



Circumdata Varietate The Multiple Dimensions of the Church Towards an Explanatory Account

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Abstract

This paper offers a survey and proposal concerning Catholic ecclesiology in the post-Vatican II context. As a survey, it addresses the attempts by four major Catholic thinkers, de Lubac, Congar, Rahner and Balthasar to articulate dual dimensions of the Church. In the last century, the surge in biblical studies and empirical methodologies has wrought numerous ecclesial images, dimensions and models for understanding the various aspects of the Church. While many of these attempts are descriptive, or even symbolic, there is a need to move to an explanatory method for a more systematic apprehension of the various dimensions of the Church. The proposal of this paper will argue that such an explanation lies in how the Church understands itself with respect to each of the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit as developed from the thought of Bernard Lonergan on the two dimensions of the Church. This will allow for a plethora of images, but simultaneously it will provide for some normative control of meaning over these various dimensions.

A. Introduction

The Church is a mystery. Vatican II sought to emphasize this reality in the first chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. Approaching the mystery, the self-understanding of the Church can be expressed in many images, allegories, models and dimensions. At the same time, as Henri De Lubac states, ‘no simple image or concept of the Church wholly succeeds in defining her.’¹

Modern biblical scholarship gives us an abundance of images from which to choose. However, some images historically seem to acquire more hermeneutic significance than others. Such is the case with

¹ Henri De Lubac, S. J. *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, James R. Dunne (tran.) (New York: Ecclesia Press, 1969), 23.

St. Paul's theology of the Body of Christ as the primary image of ecclesial unity. Following the papal encyclical *Mystici corporis* (1943), de Lubac concurred that the latter image was the most adequate expression to capture the essence and heart of the Church.²

In addition to images of the Church, one can view its various dimensions in terms of its fundamental aspects. Traditional distinctions are usually binary in character and include distinctions between the institution or official church and the charismatic church, or some variation. Others distinctions include: the ecclesial community (*Gemeinschaft*) and sociological community (*Gesellschaft*), the *ecclesia ad intra* and *ecclesia ad extra*, the *ecclesia de Trinitate* (the Church as extension of the Trinitarian community) and the *ecclesia ex hominibus* (the Church as human community), the church visible and invisible, and the church as universal and local. Following Vatican Council II, scholars have focused on various ecclesial models as exemplified in Avery Dulles' *Models of Church*, or from diverse philosophical models as demonstrated, for example, by Thomas O'Mally.³ These are just some of the ways in which scholars and ecclesiastical authorities have sought to understand the mystery of the church in its varied splendour.

Given the variety of modes for understanding the mystery of the Church, one discerns the need for a systematic exigence,⁴ that is, the need to move from the descriptive attempts that express the multiple dimensions through images and models to one that is more explanatory in character. Undoubtedly, this movement to explanation will include the introduction of some technical language that is part and parcel of a more systematic ecclesiology. In this paper I would like to survey some of the major ways in which prominent theologians have sought to express the multiple dimensions of the Church. I will then put forth an exploratory proposal that offers the potential for an explanatory heuristic for addressing the multiple dimensions of the Church, yet simultaneously preserving its mutivalency.

B. De Lubac: Communication and Communion

Henri De Lubac (1896–1991) writes about the two aspects of the Church. He emphasizes that when *ecclesia* with its corresponding Greek equivalent (*ἐκκλησία*) is translated into Latin, it connotes two senses, an active and a passive meaning. These two senses are

² Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), 125.

³ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, (New York: Doubleday, 1987) and Thomas O'Meara, 'Philosophical Models in Ecclesiology.' *Theological Studies*, 39 (1978): 3–21.

⁴ See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 81.

rendered as *convocatio*, the calling together and *congregatio*, the community of the called together.⁵ He elaborates on this dual conception of Church:

She is reconciling power and the family of all the reconciled; a double mystery of communication and communion, since by the communication of the sacraments—holy things (*sancta*)—she is a communion of holy ones (*sancti*). She is sheepfold and flock, mother and people; the mother who bears us into divine life and the reunion of all those who, by participating in this life to varying degrees, make up the ‘People of God.’ The Church is at once our mother and ourselves; a maternal breast and a [community].⁶

The Church is at once mother and child.⁷ Through her motherhood, the Triune God establishes and grounds the structures and schemes of recurrence that insure the life of the Church will continue, i.e. the sacraments, catechism, marriage, family, etc. At the same time, she is also a child in so far as she partakes in and is nourished by the life-giving food that the Church mediates.

De Lubac posits this *convocatio-congregatio* distinction in an attempt to ‘consolidate distinctions’ such as the ‘Church teaching and Church taught, Church ruling and governed, clergy and laity, hierarchy and faithful, ministers and subjects of sacraments.’ He does not seek to reinforce a series of dualisms, but rather to conjoin the distinctions ‘always within unity.’⁸ In *Splendor of the Church*, de Lubac assures this unity by emphasizing the image of the Mystical Body of Christ. However, the distinction between the ecclesial dimensions remains throughout his corpus. It occurs in an earlier work, *Catholicism*⁹ but also is presented in his post-conciliar work, *Church: Paradox and Mystery*. In the latter, he images *convocatio* as the saving vessel and *congregatio* as the community of saved aboard the vessel: ‘The Church is the ark that saves us from death... But we are not mere passengers in this ark: we *are* the ark, we are the Church.’¹⁰

As a people communicated to, the Church is called together through God’s self-communication in the person and message of Jesus Christ. Ideally, the church hierarchy facilitates this

⁵ Henri De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 103–04.

