing technocracy, modern
forms of democracy must be devised, not only making it
possible for each man to become informed and express
himself, but also involving him in shared responsibility.  

From this political stance, the Pope further urged his brother bishops around the world to
“take part in action and to spread . . . the energies of the Gospel.”  
The Synod, in one voice, later would declare war on “the focus of division and antagonism that seems today to be
increasing in strength.”  As noted, the Church has been involved in dialogical engagement for
centuries with other national political structures but it has not endeavored to extend the same
dialogical engagement to its own believing community members, perhaps because of its
bureaucratic structure and practices of discipline.

However, what is argued here is that the nature of the Church is not driven by discipline
but by demonstrating responsibility toward the Other. This invites the Church to adopt a
paradigm of a life-oriented approach (to borrow George Cheney’s phrase). The life-oriented
approach in the context of dialogue demands a face to face encounter that requires readiness to
grapple with the evolving crisis stemming from difference and disagreement. It also demands a
radical orientation toward the nitty-gritty, ugly, and undefined assumptions that may emerge from the transactive process. Conservative as the Church may be, the dynamics of the gospel message proclaimed actually demands a radicalization of its very constitution which is the *Magisterium* to focus more attention on openness and transparency in a dialogic context. This argument differs with George Cheney’s understanding of “constitution” as a conservative document because a conservative document preserves the foundations of its intrinsic nature while allowing its roots (*radices*) to be deepened and to be spread out to nurture the all parts of the whole. Unfortunately, the word “radical” has been given a bad connotation as Cheney himself assumes to be the case. He notes that “radical challenges to the established order usually must be ‘non-constitutional,’ at least in their initial formulations.” 148

Thus, the dialogic engagement calls for an ecclesial *kenosis* because the Church is in constant contest with all the complexities of the human person which as Lonergan points out, “. . . is a being in process,”149 and always stepping into the unpredictable unknowns so that it can reclaim for itself the idea of charity which underlies its very foundation. As Lonergan explains, the subject falls in love with God and others and through that experience, opens up to action. He calls this type of experience “Charitable love,” which corresponds to the emptying of oneself in dialogue in order to extend to the Other the same kind of charitable love shown by the Good Samaritan who sees the hidden God revealed in the face of the Other. 150
V. The Historicality of the Narrative of Revelation for the Church in the Twenty-First Century

The transcendent God, which Levinas describes as the “face” which is the hidden presence of God in our encounters, emphasizes the significance of Praxis Religious Dialogue for the Church. The relevance of the model inheres in the Church’s response to the challenges of the contradictions involved in the search for authenticity within dialogic engagement in order to fulfill its mission. The mission points the Church to a community of memory which is embedded in the sharing of their stories based on the narrative of revelation. The narrative of revelation suggests a communication ethic that admits the contradictions of life lived together in a world of diversity. Moreover, the narrative of revelation admits both the inclusive and exclusive hallmarks of community. The Church as a community of believers implies opening itself to the hopes, griefs, and dangers a community offers rather than being tied to agreement and consensus on every idea.

It is a community guided by the agency of the “face” that propels the conversation to an unfinalizable destiny. The historicality of the narrative of revelation is therefore driven by the community’s constant religious experience and conversion to openness to love as demanded by the gospel and to the joyful acceptance of hurts that go with falling in love in order to learn to be present to the Other in his totality. The exemplification of love for the Other through suffering is well documented in the gospels—laying down one’s life for the Other— which Levinas calls the “face to face” enactment of justice that comes from our knowledge of God which is not separated from relationship with men, for the Other in the dialogic relationship “is the very locus of metaphysical truth, and is indispensable for my relation with God.”

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The primacy of the ethical inherent in the Praxis Religious Dialogue model points to a vocative exemplification of the very nature of the Church to liberate, nurture, and affirm the significance of the humanity of the Other. What the primacy of the ethical does not admit is the silencing of the voice of the Other culminating in an eventual neglect of his presence. When the Church isolates the victim of unpleasant events, it prevents the emergence of the “between” of dialogue that admits crisis. The historicality of the narrative of revelation becomes concrete through a humble admission of authenticity of human freedom expressed in Praxis Religious Dialogue a willingness to accept competing stories in communication with the other in this period of metanarratives crisis. The narrative of revelation points us to the direction of accepting the Other in openness to dialogue. The kenosis that is called for in this regard is a bold step forward in response to the injunction by Christ himself. “I am with you always till the end of the world” (Mt. 28:20) and also the Second Vatican Council’s call for aggiornamento of the Church which is aligned with the response to the question “quid faciamus?” and a response ‘converti!’ (Acts 2: 13ff). The call to conversion is an integral part of the narrative of revelation and it underlies the model of Praxis Religious Dialogue because it is through the engagement of the other in dialogue that the challenges of life emerge to be grappled with in an ethical fashion. It also further encourages the Church to be prepared for unforeseen outcomes inherent in dialogic engagement because of the dialectics that become a source of challenge to the participants.