⁶ *Splendor*, 106–107.

⁷ In a lecture at Boston College, Joseph Komonchak draws on this distinction in de Lubac with reference to St. Augustine illustrating this double mystery in the image of the Church as Mother. ‘Loneragan and Post-conciliar Ecclesiology’, Lecture delivered at the 34th annual Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, June 18th, 2007.

⁸ De Lubac, *Splendor*, 110.

⁹ Henri de Lubac, S.J. *Catholicism: A Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind* (New York: New American Library, 1964), 38.

¹⁰ De Lubac, *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, 21.

communication by calling together the faithful through the institutions and sacraments. But not all calling together occurs through the official church, for the ecclesial schemes of recurrence are equally guaranteed through the catechists, not to mention the believing parents who give birth to subsequent generations of believers. Moreover, the communion that is called together includes both the laity and the hierarchy as participants in the life of the Triune God. Indeed, the celebration of the Eucharist is often referred to as ‘communion’. As such, it is at once the gathering together of the Body of Christ in an ecclesial sense and simultaneously the participation in the consummation of the Body of Christ in a Eucharistic sense.¹¹ The Eucharist exemplifies this twofold dimension in that when celebrated it calls the community together, while simultaneously establishing the bonds of the community in the Eucharistic meal.

De Lubac’s subtle yet profound distinction is helpful in speaking about the ‘double mystery’ of the Church. Yet the question arises: while it may adequately address the *Ecclesia ad intra*, how might it speak to the *Ecclesia ad extra*? Can this distinction adequately address how the Church relates to Christian faiths, to other religions, and to cultures including secular culture? The post-Vatican II context insists that the Church engage the Other in a new way—the documents of the Council call in an unprecedented manner for mutual relations with the Other. This is a relationship that does not simply fall back on the default of articulating differences with the Other in a strictly dialectical or one-way relationship. I am not saying that de Lubac is guilty of this; rather, the strength of his distinction is that he captures the twofold dynamism of what, in a development and application of Bernard Lonergan’s thought I have termed the Church’s *authentic self-mediating identity*.¹² That is, the identity with which the Church is present to herself and also how she presents herself to the Other. This self-presenting identity includes her message and mission to all humanity. However, this self-mediating or self-presenting identity alone does not account for the influence that the Other may have on the Church’s identity and in this way, de Lubac’s distinction is limited to the *Ecclesia ad intra*.

¹¹ De Lubac, *Splendor*, 153.

¹² I am grateful to Joseph Komonchak for turning my attention to this important distinction in de Lubac. As a result, I have developed my own thoughts on this issue and realized that there is a twofold aspect to the Church’s *authentic self-mediating identity*. On mediation as Lonergan invokes the term see Bernard Lonergan, ‘Mediation of Christ in Prayer’, in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 160–82 and the important development by Robert Doran in *What is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 45, 57–58. On mediation as I have developed it from Lonergan and Doran, see John Dadosky, ‘The Church and the Other: Mediation and Friendship in Post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Ecclesiology’, *Pacifica* 18 (October, 2005), p. 302–322.

Historically, when the Church has taken a defensive stance at official levels towards the Other, as for example in the idea of the *church militant* arising out of the counter-Reformation, then one can say the identity becomes one of *strict self-mediation*; albeit, of course, certain contexts may demand such a stance. However, Vatican II was unprecedented in its movement away from a strictly self-mediating identity, and this is represented by the final chapter of *Guadium et Spes* which is titled 'The Church and the World as Mutually Related.' Therefore, in terms of de Lubac's acknowledgment of the Church as the 'double mystery of communication and communion', we must also recognize: 1) that communication is two-way, and this means, among other things, that the Church has the responsibility to listen to and learn from the Other. This stance is exemplified by Pope Benedict's comment: 'I repeat with insistence [that] research and interreligious and intercultural dialogue are not an option but a vital necessity for our time.'¹³ Necessarily, such dialogue presupposes two-way communication. 2) While the Church is a communion of believers, there is also a sense that it has a communion or relationship with those outside of its visible communion. Suffice it to say, the principle of *mutual self-mediation* will need to be integrated into ecclesiology in order explicate more fully the *Ecclesia ad extra*—the way in which the Church relates to the Other.

Finally, while there is an authentic self-mediating identity to the Church, there are also distortions of this self-mediating identity.¹⁴ However, de Lubac's twofold distinction of the Church as *convocatio* and *congregatio* ideally represents the authentic self-mediating identity and therefore promises to be a vital part of post-Vatican II ecclesiology.

C. Congar: *Structure and Life*

Yves Congar (1904–1984) makes a distinction similar to that of de Lubac regarding two aspects of the Church. Congar distinguishes between: 1) the fellowship of the believers with God and with one another in Christ and 2) the Church as the 'totality of the means' provided by God to bring about this fellowship.¹⁵

¹³ *Zenit News Service*, February 1, 2007.

¹⁴ One such distortion occurs when the official Church overemphasizes the role of teaching without sufficient attention to learning. See the valuable article by Frederick E. Crowe, 'The Church as Learner: Two Crises, One Kairos,' Michael Vertin (ed.), *Developing the Lonergan Legacy: Historical, Theoretical, and Existential Themes* (University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 370–384.

¹⁵ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, Donald Attwater (trans.) (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965), pp. 22–3 [*Jalons pour une théologie du laïc* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1953)]. However, Congar does not link the distinction to the active-passive meanings

The fellowship of believers is the communion of all the faithful (*Societas fidelium*). The *means* by which this fellowship is established begins with the divine initiative of God's self-communication in Christ who 'institutes' the basic structure(s) of the church established by the first followers. Christ institutes the means in three fundamental ways: 1) through the sacred teaching/the deposit of the faith, 2) through the sacraments, specifically Baptism and the Eucharist, and 3) through the calling of the disciples establishment of apostolic succession. For Congar, the hierarchal structure of the church is instituted ultimately by Christ's initiative.¹⁶

The principal model of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King correlates with each of the three basic ways listed directly above. The main body of Congar's tome on the laity is dedicated to clarifying how the laity participates with the hierarchy in each of these three roles of Prophet (teaching), Priest (sacramental life), and King (leadership). In each instance, the role of the laity hinges on the fact of their consent. While this pre-conciliar work is ground-breaking in the attention it gives to the laity, exactly how consent is to be understood remains to be clarified in our post-Vatican context.

In terms of his distinction between *the fellowship of believers* and *the means of bringing it about*, Congar argues that both aspects of the Church need to be maintained. Historically, when they are separated two aberrations occur. On the one hand, the overemphasis on the communal aspect of the church leads to an anti-hierarchical stance exemplified by the outspoken voices of the Reformation. On the other hand, in response to this one-sidedness, the opposite tendency has occurred that overemphasizes the hierarchical and institutional aspects of the church at the expense of the fellowship or intersubjectivity.¹⁷

These two aspects of the church are related to Congar's more famous distinction between the *structure* and the *life* of the church. One could say that structure and life are a more specific articulation of the *means* to bring about fellowship and of the *fellowship* itself respectively. Scholars do not agree on the extent to which the distinction between structure and life is central to Congar's thought.¹⁸ Still it appears in a sufficient number of his works to warrant consideration. The distinction is made in two contexts: 1) in relationship to the role of the laity in power and authority in the church, and 2) in

in term *ecclesia* as de Lubac does. I will focus on his distinction between *structure* and *life* because it has received more attention by subsequent scholars.

¹⁶ Congar, *Lay People*, 25.

¹⁷ Congar, *Lay People*, Chapter 2.

¹⁸ Timothy I MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes* (University Press of America, 1984); Douglas M. Koskela, 'The Divine-Human Tension in the Ecclesiology of Yves Congar', *Ecclesiology* 4.1 (2007), pp. 88–106.

reference to church reform.¹⁹ In *Lay People*, by *structure* he means: ‘... the principles which, because they come from Christ, representing with him and in his name the generative causes of the Church, are the things in her, as her *pars formalis*, that constitute [humans] as Christ’s Church. They are essentially the deposit of the faith, the deposits of the sacraments of faith and the apostolic powers whereby the one and the other are transmitted. Therein resides the Church’s essence.’²⁰ In other words, by *structure* he means those schemes of recurrence and embodied meanings affirmed by church tradition as established by Christ—the principles by which the Church is constituted as such so that the believing community can practice their faith.

Congar defines *life* as ‘the activity which [humans] make Church by the said principles, exercise in order that the Church may fulfill her mission and attain her end, which is, throughout time and space, to make of [humans] and a reconciled world the community-temple of God.’²¹

For Congar, the notions of *structure* and *life* readily bring to mind the distinction between hierarchy and laity. This structure is hierarchically constituted with its origins in the divine initiative of God in order to ensure the continuance of the community in history. However, the two dimensions are interrelated and inextricably intertwined. In this pre-conciliar work Congar uses the example of consecration in the Eucharist. The consecration of the species during the Mass is not dependent upon the consent of the faithful; however, for the Church to try to function with the bare structure and without the participation and consent of the faithful would be ‘to disregard the order of life and to fail to forward the Church’s mission.’²²

Congar fleshes out this distinction of structure and life in *Lay People* in the context of the lay people’s role in the *kingly* function—their power and authority in the Church. He is clear that the authority and power to govern, teach and sanctify ‘requires an order of hierarchical mediation’, and while the laity do not have a governing role, they are part of the kingship through their ‘active consent, a co-operation made manifest as a general characteristic of their life and in certain particular ways.’²³ In terms of this *general characteristic*, he insists that the laity have an ‘active life’ and participate in the dialogue between body and head. Moreover, there is a sense where the laity have an informal power: that of public opinion. He reminds us that even

¹⁹ Yves Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l’église* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1950; rev. edn. 1968).

²⁰ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, p. 249.