Viktor Frankl’s life points to this direction of suffering in the context of dialogic engagement, especially in foregrounding the challenges in everyday life of the Church. He notes:

In concentration camps . . . we watched and witnessed some of our comrades behave like swine while others behaved
like saints. Man has both potentialities within himself. . . .

Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know
man as he really is. After all, man is the being who has
invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also
that being who has entered those gas chambers upright, with
the Lord’s Prayer or the *Shema Yisrael* on his lips.152

Frankl expresses his existential understanding of the meaning of life more than self-actualization
and pleasure, but engaging thoughtful and meaningful action in a given historical moment. Thus,
the Lonerganian conception of religious experience and conversion153 leading to falling in love
with God and neighbor is highlighted within the context of Frankl’s understanding of meaning
which also reinforces the Praxis Religious Dialogue for the Church. The tensions within the
shared narrative must address the needs of a given historical moment within a dialogic encounter
in order to reaffirm its very nature, that is, to be all in all for the Other particularly in a
postmodern period when people appear to have lost confidence in the Church. However, the
significance of postmodernity for the contemporary Church is pointed to by Kenneth Gergen in
*The Saturated Self*:

The relatively coherent and unified sense of self inherent in a
traditional culture gives way to manifold and competing
potentials. A multiphrenic condition emerges in which one
swims in ever-shifting, concatenating, and contentious currents
of being. One bears the burden of an increasing array of oughts,
of self-doubts and irrationalities. The possibility for committed romanticism or strong and single-minded modernism recedes, and the way is opened for the postmodern being.\textsuperscript{154}

Gergen offers a word of advice to the Church that suggests that even though people in postmodern historical moment do not abide by one major narrative strand, they are open to multiple possibilities in the communicative field. Therefore the Church must strengthen its efforts in inviting them to share their stories within the religious narrative paradigm. Thus, the notion of Praxis Religious Dialogue engages different “webs of metaphorical dialogic strands” that connect the concept of narrative to the religious narrative of revelation focusing on the significance of the Other in the presence of the subject. Further, the metaphors emerging from the Praxis Religious Dialogue model can serve as a dialogic engagement between the Church and its members, Christians of other faiths traditions, non-Christians, and opens to the Church the challenges that come from the between.

As Arnett and Arneson explain, “Metaphorical utterance and narrative discourse are enfolded in a vast poetic sphere.”\textsuperscript{155} As a religious organization, the Church possesses a responsibility to transform itself in the sphere of dialogue as the discourse is lived out in the public domain. The embodiment of common values in the Praxis Religious Dialogue is not a philosophical system but an approach to change a limited view of dialogue in the Church as it engages the different publics in society and within itself. Furthermore, the Praxis Religious Dialogue conceptualizes communication as more than mere giving of information. Rather, it invites the Other spoken of in the gospels and succinctly articulated in the story of the Good Samaritan to a mutual and respectable conversation even when there are disagreements.
The instructions in the form of doctrines and dogmas expounded in encyclicals and pastoral letters are significant to the faith of the believers. However, the narrative of revelation must be understood by the Church as a religious corporate story that guides the people of God and it requires active participation by all the baptized, especially those who interpret and through their interpretive actions, endeavor to reshape the narrative within the historical moment in which the Church finds itself. Caution is therefore necessary. The narrative of revelation is not interpreted as an ideology which dictates action for the people of God a priori to the event of the action implied in the gospel message. In trying to self-actualize itself, the Church stands in danger of holding on to a principle of pleasurable accomplishments which can lead to a false sense of optimism. The praxis religious model dialectically affirms the significance of individual existential meaning and understands the dangers inherent in the dialectical dialogue which is part of the narrative of revelation. This model makes sense of the narrative of revelation through the shared individual stories that emerge in the dialogue in order that the believing community as whole can create a common experience on their religious pilgrimage. It also affirms that that the narrative of revelation is grounded in taking responsibility for the Other whose presence cries in revolt to the Church, who is invited by the story of revelation to stand as the accusative “me” before the Other.
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid.