²¹ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, p. 249.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 250.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

the most autocratic regimes must take into account the role of public opinion. However, this does not consist in irrational or spontaneous rants, but as in the case of the hierarchy, it occurs under ‘the impulse of the Holy Spirit.’²⁴ The participation of the laity extends to the particular way in which each lives out their lives in the various levels of ecclesial life in the parish, in society and in their everyday living.

In the Forward to *Lay People*, Congar admits that one of his basic goals in writing the treatise is precisely ‘to reconnect life with structure.’ The extent to which ‘structures’ can change is a question Congar also addresses, but even today it remains open for theological debate in a post-conciliar context.²⁵ His original intention in invoking the distinction pertains to the issue of reform: the Church’s ‘life must grow in the setting and framework of her *structure*.’²⁶ Implied in this comment, one could argue, is the possibility that the framework of the structure could prevent the growth of life in the Church.

In Congar’s earlier work on reform, he refers to the *structures de surface* in the Church as well as its (deeper) *structure*.²⁷ Again, the latter pertains to the permanent structure instituted by Christ (*ius divinum*) which includes the deposit of the faith, the sacraments, and apostolic succession. The former refer to the external expressions historically conditioned, and these are subject to development (e.g. Mass in the vernacular language). However, according to Timothy Macdonald, by invoking this distinction Congar restricts the parameters of reform. He believes that at this juncture Congar overemphasizes the divine reality of the church to such an extent that any conception of development is restricted.²⁸

With respect to the question of reform and development in the Church within this schema, one could say they can occur in two senses. The first sense is by way of the ongoing conversion of the individual members—the life of the church. The fallibility and sinfulness of individual members provides a context for the tag *Ecclesia semper reformanda*. Nor should the significance of an ongoing *metanoia* and spiritual development of the life of the Church be underestimated. In his book *Method in Theology*, Bernard Lonergan argues that the new foundations for theology in our modern era will

²⁴ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, 253.

²⁵ Neil Ormerod raises this question in his recent article ‘On the Divine Institution of the Threefold Ministry’, *Ecclesiology* 4.1 (2007), pp. 38–51. I am sympathetic with his argument that the structures of the church originate in practical intelligence. It is an interesting question to speculate whether the establishment of apostolic succession itself has its origin in practical intelligence. Can practical intelligence preserve the transcendental mystery that is mediated in the Church?

²⁶ Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, p. xxxiv.

²⁷ Yves Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l’église* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, rev. Edn 1968), 111.

²⁸ Macdonald, 80.

not be those deduced from Aristotelian-like first principles but rather the foundations are to be derived from reflection upon conversion in all its aspects, psychological, intellectual, moral, and religious. It is noteworthy that Lonergan found consonance for this movement away from strictly deductive foundations in his reading of Congar.²⁹

The second sense with respect to the question of reform and development in the Church regard the *structures de surface*. For Congar, these refer to ‘the method of catechesis and preaching, formation of clerics, exterior forms of worship, constitution of parishes...’³⁰ While there is a sense in which one can say these structures are ultimately mediated by Christ, they are not permanent in the same way as those instituted *ius divinum*, like the deposit of the faith, the sacraments, apostolic succession, etc. However, one wonders if there is some merit to Macdonald’s observation that there is a sense of reform that occurs in the Church that is deeper than simply the *surface structures*, but yet does not pertain to the *ius divinum*. Some of these deeper structures are mediated historically through various cultural accretions, which are subject to changing circumstances and even to paradigm shifts. Such contexts raise new questions that the previous structures and meanings cannot adequately address. Clinging to these structures at a time when the ecclesial context raises relevant questions that superannuates them will have an adverse affect on the life of the Church. If this were not the case, the Church would never see a need to reform its liturgy, or its code of canon law, for example. A reform in the liturgical life of the church may involve a reform in the external structures, but it need not necessarily affect what Congar would consider to be those instituted by Christ *ius divinum* (the priesthood, the liturgy of the Word, the celebration of the Eucharist, etc.). For example, one could surmise that a change in the way bishops and popes are selected would not necessarily affect the basic structure of apostolic succession—yet it would be a more substantial change than that implied in a simple change in a surface structure.

Congar’s distinction between *structure* and *life* has been criticized over the years for various reasons. The distinction is valuable, but I would agree with Macdonald that it may be too restrictive in accounting for reforms in the church precisely because it is not just the *structures de surface* that change and develop historically but also the methods which affect those structures. In our current theological context, this includes the recognition of radical shifts in

²⁹ See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 237–234; and his ‘Theology in its New Context,’ in *A Second Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 55–67. The psychological component of conversion in Lonergan’s thought was developed by Robert Doran. See his *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), Chapter 6.

³⁰ Macdonald, 81.

our understanding of mission and inculturation but also in the shift from a deductive theology to an empirical starting point.³¹ Another clear example of such a shift is the use of the historical-critical method in biblical studies. These were not part of the consideration of the church prior to the last century. The incorporation of such methodologies need not alter the Christian belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture, even if some scholars have moved in this direction.

Congar's distinction between structure and life was criticized by Richard McBrien, for not giving sufficient clarity to the role of the laity in the world, and by Avery Dulles, for not clarifying the 'hierarchical charisms'—the genuine prophetic voice of office in the church.³² Nevertheless, I agree with Gabriel Flynn that there is a 'permanent merit' to Congar's distinction especially in the context of its original formulation—understanding reform in the church. For Flynn, this distinction protects the Church from the extremes of radical reformists on the one hand and the 'false purity of the integralists' on the other hand.³³

Congar admitted that he may have been 'too schematic' with this distinction.³⁴ Still, serious consideration of his distinction between structure and life will also need to specify how the two are not only complementary, but also how they interpenetrate. For example, the priest who administers the sacraments is by virtue of his baptism part of the life of the church. Similarly, the ongoing life of the church depends not simply on the structure(s) preserved by the official church, but also upon the families who bear, raise and form children within the church. Hence, the life of the church underpins and fosters the structure(s) of the church throughout the ages and vice versa.

D. Rahner: Institution and Charism

Avery Dulles' insistence that the charismatic element in the Church extends to office in the church would find resonance in the work of Karl Rahner (1904–1984). The latter states: 'The Spirit is promised and given to the ecclesial ministry.'³⁵ Similarly, Louis Bouyer points out that historically the charismatics, especially those expressed in monastic life, were often singled out for positions of office in the

³¹ Lonergan states: '... theology was a deductive, and it has become largely an empirical science.' 'Theology in its New Context,' 58.

³² See Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate: 2004), 180–186.

³³ Flynn, 182.

³⁴ Congar, 'Forward,' in MacDonald, p. xxii.

³⁵ Karl Rahner, 'The Charismatic Element in the Church,' in *The Dynamic Element of the Church*, *Questiones Disputatae*, Vol. 12 (Friburg: Herder/Montreal: Palm, 1967), 42.

Church.³⁶ For Rahner *charismata* extends to the official hierarchy because the Lord promises his Spirit to remain till the end of time.³⁷ Indeed, Rahner's treatment of charism is worthy of consideration because he acknowledges the charismatic element in the official church as well as in the laity.

The Spirit is present to office as a kind of insurance against complete apostasy, rebellion, etc. Of course this does not preclude the inauthenticity of individual members, but it does mean that office in the church is under 'the assistance of the Holy Spirit' who guarantees its protection against total abuse. So confident is Rahner in this belief that he reiterates: 'there is no section in the official constitution of the church to which one could appeal against official authority.'³⁸ Yet simultaneously he emphasizes that the promised assistance of the Spirit of God cannot be 'reduced to juridical terms.' In fact, one could say the assistance of the Holy Spirit seeks to reverse juridical overemphasis. The office in the church *de facto* must belong to the charismatic sphere although this does not mean that 'office in each of its manifestations is markedly "charismatic."' Moreover, the charismatic gifts do not pertain just to the individual believer, but the office itself 'must be characterized by charismatic gifts' if it is to be a medium of God's grace in the Spirit.³⁹

In the bulk of his essay, Rahner addresses the non-institutional *charismata* and their implications for the institutional church. The guidance of the Spirit insures the 'absoluteness' of the Church, but Rahner is clear that such absoluteness does not involve a 'totalitarian view of Church.' The latter view results from a reduction of charism to office. In contrast to this tendency he emphasizes: 'there are *charismata*... in addition to and outside [the Church's] official ministry.'⁴⁰ He cites Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici corporis* as doctrinal evidence for this reality. Moreover, since the *charismata* include the official and the unofficial ministry of the Church, the unity between the 'institutional and the charismatic' is guaranteed by God, and the harmony between the two is itself an aspect of the charismatic dynamism within the Church.⁴¹ This unity cannot be 'institutionally organized'; it cannot be assured by the official hierarchy alone, especially when the latter gives into the temptation to substitute *means* for *ends*, which can result in bureaucratic distortion.

³⁶ Louis Bouyer, *The Church of God: Body of Christ and Temple of the Spirit* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), pp. 7–10.

³⁷ Rahner, 'The Charismatic Element in the Church,' pp. 42–3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46–7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Rahner notes that the spiritual gifts of the *charismata* do not need to be ‘miraculously extraordinary.’ On the contrary, the gifts can be ‘inconspicuous’, as evidenced by St. Paul when he emphasizes the existence of the varied gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12.4–11). Each of these gifts, although not exclusive to office, is necessary for building up the body of Christ.