5 Ibid. p. 49.

6 Ibid. p. 49.


11 See *Lumen Gentium*, no. 37.

12 Vatican I (Denzinger-Schonmetzer 3008) and Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* no. 5.


15 See New Code of Canon Law.
16 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 92.

17 Vatican II Documents, “Opening Address of John XXIII.”


19 Vatican II Documents, “Opening Message.”


21 See *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter 2, a new name for the community of believers which departs from the old notion of the “faithful.”


25 Ibid. p. 201

26 Bruce Wilshire. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). Wilshire compares the notions of categories of metaphysics and the metaphors of the theatre and concludes that the metaphors of the theatre are capable of showing the life of the subject within the intertexture of the drama being unfolded in the subject's daily role playing of life.


33 George Cheney, *Rhetoric in an Organizational Society* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), p. 11. The term is used to describe the American society, “particularly through the homogeneity of the popular media, to justify and reinforce its own self-indulgence, individually and collectively.” The Catholic Church was not different in this regard prior to the Second Vatican Council.


35 Cheney has contended that organizations tap various resources and interests of individuals in organizations for the enhancement of the organization’s growth and output. See *Rhetoric in an Organizational Society* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991


38 Ibid. p. 292-293.


40 Ibid. p. 43.
41 Baxter & Montgomery. p. 43.


46 Ibid. p. 295.


49 Ibid.


51 Vatican II Documents, Lumen Gentium, no. 9.

52 Vatican II Documents, Gaudium et Spes, no. 40

53 The Documents Populorum Progressio (March 26, 1967), Octogesima Adveniens, (May 14, 1971), Evangelii Nuntiadi, (October 26, 1974) are considered to be the thrust for practical implementation of the documents of Vatican II. Paul VI, successor of John XXIII issued those encyclicals as a confirmation of the Council’s work for the universal Church to embody the documents in the Church’s catechesis.

54 Progressio Populorum, no. 49


56 Octogesima Adveniens, no. 4

57 Quadragesimo Anno, no. 88

Populorum Progressio (March, 1967) by Pope Paul VI.

Octagesima Adveniens, (May, 1971), by Pope Paul VI.


Ibid.


Ibid. p. 214.


Ibid.

John XXIII uses the metaphor of “medicine of mercy” in his Opening Address to the Council Fathers. In this context, it is exemplified and amplified to demonstrably point to the context in which he used the term.


Ibid. p.15.

Ibid. p. 34.

Ibid. p. 34


Ibid.


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89 Ibid.


92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.


96 See the document on the Church (Lumen Gentium), no. 9, footnote 27.

97 Ibid.


100 Ibid.


102 Vatican I, Dei Filius (Dezinger Schoenmetzer) and Vatican II, Dei Verbum, no. 5.


104 Ibid. p. 2

105 Vatican II Documents, “Introduction” to Lumen Gentium by Avery Dulles.

106 Ibid.


114 See Arnett & Arneson, p. 296.

115 Ibid. p. 31.


117 117 Mikhail Bakhtin. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s poetics.* C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). (The original work was published in 1929).

118 Ibid.


122 Bakhtin’s notion of dialogization becomes all the more significant in this work because it departs from the traditional notion of dialogue as one-sided, univocal activity based solely on who possess the knowledge and authority. Jurgen Habermas articulates similar views in his stance on Legitimation crisis in which he points out that consensus does not rest on who possesses knowledge but admits multiple voices for the sake of consensus. For a comprehensive reading, see, M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s poetics.* C. Emerson, Ed. & trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (the


124 M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s poetics.* C. Emerson, Ed. & trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). (The original work was published in 1929), p. 293.


126 Ibid. p. 46.

127 Ibid. p. 46.

128 Ibid. p. 47.


133 Anna Marie Aagaard, “Ecclesiology and Ethics,” *Studia Theologica,* 55, p. 165,


136 Ibid. p. 147.


139 Ibid. p. 339.


145 Synod of Bishops’ Second General Assembly, Justice in the World as reported in Joseph Gremillion, Gospel of Peace, 485-529.

146 Ibid. 515.

147 See Gremillion, Gospel of Peace and Justice, 485-529.


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