The charismatic element has existed in the Church throughout its history despite the fact that some contemporary theologians may ignore it, and despite the assumption that the early church was somehow more charismatic than the Church of subsequent periods. The situation of the early church, Rahner states was more compact, and while it is true that the institutional ‘machinery’ develops, it does not do so at the expense of the *charismata* although this remains an ongoing temptation. The charismatic element perjures throughout Church history from the spirit of the early martyrs to the early Egyptian monks, down to our age with the rise of religious communities and saintly figures.⁴² ‘The Church throughout her history has always been charismatic . . . the official Church is also the guardian and guide of the charismatic element; if she herself possesses the gift of discernment of spirits, then the charismatic element is not to be looked for solely in what is very rare and extraordinary. . . There is certainly a domain which cannot be directly administered by the Church.’⁴³

One example of institutional regulation of the charismatic, Rahner continues, lies in the evangelical counsels. However, the jurisdiction of the Spirit extends beyond the borders of the visible Church since ‘there can be and is God’s grace and the grace of Christ outside the Church.’ Hence, the charismatic element pertains to the ‘rich abundance’ within and the fruits outside the explicit Church. Although not always visible, these fruits may lie ‘. . . in hidden fidelity, unselfish kindness, sincerity of disposition and purity of heart, virile courage that does a duty without a fuss; in the uncompromising profession of truth . . . in the inexpressible love of a soul for God; in the unshakable trust of a sinner that God’s heart is greater than ours and that he is rich in mercy.’⁴⁴ Such *charismata* include the love of a mother for her child. ‘There are good mothers whose virtue is from God above, a gift of the spirit and of his unselfish love.’⁴⁵

Given the visible and invisible mission of the Holy Spirit, within and outside of the visible church, Rahner derives several consequences. The first pertains to the official hierarchy of the church: ‘. . . the office-holders and institutional bodies must constantly remind

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 56–8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 63–4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

themselves that it is not they alone who rule in the Church.’⁴⁶ He cautions that the subordinates within the hierarchy do not simply take orders from above, but rather, they are subject to their own obedience to God. Moreover, there may be times that God may choose to lead the church directly, without the mediation of the office holders. One historical example of this would be the role Catherine of Siena played in trying to re-unify the papacy. In the case of these examples Rahner declares the ‘official hierarchy must not be surprised or annoyed if there is stirring in the life of the spirit before this has been scheduled in the Church’s ministries.’⁴⁷

The second consequence pertains to what Rahner describes as the ‘democratic’ church. By placing this word in quotes, he does not wish to reduce the structures of the church to a democracy. Rather, he wants to point out that authority in the church is not ‘simply’ one that flows from above downwards but also is shared from below. To put it into the technical language of some of my previous work, the authority of the church is not one that operates by way of *strict self-mediation* but rather one that is shared in the *mutual self-mediation* with the *sensus fidelium*. On the one hand, there is a sense in which the church is ‘undemocratic’ because its authority comes directly from God and pertains to God’s domain. It follows that ‘the Church is a hierarchical system, but only because its summit is God, and likewise a system in which power and authority are distributed, that is, a sort of democracy though of its own special kind.’ Moreover, there are many times throughout church history when ‘the gift of God’s Spirit was better preserved by this simple and prayerful people than by many of the “princes of the Church.”’⁴⁸

Third, unfortunately, the presence of the charismatic gifts will bring with it disagreement and conflict will therefore will require discernment. Conflict is unavoidable because the Holy Spirit’s grace can flow inside and outside the official ministries and so there will be discrepancies and resistances from time to time regarding the movement of the Spirit. The inevitability of such conflict indicates the need for charity with respect to these differences. ‘Ultimately only one thing can give unity in the Church on the human level: the love which allows another to be different, even when it does not understand.’⁴⁹

Rahner reminds those who silently fear that a pope could choose to settle all theological conflicts with ‘infallible’ pronouncements that not only has this been impossible historically, but there ‘belongs to it [the papacy] the assistance of the Holy Spirit, which

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 72–3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 74.

cannot be completely expressed in juridical terms, and his guidance in the actual exercise of those plenary powers.’⁵⁰ At times the Spirit of God will animate individuals to act, to speak out and to establish new movements and trends within the Church. This latter ‘vocation’ is a segue into his fourth consequence, the burden of the charisma.

The charisma ‘always involves suffering.’ This could be because the person with the gift encounters opposition, or that their gift is ‘limited and humbled’ by someone else’s greater gift, or because they are simply ahead of their time. For Rahner this is the inevitable consequence of the fact that there is ‘one Church and many gifts.’⁵¹ Gifted individuals may experience persecution. In the language of René Girard, they may be scapegoated by their mimetic rivals who are envious of their gifts. Rahner draws a beautiful analogy between the wine of enthusiasm and the water of sobriety as an image of consolation for those ‘prophets’ who would be tempted to isolationism or bitterness in response to being rejected. From this he draws two observations: 1) opposition against individual charisms does not preclude the authenticity of the gift. In all cases discernment of these gifts is essential for the Church and the proper discernment is itself a charism (See 1 Thes. 5:21). Rahner notes the historical example of the Jesuits resisting Pius V’s imposition of solemn choir-office. Had the Jesuits conceded, their charism would have been taken off course. 2) The opposition towards the charism does not give officials free reign to obstinately deny the *charismata* in question. While it is impossible to extinguish the Spirit, it is possible for some people due to ‘sloth and indifference and hardness of heart to extinguish a true spirit in another.’⁵²

Finally, Rahner encourages us to receive the gifts of the Spirit when they are first presented, so that they ‘may be furthered and not choked by the incomprehension and intellectual laziness, if not the ill-will and hatred of those around them, ecclesiastics included.’⁵³ The language of Rahner’s final caveat is pointed. He cautions us to keep an open mind, but perhaps ‘not so open that our brains fall out’ to invoke a phrase by G. K. Chesterton. Presumably, discernment will be essential to identify the initial movements of the Spirit, but such discernment should not be used to justify institutional feet-dragging against such legitimate movements of the Spirit.

In a subsequent post-conciliar article on the same topic, Rahner’s observations on the charismatic element extend more broadly to

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 76.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 77.

⁵² Ibid., p. 80–1.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 82.

ecclesiology.⁵⁴ Perhaps most significantly, he suggests the need to factor the charismatic element explicitly into contemporary ecclesiology. While some of the basic principles have been established, he admits that ‘no comprehensive work on this subject has yet been written.’⁵⁵

Moreover, Rahner is clear that the institutional/official church and a charismatic church need not be in opposition to one another although conflict, as pointed out above, is inevitable. Nor does this distinction necessitate a Nestorian ecclesial understanding where there is a bifurcation between the two constitutive aspects of the Church. On the contrary, Rahner argues for the ‘mutual interplay’ between them.⁵⁶ In fact, he suggests several times in this article the need for a principle of mutuality in terms of all the elements and relations of the Church *ad intra* as well as *ad extra*.⁵⁷

Perhaps what is going forward in the post-conciliar ecclesial reflection is the need to develop an explicit ecclesiology that can account equally for the ‘officialdom’ of the church, its charismatic element and their mutual interaction.

F. Balthasar: Official Church and Church of Love

We find within the treasure trove of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s ecclesiology an analogous distinction between structure and life—institution and charisma. Specifically, he distinguishes between the *official church* and the *church of love*.⁵⁸ His methodology is biblically based, less systematic, and is deeply influenced by Eastern Christianity. As Congar speaks of structure and life in the Church and Rahner of the institutional and the charismata, Balthasar, in turn, articulates the different dimensions of the Church by referencing biblical personalities.⁵⁹ He associates Peter with the official church and John, the beloved disciple, with the church of love. His locus for distinguishing

⁵⁴ Karl Rahner, ‘Observations of the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church.’ *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 12, pp. 81–97.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83, n. 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 93–96.

⁵⁸ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, ‘Official Church and Church of Love (According to the Gospel of John)’, in *The Balthasar Reader*, Medard Kehl and Werner Löser (eds.), (New York: Crossroad, 1997), pp. 277–276.

⁵⁹ In *The Glory of the Lord*, Vol. I, Balthasar speaks of distinct ‘archetypal’ experiences that embody traditions of church such as the Petrine, the Marian, the Pauline and the Johannine, pp. 350–365. To make matters more complex, he also distinguishes between Peter, representing pastoral office, James, representing the law—tradition, John representing love, and Paul who represents freedom in the Holy Spirit in *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, Andrée Emery (trans.) (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), pp. 308–13.

between the official church and the church of love stems from the final chapter and the appendix chapter of John's Gospel.⁶⁰ Of the first episode which recounts Peter and John running to the tomb together, he interprets this as resulting in 'a two-peaked church, official church and church of love, in harmonious tension: office working for love, love respectfully giving precedence to office.'⁶¹

In the appendix chapter where the 'hidden' Jesus commands the apostles in the boat, Balthasar concludes that the Gospel ends with a 'suspended middle point' of 'two impossible ecclesiologies.' Are we to take from this that there will always be some tension between these two churches?

Balthasar's interpretation of what happens in the final moments of John's Gospel is unique. Without going into detail, he claims that the private love that John has for Jesus is transferred to the public service of Peter. Once Peter is commissioned, he wonders why John has not 'disappeared into him,' and when he queries Jesus, the Lord replies sternly, 'What is that to you?' In turn, according to Balthasar, John recedes into the background and even 'vanishes' but not without succession. John's place is taken by the subsequent generation of the saints, that is, those who are who are in love with God in such an intimate way that they have been given an 'unofficial ecclesial mission'.⁶² One could say that where the ecclesiastical power may rest with the officers of the church, the true authority is often mediated through the witness and intercession of the saints. Of course, it goes without saying that office in the church does not preclude saintliness and that some of the greatest ecclesiastical leaders have been simultaneously charismatics and office holders.

However, if there is any question where the real power in the Church lies, one need only look at a few historical examples in order to realize that it is the saints, by virtue of their holiness and intimacy with God, who most dramatically influence the Church throughout its history.

For Balthasar, Peter represents the pastoral side of office exemplified by the command 'feed my sheep'. Balthasar also emphasizes that office in the church should be one of service. 'Peter should love; he should thus as far as he can manage be the church of love.'⁶³ Again, the suggestion is one of a perpetual challenge to the official church to be the church of love.

⁶⁰ See John Dadosky, 'The Official Church and the Church of Love in Balthasar's Reading of John: An Exploration in Post Vatican II Ecclesiology,' *Studia Canonica*, 41(2007): 453–471.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁶² Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1896), p. 225.

⁶³ Balthasar, 'Official Church and Church of Love', p. 277.

One does not have to completely agree with Balthasar in order to benefit from this rich reflection on the Church. We find in his thought the scriptural basis for distinguishing between various ecclesial dimensions that will assist in a movement to a more explanatory account.

The Two Aspects of the Church in Lonergan

Lonergan did not reflect explicitly on ecclesiology. Much of his theological labors concentrated on issues of methodology in theology and in systematic issues of grace, christology, trinity, and redemption. Joseph Komonchak and Neil Ormerod have both labored to develop Lonergan's thought in terms of ecclesiology.⁶⁴ They both emphasize an empirical starting point for reflection on the Church's self-understanding in order to keep ecclesiology 'down to earth' so to speak, and to prevent a reification or idealization of the Church. Indeed, a lengthier work is required to interpret Lonergan's references to ecclesiology and to develop those insights. In this final section I will briefly suggest the two dimensions of the Church in Lonergan's thought as derived from his work on mediation.

In an article titled "Mediation of Christ in Prayer," Lonergan refers to four types of mediation: simple mediation, mutual mediation, self-mediation, and mutual self-mediation.⁶⁵ Specifically, he mentions communities in reference to self-mediation. So one could say that self-mediation refers to the self-presence and self-constitution of a community within society and history. However, communities in and of themselves are not isolated groups but are constituted in part by their multifaceted relations *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Hence, Lonergan's successor Robert Doran suggested that there is a mutual self-mediating conception of communities in addition to a self-mediating one.⁶⁶ From these insights, I have argued elsewhere that it is appropriate to speak of two conceptions of the Church, *ad intra* and *ad extra*. The *ecclesia ad intra* pertains to the authentic self-mediation of the Church in terms of her distinctive identity, mission and goal within salvation history. Conversely, *ecclesia ad extra* pertains to the authentic mutually self-mediating conception of the Church. I have used the adjective 'authentic' in front of each conception in order to distinguish these from the aberrant forms that can flow from the

⁶⁴ See Joseph Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology* (Boston: Boston College, 1995) and Neil Ormerod, "The Structure of Systematic Ecclesiology," *Theological Studies* 63/1 (2002): 3–28.

⁶⁵ Bernard Lonergan, 'Mediation of Christ in Prayer', in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 160–82.

⁶⁶ Robert Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 45, 57–58.

distortions of each of these self-understandings respectively. In terms of the Church's self-mediating understanding, the distortion occurs when the relationship between the Church is construed as a one-way relationship with the Other. Historically, such strict self-mediation has led to the triumphalism, juridicism and clericalism that were called into question at Vatican II. Indeed, despite the ongoing discernment about the hermeneutics of Vatican II, I have argued that one of the permanent achievements of the Council lies in its recognition of mutual relations with the Other in such documents as *Gaudium et Spes* and *Nostra Aetate* for example. Such a recognition is an unprecedented development of the Church's self-understanding at Vatican II because it recognizes that relations with the Other is a two-way street. Hence I have argued that there are two basic ecclesial understandings emerging at Vatican II. The first, *communio*, has been affirmed by the bishops at the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 and recognized by various other officials and theologians. The second speaks to the Church's relations *ad extra* and accounts for the Church's mutual relations with the Other. It refers to an ecclesiology of friendship, and it complements the *ecclesia ad intra*, or communion ecclesiology of Vatican II. These two ecclesial understandings are complementary of each other and their unity is grounded in the visible mission of the Son as it ensures the unity within the mystical body of Christ (communion) and the mission of the of the Spirit who is greeted in the encounter with the Other in the fellowship of the Spirit (friendship). Moreover, there is a sense in which these two conceptions of Church interpenetrate so that mutuality can be incorporated and integrated into the life of the Church's self-mediating identity, *ad intra*. Likewise, the self-mediating identity is fully present within mutual encounters with the Other and represents the integrity and authentic spirit of the tradition. In this way, the identity is not compromised within the dialogical encounter.

The perichoresis of the divine persons in the life of the Trinity serve as the analogy for understanding the dynamic relationship between the two dimensions of the Church as self-mediating and as mutually self-mediating. One can say there is a sense that the missions of the Son and the Spirit are inextricably intertwined together within the life of the Church and invisibly outside of the explicit Church. The two basic conceptions of Church may speak to the both of these.

Finally, there is a distortion that can follow from mutual relations if the approach to the Other is naïve and does not acknowledge that differences exist and/or fails to distinguish the different types of differences, for example, complementary and contradictory differences. Therefore, the ecclesiology of friendship is also based on a method of relating with the Other and must include mutual self-mediation, the

different types of differences and discernment in order to distinguish those differences.⁶⁷

Conclusion

This paper has surveyed some of the significant figures in Catholic ecclesiological history in the past century who articulated the Church's self-understanding by distinguishing dual dimensions of the Church. Keeping in mind the dangers of reductionism or binary oppositions, it may be that this movement of dual ecclesial understandings has its origins in the two non-competing missions of the Son and the Spirit. However, this is a matter for further development.

I have presented some of the developments from the thought of Bernard Lonergan, which are consonant with this twofold ecclesial understanding. A post-Vatican II systematic ecclesiology, drawing on the remarkable insights of De Lubac, Congar, Rahner and Balthasar, can help develop Lonergan's two dimensions of the Church.

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⁶⁷ This is a summary of my argument in John Dadosky, "Towards a Fundamental Theological *Re-Interpretation* of Vatican II."